TRACTS OF J.C. RYLE

by John C. Ryle

A collection of J.C. Ryle's evangelical tracts addressing foundational topics of Anglican doctrine, personal holiness, and practical Christianity for the instruction of believers.

87 Chapters

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Chapter 1

Tracts of JC Ryle

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Bishop Ryle wrote well over two hundred evangelical tracts, of which more than two million were circulated, and many were translated into foreign languages. Throughout his ministry he remained one of the strongest defenders of the evangelical reformed faith within the Church of England. His faithful witness to the Gospel of Christ needs to be heard more than ever today. The following selection of tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers came to expect from all his writings. His tracts are “pure gold.” Some of them, not published since the 19th century, have come into my possession, and I offer you these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were published by Drummond’s Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland, as well as other tracts taken from his classic 19th century books.

01 39 Articles

02 Able to Save Hebrews 7:25

03 Against Ritualism

04 Apostolic fears 2 Corinthians 11:3

05 Archbishop Laud

06 Are we Sanctified?

07 Are you Fighting? 1 Timothy 6:12

08 Are you Happy?

09 Able to Save Hebrews 7:25

10 Are you Looking? Hebrews 12:2

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12 Assurance 2 Timothy 4:6-8

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15 Be Content

16 Beware! Matthew 16:6

17 Bible Reading John 5:39; Luke 10:26

18 Calvary

19 Christ Crucified

20 Come Matthew 11:28

21 Come out, and Be Ye Separate! 2 Corinthians 6:17

22 Conversion Acts 3:19

23 Cross Galatians 6:14

24 Do you Believe? John 3:16

25 Do you Confess?

26 Duties of Parents Proverbs 22:6

27 Evangelical Religion

28 Faith and Assurance

29 Faith's Choice Hebrews 11:24-26

30 Free Salvation

31 Farewall Address

32 Few are Saved 1 Corinthians 14:8

33 Form or Heart 2 Timothy 3:5

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35 Gospel Treasures

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48 Is it real? Jeremiah 6:30

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50 Looking unto Jesus Hebrews 12:2

51 Many shall come Matthew 8:11

52 Morning without clouds 2 Samuel 23:4-5

53 Never perish John 10:28

54 No Uncertain Sound

55 Occupy until I come Luke 19:11-13

56 One Blood Acts 17:26

57 Only One Way Acts 4:12

58 Owe Reformation

59 Peace be still! Mark 4:37-40

60 Power of the Holy Spirit

61 Prayer Luke 18:1; 1 Timothy 2:8

62 Preference to Gospel of John

63 Prove all things 1 Thessalonians 5:21

64 Regeneration

65 Remember Lot! Genesis 19:16

66 Self Exertion Luke 13:24

67 Self Inquiry Acts 15:36

68 Seven Bishops

69 Shall we Know?

70 Strive Luke 13:24

71 The Sight that stirred St Paul Acts 17:16-17

72 The World 2 Corinthians 6:17

73 Three Pictures Acts 26:24-29

74 Toplady Job 8:8

75 Tried by its fruits Luke 6:44

76 Two Thieves Luke 23:39-43

77 Unbelief a Marvel Mark 6:6

78 Victory 1 John 4:4-5

79 We must be holy

80 What Canst thou Know? Job 11:7-8

81 What think ye of Christ? Matthew 22:42

82 Where are your sins? Job 13:22; Psalms 51:2; 1 John 1:7; Romans 3:25

83 Whole Family Ephesians 3:15

84 Why were our Reformers burned?

85 Wycliffe

86 Zeal Galatians 4:18 Taken from http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/john_charles_ryle.htm("http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/john_charles_ryle.htm")

39 Articles

(chapter taken from)

KNOTS UNTIED.

BEING

PLAIN STATEMENTS ON DISPUTED POINTS IN RELIGION,

FROM THE

STANDPOINT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCHMAN.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.

Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels," etc.,

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THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES

Chapter IV.

I MUST begin this paper with an apology. My subject may seem at first sight dry, dull, and uninteresting. But I ask my readers to believe that it is not so in reality. There are few points about which it is so important for English Churchmen to have clear and correct views, as about the nature, position, and authority of the Thirty-nine Articles.

Marriage settlements and wills are not very lively reading. Like all carefully-drawn legal documents, they are extremely unattractive to general readers. The language seems cramped and old-fashioned; the amount of verbiage and circumlocution in them appears positively astounding; yet none but a child or fool would ever dare to say that wills and marriage settlements are of no use. The happiness of whole families often turns upon the meaning of their contents. It is even so with the Thirty-nine Articles. Dry, and dull, and uninteresting as they may appear to some, they are in one sense the backbone of the Church of England. Surely some knowledge of them ought to be

sought after by every sensible and intelligent member of our Communion.

Who is the “true Churchman”? That is a question which is shaking the Established Church of England to the very centre, and will shake it a good deal more, I suspect, before the end of the world comes. It is becoming a very large and serious question, and one which imperatively demands an answer.

It is not enough to say that everybody who goes to church is a “true Churchman.” That reply, I think, will content nobody. There are scores of people occupying our pews and benches every Sunday, who know nothing whatever about religion. They could not tell you, if life depended on it, what they believe or don't believe, hold or don't hold, think or don't think, about any doctrine of Christianity. They are totally in the dark about the whole subject. Politics they know, and business they know, and science perhaps they know, and possibly they know something about the amusements of this world. But as to the composition of a “true Churchman's” creed, they can tell you nothing whatever. They “go to church” on Sundays; and that is all. Surely this will never do! Ignorance, complete ignorance, can never be the qualification of a true Churchman. But perhaps it is enough to say that everybody who goes to church, and is zealous and earnest in his religion, is a “true Churchman”? That is a very wide question, and opens up an entirely new line of thought. But I fear it will not land us in any satisfactory conclusion. “Earnestness” is the attribute of men of the most opposite and contradictory creeds. “Earnestness is the character of religionists who are as wide apart as black and white, light and darkness, bitter and sweet, hot and cold.-You see it outside the Church of England. The Mohametans who overran the rotten Churches of Africa and Western Asia, crying, “the Koran or the sword,”-the Jesuit, who saps and mines, and compasses sea and land to make one proselyte,-the Mormonite, who crosses half the globe to die in the Salt Lake City, and calls Joe Smith a prophet,-all these undeniably were and are earnest men.-You see it inside the Church of England at this very day. The Ritualist, the Rationalist, the Evangelical, all are in earnest. Yet every one knows that their differences are grave, wide, deep, and irreconcilable. Surely this will never do. Earnestness alone is no proof that a man is a true Churchman. The devil is in earnest. Infidels are in earnest. Deists are in earnest. Socinians are in earnest. Papists are in earnest. Pharisees were in earnest. Sadducees were in earnest. Earnestness alone proves nothing more than this,-that a man has a good deal of steam and energy and “go” about him, and will not go to sleep. But it certainly does not prove that a man is a “true Churchman.” What is the man earnest about? This is the question that ought to be asked, and deserves to be answered.

Once for all, I must protest against the modern notion, that it does not matter the least what religious opinions a man holds, so long as he is in “earnest” about them,-that one creed is just as good as another,-and that all “earnest” men will somehow or other at last find themselves in heaven. I cannot hold such an opinion, so long as I believe that the Bible is a revelation from God. I would extend to every one the widest liberty and toleration. I abhor the idea of persecuting any one for his opinions. I would “think and let think.” But so long as I have breath in my body, I shall always contend that there is such a thing as revealed truth,-that men may find out what truth is if they will honestly seek for it,-and that mere earnestness and zeal, without Scriptural knowledge, will never give any one comfort in life, peace in death, or boldness in the day of judgment.

But how are we to find out who is the “true Churchman”? someone will ask me. Men complain with good reason that they feel puzzled, perplexed, embarrassed, bewildered, posed, and mystified by the question. Rationalists, Ritualists, and Evangelicals, all call themselves “Churchmen.” Who is right?-The name “Churchman” is bandied about from side to side, like a shuttlecock, and men lay claim to it who on many points are diametrically opposed to one another. Now how are we to settle the question? What are we to believe? What are we to think? How shall we distinguish the good coin from the bad? In one word, is there any test, any legal, authorized test of a true Churchman?

My answer to all these inquiries is short, plain, and most decided. I assert confidently that the Church of England has provided a test of true Churchmanship, and one that is recognized by the law of the land. This test is to be found in “the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion.” I say, furthermore, that the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion form a test which any plain man can easily understand, if he will only give his mind to a study of them. An honest examination of these Articles will show any one at this day who is the best, the truest, the most genuine style of Churchman. To exhibit the authority, nature, and characteristics of the Thirty-nine Articles, is the simple object for which I send forth the paper which is now in the reader's hands.

I. Now, first of all, what are the Thirty-nine Articles? This is a question which many will be ready to ask, and one to which it is absolutely necessary to return an answer. It is a melancholy fact, explain it as we may, that for the last 200 years the Articles have fallen into great and undeserved neglect. Thousands and myriads of Churchmen, I am fully persuaded, have never read them, never even looked at them, and of course know nothing whatever of their contents. I make no apology therefore for beginning with that which every Churchman ought to know. I will briefly state what the Thirty-nine Articles are.

The Thirty-nine Articles are a brief and condensed statement, under thirty-nine heads or propositions, of what the Church of England regards as the chief doctrines which her chief members ought to hold and believe. They were, most of them, gathered by our Reformers out of Holy Scripture. They were carefully packed up and summarized in the most accurate and precise language, of which every word was delicately weighed, and had a special meaning. Some of the Articles are positive, and declare directly what the Church of England regards as Bible truth and worthy of belief. Some of them are negative, and declare what the Church of England considers erroneous and unworthy of credence. Some few of them are simple statements of the Church's judgment on points which were somewhat controverted, even among Protestants, 300 years ago, and on which Churchmen might need an expression of opinion. Such is the document commonly called the Thirty-nine Articles; and all who wish to read it will find it at the end of every properly printed Prayer-book. At all events, any Prayer-book which does not contain the Articles is a most imperfect, mutilated, and barely honest copy of the Liturgy.

When and by whom were these Articles first drawn up? They were first composed by our Reformers in the days of that admirable young King, Edward the Sixth. Who had the chief hand in the work, history does not reveal; but there is every reason to believe that Cranmer and Ridley our two most learned martyrs, had more to do with it than any. When first sent forth, they were forty-two in number. Afterwards, when Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, they were reduced by Archbishop Parker and his helpers, of whom Bishop Jewell was probably the chief, to their present number, with a few unimportant alterations. They were finally confirmed and ratified by Crown,

Convocation, and Parliament, in the year 1571, and from 1571 down to this day not a single word in them has been altered.

The object for which the Articles were drawn up is clearly stated in the title of them, which any one will find in a proper Prayer-book. They are called “Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, and the whole clergy, in the Convocation holden at London in the year 1562, for avoiding of diversities of opinion, and for the establishment of consent touching true religion.” About the real, plain, honest meaning of this title, I think there ought to be no doubt. It proves that the Thirty-nine Articles are intended to be “the Church of England's Confession of faith.” Every well-organized Church throughout Christendom has its Confession of faith: that is, it has a carefully composed statement of the main things in religion which it considers its members ought to believe. Every reading man knows this. The Augsburg Confession, the Creed of Pope Pius IV., the Decrees of the Council of Trent, the Westminster Confession, are documents with which every student of ecclesiastical history is familiar. Common sense shows the necessity and convenience of such Confessions. In a fallen world like this the terms of membership in any ecclesiastical corporation must be written down in black and white, or else the whole body is liable to fall into disorder and confusion. Every member of a Church ought to be able to render a reason of his membership, and to say what the great principles of his Church are. To do this his Church supplies him with a short creed, manual, or Confession, to which at any time he may refer inquirers. This was the object of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. They were intended to be “the Churchman's Confession of his faith.”

The substance of the Thirty-nine Articles is a point on which I shall say but little at present, because I propose to dwell on it by and by. Let it suffice to say that they contain most admirable, terse, clear statements of Scriptural truth, according to the judgment of our Reformers, on almost every point in the Christian religion. The titles overleaf speak for themselves.

Some of these points are handled in a more firm, strong, and decided manner than others, and the curiously different tone of the Articles, according to their subject-matter, is a matter on which I shall have more to say by and by. But taking them for all in all, as a Church's statement of things to be believed, I think that no Church on earth has a better “Confession of faith” than the Church of England. I have no wish to find fault with other Churches. God forbid! We have faults and defects enough to keep us humble within the Anglican Communion. But after carefully examining other Confessions of faith, I find none which seem comparable to our own. Some Confessions are too long. Some go into particulars too much. Some define what had better be left undefined, and shut up sharply what had better be left a little open. For a combination of fulness, boldness, clearness, brevity, moderation, and wisdom, I find no Confession which comes near the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England.1 A List of the Articles

1. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.

2. Of Christ the Son of God.

3. Of His going down into Hell.

4. Of His resurrection.

5. Of the Holy Ghost.

6. Of the Sufficiency of the Scripture.

7. Of the Old Testament.

8. Of the Three Creeds.

9. Of Original or Birth-sin.

10. Of Free-will.

11. Of Justification.

12. Of Good Works.

13. Of Works before Justification.

14. Of Works of Supererogation.

15. Of Christ alone without Sin.

16. Of Sin after Baptism.

17. Of Predestination and Election.

18. Of obtaining Salvation by Christ.

19. Of the Church.

20. Of the Authority of the Church.

21. Of the Authority of General Councils.

22. Of Purgatory.

23. Of Ministering in the Congregation.

24. Of Speaking in the Congregation.

25. Of the Sacraments.

26. Of the Unworthiness of Ministers.

27. Of Baptism.

28. Of the Lord's Supper.

29. Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ.

30. Of both kinds.

31. Of Christ's one Oblation.

32. Of the Marriage of Priests.

33. Of Excommunicate Persons.

34. Of the Traditions of the Church.

35. Of Homilies.

36. Of Consecrating of Ministers.

37. Of Civil Magistrates.

38. Of Christian Men's Goods.

39. Of a Christian Man's Oath. So much for what we mean when we talk of the Thirty-nine Articles. For dwelling so much on the point, I shall make little apology. The intrinsic importance of it, and the singular ignorance of most Churchmen about it, are my best excuse. The times we live in make it imperatively necessary to look up and ventilate these old questions. The perilous position of the Church of England requires all her sons to spread light and information. He that would know what a true Churchman is, must be content to begin by finding out what is meant by “the Thirty-nine Articles.”

II. I must now take up a question which is of great and serious importance. To prevent mistakes I shall state it as clearly and logically as I can. “What is the precise rank, authority, and position of the Thirty-nine Articles? Are they, or are they not, the chief, foremost, primary and principal test of true Churchmanship?”

My reasons for going into this point are as follows. Some clergymen and laymen in the present day are fond of saying that the Prayer-book, and not the Articles, is the real measure and gauge of a Churchman. “The Prayer-book! the Prayer-book!” is the incessant cry of these people. “We want no other standard of doctrine but the Prayer-book.”-Is it a controverted point about the Church? What says the Prayer-book?-Is it a doctrine that is disputed? What says the Prayer-book?-Is it the effect of baptism, or the nature of the Lord's Supper, that is under discussion? What says the Prayer-book?-To the Articles these gentlemen seem to have a peculiar dislike, a hydrophobic aversion. They seldom refer to them, unless perhaps to sneer at them as the “forty stripes save one.” They never quote them, never bring them forward if they can possibly help it. What intelligent observer of religious questions among Churchmen does not know perfectly well the class of men whom I have in view? They are to be found all over England. We meet them in newspapers and books. We hear them in pulpits and on platforms. They are ever thrusting on the public their favourite “Diana of the Ephesians,” their darling notion that the Prayer-book, and not the Articles, is the test of a Churchman.

Now, with all respect to these worthy people, I venture to say that their favourite notion is as real an idol as the Ephesian “Diana” was of old. I shall try to show the reader that in exalting the Prayer-book above the Articles, they have taken up a position that cannot possibly be maintained. I shall try to show, by evidence that cannot be gainsayed, that the true state of the case is exactly the reverse of what they are so fond of proclaiming. I am not going to say anything against the Prayer-book. It is a matchless book of devotion. But I am going to say, and to prove, that the Articles, and not the Prayer-book, are the first, foremost, and principal test of a true Churchman.

I shall dismiss briefly four points that I might dwell upon at length, if it were worth while.

(a) I pass over the obvious suspiciousness of any Churchman ignoring the Articles, giving them the cold shoulder, and talking only about the Prayer-book, when he is speaking of the tests of a Churchman's religion. That many do so it is quite needless to say. Yet the fifth Canon, of 1604,

contains the following words: “Whosoever shall hereafter affirm that any of the Thirty-nine Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, in the Convocation holden at London in the year of our Lord God 1562, for avoiding diversities of opinion, and establishing of consent touching true religion, are in any part superstitious, or erroneous, or such as he may not with a good conscience subscribe unto, let him be excommunicated ipso facto, and not restored but only by the Archbishops, after his repentance and public revocation of such his wicked errors.” Plain language that! Certain Churchmen who are fond of pelting Evangelical Churchmen with Canons would do well to remember that Canon.

(b) I pass over the implied insinuation that there is any contradiction between the Articles and the Prayer-book. Many talk and write as if there was. It is a notion unworthy of any one of common sense. The man who supposes that divines of such grace and learning as the Elizabethan Reformers would ever with the same hands draw up Articles and a Prayer-book containing two different doctrines, must be in a strange state of mind? Reason itself points out that the Prayer-book and Articles were meant to teach the same doctrines, and that no interpretation which makes them jar and contradict one another can be correct. Lord Chatham's famous dictum, that the Church of England has a Popish Liturgy, an Arminian clergy, and a Calvinistic set of Articles, was doubtless very smart, but it was not true.

(c) I pass over the unreasonableness of setting up a book of devotion, like the Liturgy, as a better test of Churchmanship than a Confession of faith like the Articles. Prayers, in the very nature of things, are compositions which are not so precisely framed and worded as cold, dry, dogmatic statements of doctrine. They are what the rhetorical speech of the advocate is, compared to the cautiously-balanced decision of the judge. “In the Prayer-book,” says Dean Goode, “we have a collection of national formularies of devotion, written at a time when a large proportion of the people were inclined to Romanism, and at the same time compelled to attend the services of the national Churches,-and consequently carefully drawn up, so as to give as little offence as possible to Romish prejudices. Is such a book calculated to serve the purposes of a standard of faith?”-“In the Articles,” he adds, on the other hand, “we have a precise Confession of faith on all the great points of Christian doctrine, drawn up in dogmatic propositions, as a test of doctrinal soundness for the clergy.” The Liturgy is an excellent book. But to say that in the nature of things it can serve the purpose of a standard of faith so well as the Articles, is absurd.

(d) I pass over the glaring foolishness of the common remark, that those who are fond of maintaining the primary authority of the Articles cast discredit upon the Creeds. The authors of this notable charge must surely have forgotten that one whole Article-the eighth-is devoted to the three Creeds! So far from the admirers of the Articles dishonouring and disparaging the Creeds, they are specially bound to honour, reverence, and defend them. Such vague argumentation goes far to show that many who speak slightly of the Articles do not even know what the Articles contain! They “speak evil of things which they know not.” (Jude 1:10.)

But I pass over all these points. I desire to go straight to the mark, and to give direct proofs of the position that I take up. What I deliberately assert is, that the Thirty-nine Articles were always intended to be, and are at this day, the first, foremost, chief, and principal test of a Churchman, and that in this point of view there is nothing else that stands on a level with them. In proof of this assertion I shall now bring forward a few witnesses.

(1) My first witness shall be a very simple one. I mean the title of the Articles, which is prefixed to them in every complete and unmutilated Prayer-book. They are called, “Articles agreed upon for the avoiding of Diversities of Opinion, and for the stablishing of Consent touching true Religion.” This title was first given to them by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the reign of Edward VI., 1552; and afterwards given a second time by Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, in 1562. I want no plainer language than the words of this title. The man who tries to get away from it and evade it is like a viper biting a file.2

(2) My second witness shall be the statute law of the realm. I refer to two Acts of Parliament. One is called the 13th of Elizabeth, cap. 12, and entitled “An Act for Ministers of the Church to be of sound religion.” The other Act is called the 28th and 29th Victoria, cap. 122, and is entitled “An Act to Amend the Law as to the declarations and subscriptions to be made, and Oaths to be taken by the Clergy,” and was passed in the year 1865.

The Act of Elizabeth, in the second section declares, that “if any person ecclesiastical, or which shall have any ecclesiastical living, shall advisedly maintain or affirm any doctrine directly contrary or repugnant to any of the said Thirty-nine Articles; and being convicted before the Bishop of the Diocese, or the Ordinary, or before the Queen's Commissioner in causes ecclesiastical, shall persist therein, or not revoke his error, or after such revocation affirm such untrue doctrine, such maintaining, or affirming, or persisting shall be just cause to deprive such person of his ecclesiastical functions; and it shall be lawful for the Bishop of the Diocese, or Ordinary, or such Commissioner, to deprive such person.”

Comment on the evidence of this witness is needless. There is no way of honestly evading the edge and point of this yet unrepealed Act of Parliament. In a decision of all the judges, in the twenty-third year of Elizabeth, it was declared that the Act of 13th Elizabeth was made for avoiding a diversity of opinion, and that the “prevention of such diversity was the scope of the statute.” (Coke's Institut. 1865.) The provisions of this Act of Elizabeth are in full force at this very day, and form the basis of any proceedings against a clergyman in matters of religion.

The Act of the 28th and 29th of Victoria is even more remarkable than the 13th of Elizabeth. The seventh section requires every person instituted to any living, on the first Lord's Day in which he officiates in his church, “publicly and openly in the presence of his congregation, to read the whole Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and immediately after reading to make the declaration of assent to them.”

Up to the year 1865, we must remember, a clergyman was required to read over the whole Morning and Evening Service as well as the Articles, and then declare his assent and consent to the use of the Book of Common Prayer. This was dispensed with by the Act of Victoria. But the requirement to read the Thirty-nine Articles was carefully retained! The result is, that every beneficed clergyman in the Church of England has not only declared his assent to the Thirty-nine Articles, but has done it in the most public way, after reading them over before his congregation.

(3) My third witness shall be the Royal Declaration prefixed to the Articles in 1628, by King Charles I. It is a document which will be found at length in every complete and unmutilated Prayer-book. It contains the following passage: “We hold it most agreeable to this our Kingly office, and our own religious zeal, to conserve and maintain the Church committed to our charge, in unity of true

religion, and in the bond of peace; and not to suffer unnecessary disputations, altercations, or questions to be raised, which may nourish faction both in the Church and Commonwealth. We have therefore, upon mature deliberation, and with the advice of so many of our Bishops as might conveniently be called together, thought fit to make this declaration following:-

“That the Articles of the Church of England (which have been allowed and authorized heretofore, and which our clergy generally have subscribed unto) do contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God's Word: which we do therefore ratify and confirm, requiring all our loving subjects to continue in the uniform profession thereof, and prohibiting the least difference from the said Articles.” Admirable words these! Well would it have been if the unhappy Monarch who put forth this declaration, had afterwards adhered more decidedly to the doctrine of the Articles, and not ruined himself and the Church by patronizing and supporting such men as Archbishop Laud.

(4) My fourth witness shall be a remarkable letter or circular issued by the Crown in 1721, entitled “Directions to our Archbishops and Bishops for the preservation of unity in the Church and the purity of the Christian faith, particularly in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.” The charge given to the Bishops in these directions is as follows: “You shall, without delay, signify to the clergy of your several dioceses this our Royal command, which we require you to see duly published and decreed: viz., that no preacher whatsoever in his sermons or lectures do presume to deliver any other doctrines concerning the great and fundamental truths of our most holy religion, and particularly concerning the blessed Trinity, than what are contained in the Holy Scriptures, and are agreeable to the three Creeds and the Thirty-nine Articles of religion.” The circular proceeds to direct the Bishops to put in force the famous statute of Elizabeth already quoted. But not one word do we find about the Prayer-book, from beginning to end. Of course these “directions” have no binding force now, but as evidence of what men thought the test of Church religion in 1721, they are remarkable.

(5) My fifth witness shall be Thomas Rogers, chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, who published in 1607, the first Exposition of the Articles which ever appeared. This book, we must remember, was written within forty years of the time when the Articles were finally ratified. It was a work of great authority at the time, and was dedicated to the Archbishop. In the preface to this work Rogers says:-

“The purpose of our Church is best known by the doctrine which she does profess: the doctrine by the Thirty-nine Articles established by Act of Parliament; the Articles by the words whereby they are expressed: and other doctrine than in the said Articles is contained, our Church neither hath nor holdeth, and other sense they cannot yield than their words do import.”

Strong language that from an Archbishop's chaplain! I heartily wish we had a few more chaplains like him.

(6) My sixth and last evidence, for brevity's sake, I will give you all at once, in the words of five well-known Bishops of the Church, who have long passed away. They were men very unlike one another, and belonged to very different schools of thought. But their testimonies to the value and rightful position of the Articles are so curiously harmonious, that it is interesting to have them brought together.

(a) Let us hear then what great and good Bishop Hall says, in his work on “The Old Religion:” “The Church of England, in whose motherhood we have all come to pride ourselves, hath in much wisdom and piety delivered her judgment concerning all necessary points of religion, in so complete a body of divinity as all hearts may rest in. These we read, these we write under, as professing not their truth only, but their sufficiency also. The voice of God our Father, in His Scriptures, and, out of them, the voice of the Church our mother, in her Articles, is that which must both guide and settle our resolutions. Whatsoever is beside these, is either private, or unnecessary, or uncertain.”-Hall's Works. Oxford Edition. Vol. ix., p. 308.

(b) Let us hear next what Bishop Stillingfleet says in his Unreasonableness of Separation: “This we all say, that the doctrine of the Church of England is contained in the Thirty-nine Articles; and whatever the opinions of private persons may be, this is the standard by which the sense of our Church is to be taken.”-London, 4to edition, p. 95. 1631.

(c) Let us hear next what Bishop Burnet says: “The Thirty-nine Articles are the sum of our doctrines, and the confession of our faith.-Burnet on Articles, pref., p. 1. Oxford Edition. 1831.

(d) Let us hear next what Bishop Beveridge says, in the preface to his great work on the Articles: “The Bishops and clergy of both provinces of this nation, in a Council held at London, 1562, agreed upon certain Articles of Religion, to the number of thirty-nine, which to this day remain the constant and settled doctrine of our Church; which, by an Act of Parliament of the 13th of Queen Elizabeth, 1571, all that are entrusted with any ecclesiastical preferments, are bound to subscribe to.”-Beveridge on Articles, vol. i., p. 9. Oxford Edition. 1840.

(e) Let us hear, lastly, what Bishop Tomline says: “The Thirty-nine Articles are the criterion of the faith of the members of the Church of England.”-Elements of Theol., vol. ii., p. 34. 1799.

Such are the testimonies which I offer to the attention of my readers, in proof of my assertion that the Articles, much more than the Prayer-book, are the true test of Churchmanship. The title prefixed to the Articles by Cranmer and Parker; the famous statutes of the 13th Elizabeth and 28th and 29th Victoria; the Royal Declaration of Charles I., in 1628; the Royal Circular to the Bishops in 1721; the express opinion of Rogers, Archbishop Bancroft's private chaplain; the deliberately expressed judgment of five such men as Hall, Stillingfleet, Burnet, Beveridge, and Tomline,-all these witnesses, taken together, supply a mass of evidence, which to my eyes seem perfectly unanswerable. In the face of such evidence I dare not, as an honest man, refuse the conclusion, that the truest Churchman is the man who most truly agrees with the Thirty-nine Articles.

It would be easy to multiply witnesses, and to overload the subject with evidence. But in these matters enough is as good as a feast. Enough, probably, has been said to satisfy any candid and impartial mind that the ground I have taken up about the Articles has not been taken up in vain. He that desires to go more deeply into the subject would do well to consult Dean Goode's writings about it, in a controversy which he held with the late Bishop of Exeter. In that remarkable controversy, I am bold to say, the Dean proved himself more than a match for the Bishop. (Goode's Defence of Thirty-nine Articles, and Vindication of Defence. Hatchard. 1848.)

One remark I must make, in self-defence, before leaving this branch of my subject. I particularly request that no reader will misunderstand the grounds I have been taking up. Let no one suppose that I think lightly of the Prayer-book, because I do not regard it as the Church of England's

standard and test of truth. Nothing could be more erroneous than such an idea. In loyal love to the Prayer-book, and deep admiration of its contents, I give place to no man. Taken for all in all, as an uninspired work, it is an incomparable book of devotion for the use of a Christian congregation. This is a position I would defend anywhere and everywhere. But the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer was never intended to be the Church's standard of doctrine in the same way that the Articles were. This was not meant to be its office; this was not the purpose for which it was compiled. It is a manual of public devotion: it is not a Confession of faith. Let us love it, honour it, prize it, reverence it, admire it, and use it. But let us not exalt it to the place which the Thirty-nine Articles alone can fill, and which common sense, statute law, and the express opinions of eminent divines unanimously agree in assigning to them. The Articles, far more than the Prayer-book, are the Church's standard of sound doctrine, and the real test of true Churchmanship.3

III. One more point now remains to be considered, which is of so much importance that I dare not pass it by unnoticed. What the Articles are we have seen. What their position and authority is in the Church of England we have also seen. Ought we not now to see what are the great leading characteristics of the Articles? I think we ought, unless we mean to leave our subject unfinished. There are certain grand features in them, without descending into particulars, which stand out prominently, like mountains in a landscape. What those features are we ought to know. I shall therefore proceed to point them out to the reader, and try to impress them on his attention. If those who are induced to read them with attention, in consequence of this paper, are not struck with the singular distinctness and prominence of these leading features in the Articles, I shall be greatly mistaken. To my eyes they stand out in bold, clear, and sharply-cut relief. I ask the reader to give me his attention for a very few minutes, and I will show him what I mean.

(1) Let us mark, then, for one thing, as we read the Articles, the strong and decided language which they use in speaking of things which are essential to salvation.

Concerning the nature of God and the Holy Trinity,-concerning the sufficiency and authority of Scripture,-concerning the sinfulness and helplessness of natural man,-concerning justification by faith alone, concerning the place and value of good works,-concerning salvation only by the name of Christ; concerning all these grand foundations of the Christian religion, it is hard to conceive language more decided, clear, distinct, ringing, and trumpet-toned than that of the Thirty-nine Articles. There is no doubtfulness, or hesitancy, or faltering, or timidity, or uncertainty, or compromise about their statements. There is no attempt to gratify undecided theologians by saying, “It is probably so,”-or, “Perhaps it may be so,”-or, “There are some grounds for thinking so,” and all that sort of language which is so pleasing to what are called “broad” Christians. Nothing of the kind! On all the points I have named the Articles speak out boldly, roundly, frankly, and honestly, in a most unmistakable tone. “This is the Church of England's judgment, “they seem to say; and “these are the views which every Churchman ought to hold.”

I ask special attention to this point. We live in days when many loudly declare that it is not right to be positive about anything in religion. The clergyman who dares to say of any theological question, “This is true, and that is false,-this is right, and that is wrong,”-is pretty sure to be denounced as a narrow-minded, illiberal, uncharitable man. Nothing delights many Churchmen so much as to proclaim that they “belong to no party,”-that they are “moderate men,”-that they “hold no extreme views.” Well! I only ask these Churchmen to settle matters with the Thirty-nine Articles. I want no

clergyman to go a bit beyond the authoritative statements of his own Church; but I do want every clergyman not to fall below them. And I shall always maintain, publicly or privately, that to call any one an “extreme” man, or a “party” man, because his doctrinal views are in harmony with the bold, decided statements of the Articles, is neither just, nor fair, nor reasonable, nor consistent with common sense. Give me the clergyman who, after reading the Articles to his congregation, and solemnly promising to abide by them, acts up to his promise, and speaks out boldly, decidedly, and unhesitatingly, like a man, about all the leading doctrines of Christianity. As for the clergyman who, after declaring his assent to the Articles, flinches from their doctrinal distinctness, and preaches hesitatingly, as if he hardly knew what he believed, I am sorry for him. He may be a charitable, a liberal, a learned man, but he is not in the right place in the pulpit of the Church of England.

(2) Let us mark, in the next place, as we read the Articles, their studied moderation about things non-essential to salvation, and things about which good Christian men may differ.

About sin after baptism,-about predestination and election,-about the definition of the Church,-about the ministry,-about the ceremonies and rights of every particular or national Church,-about all these points it is most striking to observe the calm, gentle, tender, conciliatory tone which runs throughout the Articles; a tone the more remarkable when contrasted with the firm and decided language on essential points, to which I have just been referring.

It is clear as daylight to my mind, that the authors of the Articles intended to admit the possibility of difference on the points which I have just been enumerating. They saw the possibility of men differing about predestination and election, as Fletcher and Toplady did. How cautious are their statements, and how carefully guarded and fenced!-They believed that there might be Churches differently organized to our own, that there might be many good Christian ministers who were not Episcopalians, and many useful rites and ceremonies of worship unlike those of the Church of England. They take care to say nothing which could possibly give offence.-They scrupulously avoid condemning and denouncing other Churches and other Christians. In short, their maxim seems to have been, “in necessaries unitas, in non-necessaries libertas, in omnibus caritas.”

I greatly admire this moderation in non-essentials. I heartily wish that the spirit of it had been more acted upon in days gone by, by the rulers of the Church of England. To the blind intolerance and fanaticism of days gone by, to the insane and senseless wish to cram Episcopacy and Liturgy down the throats of every man by force, and excommunicate him if he would not swallow them,-to this we owe an immense proportion of our English Dissent. And the root of all this has been departure from the spirit of the Thirty-nine Articles.

I frankly own that I belong to a school in the Church of England, which is incorrectly and unfairly called “low.” And why are we called so? Simply because we will not condemn every Church which is not governed by Bishops; simply because we will not denounce every one as greatly in error who worships without a surplice and a Prayer-book! But I venture to tell our accusers that their charges fall very lightly on us. When they can prove that our standard is not the standard of the Thirty-nine Articles,-when they can show that we take lower ground than our own Church takes in her authorized Confession of faith,-then we will allow there is something in what they say against us. But till they can do that, and they have not done it yet, I tell them that we shall remain unmoved. We may be called “low” Churchmen, but we are “true.”

(3) Let us mark, in the next place, as we read the Articles, their wise, discreet, and well-balanced statements about the Sacraments. They declare plainly the divine authority of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They use high and reverent language about them both, as means of grace, “by the which God doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but strengthen and confirm our faith in Him.”

But after saying all this, it is most instructive to observe how carefully the Articles repudiate the Romish doctrine of grace being imparted by the Sacraments “ex opere operato...”. “The Sacraments,” says the Twenty-fifth Article, “were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation.”

Now if there is any one thing that is laid to the charge of us Evangelical clergy, it is this, that we deny sacramental grace. “Excellent, worthy, hard-working men,” we are sometimes called; “but unhappily they do not hold right Church views about the Sacraments.”-Men who talk in this manner are talking rashly, and saying what they cannot prove. Evangelical clergymen yield to none in willingness to give rightful honour to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. All we say is, that grace is not tied to the Sacraments, and that a man may receive them, and be none the better for it. And what is all this but the doctrine of the Thirty-nine Articles?

(4) Let us mark, in the fourth place, as we read the Articles, the thoroughly Protestant spirit which runs throughout them, and the boldness of their language about Romish error.

What says the Nineteenth Article? “The Church of Rome hath erred, not only in living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.”

What says the Twenty-second Article? “The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons, worshipping and adoration, as well of images as of reliques, and also of invocation of saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”

What says the Twenty-fourth Article? It forbids the Romish custom of having public prayers and ministering the Sacraments in Latin. What says the Twenty-fifth Article? It declares that the five Romish sacraments of confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be accounted sacraments of the Gospel.

What says the Twenty-eighth Article? It declares that “transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.” It also declares that “the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.”

What says the Thirtieth Article? “The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay-people.”

What saith the Thirty-first Article? “The sacrifices of masses, in which it was commonly said the priest did offer Christ for the quick and dead, to have remission of pain and guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceit.”

What says the Thirty-second Article? “Bishops, priests, and deacons are not commanded by God's laws to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage.”

What says the Thirty-seventh Article? “The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England.”

Now what shall we say to all this? Nine times over the Thirty-nine Articles condemn, in plain and unmistakable language, the leading doctrines of the Church of Rome, and declare in favour of what must be called Protestant views. And yet men dare to tell us that we Evangelical clergymen have no right to denounce Popery,-that it is very wrong and very uncharitable to be so hot in favour of Protestantism,-that Romanism is a pretty good sort of thing,-and that by making such a piece of work about Popery, and Protestantism, and Ritualism, and semi-Popery, we are only troubling the country and doing more harm than good. Well! I am content to point to the Thirty-nine Articles. There is my apology! There is my defence! I will take up no other ground at present. I will not say, as I might do, that Popery is an unscriptural system, which every free nation ought to dread, and every Bible-reading Christian of any nation ought to oppose. I simply point to the Thirty-nine Articles.

I ask any one to explain how any English clergyman can be acting consistently, if he does not oppose, denounce, expose, and resist Popery in every shape, either within the Church or without. Other Christians may do as they please, and countenance Popery if they like. But so long as the Articles stand unrepealed and unaltered, it is the bounden duty of every clergyman of the Church of England to oppose Popery.

(5) Let us mark, in the last place, as we read the Articles, the unvarying reverence with which they always speak of Holy Scripture. The inspiration of the Bible, no doubt, is never distinctly asserted. It is evidently taken for granted as a first principle, which need not be proved. But if constant references to Scripture, and constant appeals to the authority of Scripture, as God's Word, are allowed to prove anything, in no document does the Bible receive more honour than in the Articles.

The Sixth Article declares that “Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation, and that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite and necessary to salvation.”

The Eighth Article says that “the three Creeds ought thoroughly to be believed and received, for they may be proved by most certain warranty of Holy Scripture.”

The Twentieth Article says, “It is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another.”

The Twenty-first Article says that “things ordained by General Councils as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it be declared that they be taken from Holy Scripture.”

The Twenty-second Article condemns certain Romish functions, “because they are grounded on no warranty of Scripture, but are rather repugnant to the Word of God.”

The Twenty-eighth Article condemns Transubstantiation, “because it cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture.”

The Thirty-fourth Article says that “traditions and ceremonies of the Church may be changed, so long as nothing is ordained against God's Word.”

Now I see in all this abundant proof that the Bible is the rule of faith in the Church of England, and that no doctrine is “Church doctrine” which cannot be reconciled with God's Word. I see a complete answer to those who tell us that we make an idol of the Bible, and that we ought to go to the voice of the Church and to the Prayer-book for direction. I see that any sense placed on any part of the Prayer-book which is not reconcilable with Scripture, must be a mistake, and ought not to be received. I see, above all, that all who pour contempt on the Bible, as an uninspired, imperfect, defective Book, which ought not to be believed, if it contradicts “modern thought,” are taking up ground which is at variance with the Church's own Confession of faith. They may be clever, liberal, scientific, and confident; but they are contradicting the Articles, and they are not sound Churchmen.

Such are the leading features, in my judgment, of the Thirty-nine Articles. I commend them to the attention of my readers, and ask that they may be carefully weighed. No doubt men may say that the Articles admit of more than one interpretation, and that my interpretation is not the correct one. My reply to all this is short and simple. I ask in what sense the Reformers who drew up the Articles meant them to be interpreted? Let men answer that. It is an acknowledged axiom in interpreting all public documents, such as treaties, covenants, wills, articles of faith, and religious formularies, that in any case of doubt or dispute the true sense is the sense of those who drew them up and imposed them. Waterland and Sanderson have abundantly shown that. Upon this principle I take my stand. I only want the Thirty-nine Articles to be interpreted in the sense in which the Reformers first imposed them, and I believe it impossible to avoid the conclusion you arrive at. That conclusion is, that the Thirty-nine Articles are in general tone, temper, spirit, intention, and meaning, eminently Protestant and eminently Evangelical.

And now I draw my subject to a conclusion. I have shown the reader, to the best of my ability, what the Articles are,-what is the position and authority which they hold in the Church of England,-and what are the leading features of their contents. It only remains for me to point out a few practical conclusions, which I venture to think are peculiarly suited to the times.

(1) In the first place, I ask every Churchman who reads this paper to read the Thirty-nine Articles regularly at least once every year, and to make himself thoroughly familiar with their contents.

It is not a reading age, I fear. Newspapers, and periodicals, and novels absorb the greater part of the time given to reading. I am sorry for it. If I could only reach the ear of all thinking lay Churchmen, I should like to say, “Do read your Articles.” As for clergymen, if I had my own way I would require them to read the Articles publicly in church once every year.

Ignorance, I am compelled to say, is one of the grand dangers of members of the Church of England. The bulk of her people neither know, nor understand, nor seem to care about the inside of any of the great religious questions of the day. Presbyterians know their system. Baptists, Independents, and Methodists know theirs. Papists are all trained controversialists. Churchmen alone, as a body, are generally very ignorant of their own Church, and all its privileges, doctrines, and history. Not one in twenty could tell you why he is a Churchman.

Let us cast aside this reproach. Let all Churchmen awake and rub their eyes, and begin to read up their own Church and its doctrines. And if any man wants to know where to begin, I advise him to begin with the Thirty-nine Articles.

(2) In the second place, I ask all who read this paper to teach the Thirty-nine Articles to all young people who are yet of an age to be taught. It is a burning shame that the Articles are not made an essential part of the system of every school connected with the Church of England, whether for high or low, for rich or poor.

I do not say this without reason. It is a simple fact, that the beginning of any clear doctrinal views I have ever attained myself, was reading up the Articles at Eton, for the Newcastle Scholarship, and attending a lecture, at Christ Church, Oxford, on the Articles, by a college tutor. I shall always thank God for what I learned then. Before that time I really knew nothing systematically of Christianity. I knew not what came first or what last. I had a religion without order in my head. What I found good myself I commend to others. If you love young people's souls, and would ground them, and stablish them, and arm them against error betimes, take care that you teach them not only the Catechism, but also the Articles.

(3) In the third place, I advise all who read this paper to test all Churchmanship by the test of the Articles. Be not carried away by those who talk of “nice Church views,” “Catholic ceremonies,” “holy, earnest, parish priests,” and the like. Try all that is preached and taught by one simple measure,-does it or does it not agree with the Articles? You have an undoubted right to do this, and no English clergyman has any right to object to your doing it. Say to him, if he does object, “You publicly read and subscribed to the Articles when you accepted your cure of souls. Do you or do you not abide by your subscription?”

This is the simple ground we take up in the various societies which, amidst much abuse, obloquy, and opposition, are labouring to maintain the Protestant character of the Church of England. They are not intolerant, whatever some may please to say. They do not want to narrow the limits of our Church. But we do say that any one who holds preferment in the Church of England ought to be bound by the laws of the Church of England, so long as those laws are unrepealed. Repeal the Act of Parliament called the 13th of Elizabeth, and cast out the Thirty-nine Articles, and we will cease to oppose Ritualism, and will concede that a Churchman may be anything, or everything, in opinion. But so long as things are as they are, we say we have a right to demand that respect should be paid to the Articles.

(4) Finally, let me advise every Churchman who values his soul never to be ashamed of the great leading doctrines which are so nobly set forth in the Articles.

Never mind if people call you extreme, party-spirited, going too far, Puritanical, ultra-Methodist, and the like.-Ask them if they have ever read the first nineteen Articles of their own Church. Tell them, so long as you are a Churchman, you will never be ashamed of holding Church doctrine, and that you know what Church doctrine is, if they do not.

Remember, above all, that nothing but clear, distinct views of doctrine, such views as you will find in the Articles, will ever give you peace while you live, and comfort when you die.

“Earnestness” is a fine, vague, high-sounding term, and is very beautiful to look at and talk about, when we are well, and happy, and prosperous. But when the stern realities of life break in upon us, and we are in trouble,-when the valley of death looms in sight, and the cold river must be crossed,-in seasons like those, we want something better than mere “earnestness” to support our souls. Oh, no! it is cold comfort then, as our feet touch the chill waters, to be told, “Never mind! Be in earnest! Take comfort! Only be in earnest!”-It will never, never do! We want them to know if God is our God, if Christ is our Christ, if we have the Spirit within us, if our sins are pardoned, if our souls are justified, if our hearts are changed, if our faith is genuine and real. “Earnestness” will not be enough then. It will prove a mere fine-weather religion. Nothing, in short, will do in that solemn hour but clear, distinct doctrine, embraced by our inward man, and made our own. “Earnestness” then proves nothing but a dream. Doctrines such as those set forth in the Articles are the only doctrines which are life, and health, and strength, and peace. Let us never be ashamed of laying hold of them, maintaining them, and making them our own. Those doctrines are the religion of the Bible and of the Church of England!

FOOTNOTES

1 The famous historian Bingham, in his curious book on the French Protestant Church, quotes a remarkable testimony to the Articles from the French divine Le Moyne, a man of great note in his day:-“No Confession can be contrived more wisely than the English is, and the Articles of Faith were never collected with a more just and reasonable discretion. “-Bingham's Works, Oxf. Edit., vol. x., p. 95.

2 Archbishop Parker's Correspondence, published in the Parker Society's series, supplies remarkable evidence of the importance attached to the Thirty-nine Articles by the Elizabethan Reformers. This evidence will be found in a letter addressed to the Queen, by the Archbishop and thirteen other Bishops, in which they pray her to facilitate the passing of a Bill through Parliament for the confirmation of the Articles. The reason why the Queen interposed any delay does not appear to have been any dislike to the Articles, but her characteristic Tudor jealousy of any thing being done in Church or State which did not originate from herself. In short, she affected to consider the initiation of a Bill affecting religion by the Commons, was an infringement of her ecclesiastical supremacy!

The reasons against delay which the Archbishop and Bishops pressed on the Queen's attention deserve special notice. They say:-“First, the matter itself tendeth to the glory of God, the advancement of true religion, and the salvation of Christian souls, and therefore ought principally, chiefly, and before all other things to be sought.

“Secondly, in the book which is now desired to be confirmed are contained the principal Articles of Christian religion most agreeable to God's Word, publicly, since the beginning of your Majesty's reign, professed, and by your Highness' authority set forth and maintained.

“Thirdly, divers and sundry errors, and namely, such as have been in the realm wickedly and obstinately by the adversaries of the Gospel defended, are by the same Articles condemned.

“Fourthly, the approbation of these Articles by your Majesty shall be a very good mean to establish and confirm all your Majesty's subjects in one consent and unity of true doctrine, to the great quiet and safety of your Majesty and this free realm; whereas now, for want of plain certainty of Articles

of doctrine by law to be declared, great distraction and dissension of minds is at this present among your subjects."-Parker Correspondence, Parker Society, p. 293.

Notwithstanding this letter, the prayer of the Bishop appears not to have been granted until the year 1571. It is only one among many illustrations of the immense difficulties which the Elizabethan Reformers had to contend with, in consequence of the arbitrary and self-willed character of their Sovereign. I venture the opinion that few English Monarchs have been so much over-praised and misunderstood as Elizabeth. I suspect the English Reformation would have been a far more perfect and complete work if the Queen had allowed the Reformers to do all that they wanted to do.

3 If any reader supposes that there is anything peculiar or extravagant in the position I take up about the authority of the Articles, as compared to the Prayer-book, I ask him to remember that Lord Hatherley, in his judgment in the famous "Voysey" case, takes up precisely the same ground. These are his words, as reported in the Guardian: "We have not, in this our decision, referred to any of the formularies of the Church, other than the Articles of Religion. We have been mindful of the authorities which have held that pious expressions of devotion are not to be taken as binding declarations of doctrine."

In commenting on this judgment, the Solicitor's Journal, which certainly is not the organ of any theological party, uses the following remarkable language: "The Judicial Committee have adhered to the principles of previous decisions in their recent judgment. The Articles of Religion, and these alone, are to be considered as the code of doctrine of the Church of England.

Chapter 3

Able to Save

ABLE TO SAVE. by John Charles Ryle D.D.

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"He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." - Hebrews 7:25.

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READER,

There is one subject in religion, about which you can never know too much. That subject is Jesus Christ the Lord. This is the mighty subject which the text that heads this page unfolds,-Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ's intercession.

I have heard of a book entitled "The Story without an End." I know no story deserving that title so well as the everlasting Gospel: this is indeed and in truth the story without an end. There is an infinite "fulness" in Christ; there are in Him "unsearchable riches;" there is in Him a "love which passeth knowledge;" He is an "unspeakable gift." (Colossians 1:19; Ephesians 3:8; Ephesians 3:19; 2 Corinthians 9:15) There is no end to all the riches that are treasured up in Him,-in His person, in His work, in His offices, in His words, in His deeds, in His life, in His death, in His resurrec-tion. I take but one branch of the great subject this day. I am going to speak to you about the intercession and priestly office of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God the holy Ghost bless the consideration of this subject! May He, without whom minis-ters preach and write in vain, apply the subject with power to your soul! If His blessing goes with this tract, good will be done. If His blessing goes not with it, the words that I write will fall to the ground.

There are three points which I purpose to consider, in opening the text which heads this tract.

I-You have here a description of all true Christians: they are a people who come to God by Christ.

II.-You have the work that Jesus Christ is ever carrying on on behalf of true Christians: He ever lives to make intercession for them.

III.-You have the comfortable conclusion built by St. Paul upon Christ's work of intercession. He says: "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

I.-You have, first, a description of all true Christians. It is most simple, most beautiful, and most true. Great is the contrast between the description given by the Holy Ghost of a Christian and the description which is given by man. With man it is often enough to say that such a one "is a Churchman," or that such a one "belongs to this body of Christians or to that." It is not so when the Holy Ghost draws the picture. The Holy Ghost describes a Christian as a man "who comes unto God by Christ."

True Christians come unto God. They are not as many, who turn their backs upon Him; who "go into a far country," like the prodigal son; "who go out," like Cain, "from the presence of the Lord"; who are "alienated, strangers and enemies in their mind by wicked works." (Colossians 1:21) They are reconciled to God and friends of God. They are not as many, who dislike everything that belongs to God,-His Word, His day, His ordinances, His people, His house. They love all that belongs to their Master. The very footprints of His steps are dear unto them. His name is as ointment poured forth.-They are not as many, who are content with coming to church, or with coming to chapel, or with coming to the Lord's Table. They go further than that. They "come unto God," and in communion with God they live.

But, more than this, true Christians come unto God in a certain peculiar way. They come unto God by Christ; pleading no other plea, mentioning no other name, trusting in no other righteousness, resting on no other foundation than this,-that Jesus hath lived, Jesus hath died, Jesus hath risen again for their souls.

"I the chief of sinners am,

But Jesus died for me."

This is the way by which the true Christian draws near to God.

Reader, the way of which I have been speaking is an old way. It is well nigh 6,000 years old. All that have ever been saved have drawn near to God by this way. From Abel, the first saint that entered Paradise, down to the last infant that died this morning, they have all come to God only by Jesus Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Christ." (John 14:6)

It is a good way. It is easy for the worldly-wise to sneer at and ridicule it. But all the wit and wisdom of man has never devised a way more perfect, more com-plete, and that will bear more thoroughly all fair and reasonable investigation. It has been to the Jew a stumbling-block; it has been to the Greek foolishness. But all who have known their hearts, and understood what God demands, have found the way made by Jesus Christ a good way, and a way that stands the fullest ex-amination that can be made as to its wisdom. Therein they find justice and mercy met together, righteousness and peace kissing one another; God a holy God, yet loving, kind, and merciful; man knowing himself a poor, weak sinner, yet draw-ing near to God with boldness, having access with confidence, looking up into His face without fear, seeing Him in Christ his Father and his Friend.

Not least, it is a tried way. Thousands and tens of thousands have walked in it, and not one of all that number has ever missed heaven. Apostles, prophets, patri-archs, martyrs, early fathers, reformers, puritans, men of God in every age, and of every people and tongue: holy men of our own day,-men like Simeon, Bicker-steth, Havelock,-have all walked in this way. They have had their battles to fight, and their enemies to contend with; they have had to carry the cross; they have found lions in their path; they have had to walk through the valley of the shadow of death; they have had to contend with Apollyon. They have had to cross at last the cold dark river; but they have walked safely through to the other side, and entered with joy into the celestial city. And now they are waiting for you and me to walk in their steps, to follow them, and to share in their glory.

Reader, this is the way I want you to walk in. I want you to come unto God by Jesus Christ. Let there be no mistake as to the object which true ministers of the Gospel have in view. We are not

set apart merely to perform a certain round of ordinances; to read prayers, to Christen those that are Christened, to bury those that are buried, to marry those that are ruined. We are set apart for the grand pur-pose of proclaiming the one true living way, and inviting you to walk in it. We ought to labour day and night, until we can persuade you, by God's blessing, to walk in that way,-the tried way, the good way, the old way,-and to know the peace which passeth all under standing, which in that way alone is to be found.

II. I pass on now to the second point which I purpose to consider. The text which heads this tract speaks of the work which the Lord Jesus Christ is ever do-ing on behalf of true Christians. I ask your special attention to this point. It is one of deep importance to our peace, and to the establishment of our souls in the Christian faith.

There is one great work which the Lord Jesus Christ has done and finished completely. That work is the work of atonement, sacrifice, and substitution. It is the work which He did when He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God. He saw us ruined by the fall, a world of poor, lost, ship-wrecked sinners. He saw and He pitied us; and in compliance with the everlast-ing counsels of the Eternal Trinity, He came down to the world, to suffer in our stead, and to save us. He did not sit in heaven pitying us from a distance: He did not stand upon the shore and see the wreck, and behold poor drowning sinners struggling in vain to get to shore. He plunged into the waters Himself: He came off to the wreck and took part with us in our weakness and infirmity becoming a man to save our souls. As man, He bore our sins and carried our transgressions; as man, He endured all that men can endure, and went through everything in man's experience, sin only excepted; as man He lived; as man He went to the cross; as man He died. As man He shed His blood, in order that He might save us, poor shipwrecked sinners, and establish a communication between earth and heaven! As man He became a curse for us, in order that He might bridge the gulf, and make a way by which you and I might draw near to God with boldness, and have access to God without fear. In all this work of Christ, remember, there was infi-nite merit, because He who did it was not only man, but God. Let that never be forgotten. He who wrought out our redemption was perfect man; but He never ceased for a moment to be perfect God.

But there is another great work which the Lord Jesus Christ is yet doing. That work is the work of intercession.-The first work He did once for all: nothing can be added to it; nothing can be taken away from it. It was a finished, perfect work, when Christ offered up the sacrifice upon the cross: no other sacrifice need be offered beside the sacrifice once made by the Lamb of God, when He had His own blood at Calvary. But the second work He is ever carrying on at the right hand of God, where He makes intercession for His people.-The first work He did on earth when He died upon the cross: the second work He carries on in heaven, at the right hand of God the Father.-The first work He did for all man-kind, and offer all benefit of it to all the world: the second work He carries on and accomplishes solely and entirely on behalf of His own elect, His people, His ser-vants, and His children.

Reader, how does our Lord Jesus Christ carry on this work? How shall we comprehend and grasp what is the meaning of Christ's intercession? We must not pry rashly into things unseen. We must not "rush in where angels fear to tread." Yet some idea we can obtain of the nature of that continual intercession which Christ ever lives to make on behalf of His believing people.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is doing for His people the work which the Jewish high-priest of old did on behalf of the Israelites. He is acting as the manager, the rep-resentative, the mediator in all things between His people and God.-He is ever presenting on their bed of His own perfect sacrifice, and His all sufficient merit, before God the Father.-He is ever obtaining daily supplies of fresh mercy and of fresh grace for His poor, weak servants, who need daily mercy for daily sins, and daily grace for daily necessities.-He ever prays for them. As He prayed for Simon Peter upon earth, so I believe He prays for His people now.-He presents their names before God the Father. He carries their names upon His heart, the place of love; and upon His shoulder, the place of power,-as the high-priest car-ried the names of all the tribes of Israel, from the least to the greatest, when he wore his robes of office. He presents their prayers before God. They go up before God the Father mingled with Christ's all-prevailing intercession, and so are so acceptable in God's sight. He lives, in one word, to be the friend, the advocate, the priest, the all-prevailing agent, of all who are His members here upon earth. As their elder brother He acts for them; and all that their souls require He, in the court of heaven, is ever carrying on.

Does any reader of this tract need a friend? In such a world as this, how many hearts there are which ought to respond to that appeal! How many there are who feel "I stand alone." How many have found one idol broken after another, one staff failing after another, one fountain dried after another, as they have travelled through the wilderness of this world. If there is one who wants a friend, let that one behold at the right hand of God an unfailing friend, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let that one repose his aching head and weary heart upon the bosom of that unfailing friend, Jesus Christ the Lord. There is one living at God's right hand of matchless tenderness. There is one who never dies. There is one who never fails, never dis-appoints, never forsakes, never changes His mind, never breaks off friendship. That One, the Lord Jesus, I commend to all who need a friend. No one in a world like this, a fallen world, a world which we find more and more barren, it may be, every year we live,-no one ever need be friendless while the Lord Jesus Christ lives to intercede at the right hand of God.

Does any reader of this tract need a priest? There can be no true religion with-out a priest, and no saving Christianity without a confessional. But who is the true priest? Where is the true confessional? There is only one true priest,-and that is Christ Jesus the Lord. There is only one real confessional,-and that is the throne of grace where the Lord Jesus waits to receive those who come to Him to unburden their hearts in His presence. We can find no better priest than Christ. We need no other priest. Why need we turn to any priest upon earth, while Jesus is sealed, anointed, appointed, ordained, and commissioned by God the Father, and has an ear ever ready to hear, and a heart ever ready to feel for the poor sinful sons of men? The priesthood is His lawful prerogative. He has deputed that office to none. Woe be to anyone upon earth who dares to rob Christ of His prerogative! Woe be to the man who takes upon himself the office which Christ holds in His own hands, and has never transferred to any one born of Adam, upon the face of the globe!

Reader, I charge you solemnly, never to lose sight of this mighty truth of the Gospel,-the intercession and priestly office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I believe that a firm grasp of this truth is one great safeguard against the errors of the Church of Rome. I believe that losing sight of this great truth is one principal reason why so many have fallen away from the faith in some quarters, have forsaken the creed of their Protestant forefathers, and have gone back to the darkness of Rome. Once firmly established upon this holy truth,-that we have a Priest, an altar,

and a Confessor; that we have a unfailing, never-dying, ever-living intercession, who has deputed His office to none,-and we shall see that we need turn aside nowhere else. We need not hew for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water, when we have in the Lord Jesus Christ a fountain of living water, ever flowing and free to all. We need not seek any human priest upon earth, when we have a Divine Priest living for us in heaven.

Reader, beware of regarding the Lord Jesus Christ only as one that is dead. Here, I believe, many greatly err. They think much of His death, and it is right that they should do so. But we ought not to stop short there. We ought to re-member that He not only died and went to the grave, but that He rose again, and ascended up on high, leading captivity captive. We ought to remember that He is now sitting on the right hand of God, to do a work as real, as true, as important to our souls, as the work which He did when He shed His blood. Christ lives, and is not dead. He lives as truly as any one of ourselves. Christ sees us, hears us, knows us, and is acting as a Priest in heaven on behalf of His believing people. The thought of His life ought to have as great and important a place in our souls as the thought of His death upon the cross.

III. I will now speak, in the third place, of the comfortable conclusions that the Apostle builds upon the everlasting intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. We need much comfort and consolation in a world like this. It is no easy matter for a man to carry the cross and reach heaven. There are many enemies to be encoun-tered and overcome. We have often to stand alone. We have at the best times few with us and many against us. We need cordials and strong consolation to sustain and cheer us, and to preserve us from fainting on the way as we travel from Egypt into Canaan. The Apostle appears deeply conscious of all this in the words he uses. He says, "He is able to save to the uttermost,"-to save perfectly, to save completely, to save technically,-"all that come unto God by Him, be-cause He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Reader, I might say much on the glorious expression

which is before you. But I forbear. I will only point out a few of the thoughts which ought to arise in our minds when we hear of Christ's ability to save to the uttermost. I have not space to dwell on them at length. I rather throw them out as suggestions to supply matter for private meditation.

1. Think, for one thing, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwith-standing the old sins of any believer. Those old sins shall never rise again, not stand up to condemn the child of God. For what says the Scripture: "Christ has not entered into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself; to appear in the presence of God for us." (Hebrews 9:24) Christ, to use a legal phrase, is ever making an appearance in the court of heaven on behalf of them that believe in Him. There is not a year, nor a month, nor a day, nor an hour, nor a minute, but there is One living in the presence of God, to make an appearance there on behalf of all the saints. Christ is ever appearing before God the Father on behalf of the men and women that believe in Him. His blood and His sacrifice are ever in God's sight. His work, His death, His intercession are always sounding in God the Father's ears.

I remember reading a story in ancient history which may help to illustrate the truth on which I am now dwelling. It is the story of one who was put upon trial for a capital charge, at Athens, shortly after the great battle of Marathon. In that famous battle the Athenians had preserved, by their valour, liberty for their little state, against the mighty hosts of the Persians; and among those who

had distin-guished themselves greatly, the brother of the prisoner was one; and had been sorely wounded in the fight. The man was put upon his trial. The evidence against him was strong and unanswerable; there seemed no chance of the prisoner escaping condemnation. Suddenly there came forward one who asked to be heard on his behalf. And who was this? It was his own brother. When he was asked what evidence he had to give, or what reason he had to show why the prisoner at the bar ought not to be found guilty, he simply lifted up his mutilated arms-nothing but stumps-the hands completely cut off; the wounded stumps alone remaining. He was recognised as a man who, at the battle of Marathon, had done prodigies of valour, and in the service of the State had lost his hands. By those wounds he had helped to win the victory which was then ringing in Athenian ears. Those wounds were the only evidence he brought forward. Those wounds were the only plea he advanced why his brother ought to be set free, and sentence ought not to be passed upon him. And the story states that for the sake of those wounds-for the sake of all his brother had suffered, the prisoner was acquitted. The case was dismissed at once, and the prisoner obtained his liberty. Reader, in like manner the wounds of the Lord Jesus Christ are ever before God the Father. The nail-prints in His hands and feet-the marks of the spear in His side-the thorn marks upon His forehead-the marks of all that he suffered as a lamb slain, are ever before God the Father in heaven. While Christ is in heaven, the believer's sins will never rise in judgment against him. Think not with fear upon those old sins of yours, my believing brother or sister. Christ lives, and those old sins will not condemn you. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

2. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the present weakness of His believing people. How great that weakness is, time would fail me to show. There are many of God's children who know their hearts' bitterness, who bewail with strong crying and tears their shortcomings, their un-profitableness, and the scanty fruit they bring forth. But oh, my beloved reader, take comfort in the words of St. John: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,- "ever present with the Father,"- "Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 2:1) Those weaknesses may well humble thee. Those infirmities may well make thee walk softly before thy God. But while the Lord Jesus Christ lives, those infirmities need not make thee en-tirely despair. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

3. Think again, that Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstand-ing all the trials that believers have to go through. Hear what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy: "I suffer: nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have com-mitted unto Him against that day." (2 Timothy 1:12) So long as Jesus Christ lives, the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ may be assured that no affliction shall be allowed to break off the union between him and his risen Head. He may suffer greatly and be sorely tried. But while Christ lives he shall never be forsaken. Nei-ther poverty, nor sickness, nor bereavements, nor separations, shall ever separate Jesus and His believing people. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

4. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the persecutions that believers have to go through. See what is said of St. Paul, when he met with much opposition at Corinth. We are told that the Lord stood by him in the night, and said, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have

much people in this city." (Acts 18:10) Remember what He said to St. Paul at a former time, when He met him on the way to Damascus: "Saul, Saul, why persecute thou Me?" (Acts 9:4) Every injury done to the believer is an injury done to the living Head in heaven. And every persecution showered down upon the head of the poor child of God here is known, felt, and, I may add with all reverence, resented, by our Great Elder Brother, who is ever living to make intercession for us. Christ lives, and therefore believers, though persecuted, shall not be destroyed. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Romans 8:37) We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

5. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the temptations of the devil. Remember that famous passage in the Gospel of St. Luke, where our Lord, speaking to St. Peter, says, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." (Luke 22:32) Prayer like that is still carried on. Those words were spoken as an emblem of what the Lord is ever doing on behalf of His believing people. Satan, the prince of this world, is ever going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But Christ lives; and, blessed be God, while Christ lives Satan shall not be able to overcome the soul that believes on Him. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

6. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding the sting of death, and all that death brings with it. When David remembered that, he said, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4) You and I may die, but Christ still lives. The hour may come when friends can do us no more good, when faithful servants can no longer minister to our wants, when all that love, and kindness, and affliction can do to alleviate pain and make the last journey pleasant, can no longer render any service to us. But then the thought that Christ lives-Christ interceding, Christ caring for us, Christ at the right hand of God for us,-ought to cheer us. The sting of death will be taken away from the man that leans upon a dying and also a living Saviour. Christ never dies. Through faith in that living Saviour we shall have a complete victory. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

7. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding the terrors of the judgment day. Mark how St. Paul rests upon that in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans,-in that wonderful conclusion to that wonderful chapter,-a chapter unrivalled in the Word of God for privilege, beginning with "no condemnation," and concluding with "no separation!" Observe how he dwells upon Christ's intercession in connection with the judgment of the last day. After saying, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth," he goes on: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." The thought of Christ's intercession, no less than His dying and rising again, was one ground of the Apostle Paul's confidence in looking for-ward to the great day. His strong consolation was the recollection of a living Christ. That consolation is for us as well as for St. Paul. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

8. Think, lastly, and above all, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost throughout all eternity. "I am He," He says, "that liveth, and was dead; and, be-hold, I am alive for evermore." (Revelation

1:18) The root of the believer never dies, and the branches, therefore, shall never die. Christ being "raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him." (Romans 6:9) He lives, that all who trust in Him may receive honour and glory to all eternity; and be-cause He lives, His believing people shall never die. "Because I live," to use His own words, "ye shall live also." (John 14:19) We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

Reader, would you know the security for the perseverance of God's own peo-ple? Would you know why it is that Christ's sheep shall never perish, and none shall ever pluck them out of His hand? It is a miraculous thing. When you look at the believer's heart, listen to the believer's prayers, mark the believer's confes-sions,-when you see how a just man may fall, sometimes seven times,-when you see, with all this, the believer's perseverance, it is a marvel indeed. To carry a candle upon a stormy night, when winds and gusty blasts are blowing from every quarter,-to carry it still burning, steadily burning, along the street,-this is a wonderful achievement. To go over a stormy sea in a little boat,-to mount bil-low after billow, and not see the waves breaking over the boat, and overturning it,-this is well-nigh a miracle. To see a little child tottering along the crowded street, a child some three or four years old -to see it tottering on and making its way in safety, from one end of a long street to the other,-this is a mighty marvel. But, after all, what is this, but the life, and history, and experience of every true Christian? Though he falls, he rises again; though he is cast down, he is not de-stroyed. He goes on from one position to another, like the moon upon a stormy night, plunging from one cloud into another, yet by- and-by shining out again and walking in brightness. What is the secret of it all? It is the continual intercession of a mighty Friend at the right hand of God: a Friend that never slumbers and never sleeps: a Friend who cares for the believer morning, noon, and night. The intercession of Christ is the secret of the perseverance of the Christian.

Reader, you would do well to study the words of the Apostle in the 5th chapter of Romans: "Much more then," he says, "being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Mark the connection: "Being already justified by His death, we shall be saved,"-and saved by what? "By his life:" by His ever living to make intercession for us. Wise and beautiful is the comparison made by that mas-ter of allegory, John Bunyan, in the "Pilgrim's Progress." He tells us how Chris-tian was taken into the Interpreter's house, and how the Interpreter showed him many things wonderful and instructive. In one place he took him into a room where there was a fire burning, and showed him one ever pouring water upon that fire, and yet the water did not quench the fire. However much water he poured on, still the fire went on burning steadily. Then said the Interpreter, "Knowest thou what this means?" When Christian did not know, he took him behind the fire, and showed him one pouring on oil out of a vessel. This oil fed the fire, and made it burn more fiercely, notwithstanding all the water that was poured upon it. Then the Interpreter told him that this was a picture of Jesus Christ's intercession. That fire was the fire of grace in the believer's heart. He that poured on the water was the enemy of souls, the devil. But He that poured on the oil, standing behind the fire, was the Lord Jesus Christ, who by continual intercession and the supply of His Spirit, secretly and unseen by man, kept alive His own work in the be-liever's heart, and did not allow Satan and all his agents to get a victory over Him.

Would you know the secret of the believer's boldness in prayer? It is a marvel how a man that feels his sins so deeply as the believer does, can speak with the confidence the believer frequently does. How one that acknowledges he is wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked, ruined, undone; who often does what he ought not to do, and leaves undone what he ought to do, and finds no health in him; how such a one as this can go before God with confidence, pour out his heart before Him freely, ask from Him what he requires day after day and not feel afraid,-this is wonderful indeed. What is the secret of it? It is the intercession of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whereby the true Christian knows his prayers are made acceptable, and received in the court of heaven. What is the believer's prayer in itself? A poor, weak thing, unfit to rise above the ground. I know noth-ing it is more like than a banknote without the signature in the corner. What is the value of that banknote without the signature? Nothing at all. Once get a few words, a very few letters, traced in ink upon the corner of that banknote, and that which was a piece of waste paper a few moments before becomes worth, it maybe, many hundred pounds, through the signature being attached to it. So it is with the intercession of Christ. He signs, endorses, and presents the believer's petitions, and through His all-prevailing intercession they are heard on high, and bring down blessings upon the Christian soul.

Would you know the secret of daily comfort in all the toil, and business, and distractions we have to go through? We all know that they who have to do work in any secular calling, find the work oftentimes a sore burden to their souls. Of-tentimes in the morning they feel, "How can I get through this day without a de-filed conscience, without being sorely troubled and tempted to forget my God?" How shall a man get through the day with comfort, fill his office in the world, do his duty in the position to which God has called him? Let him lay hold upon the intercession of Jesus Christ. Let him grasp the great thought, that Christ not merely died for him, but rose again, and still lives for him.

There is a story recorded of one who lived 200 hundred years ago; a man well known in his day and generation-a man who left behind a character as pure and unsullied as anyone who fell in the unhappy Commonwealth wars: I allude to the great Lord Falkland. It is recorded of Lord Falkland during the Commonwealth wars, when he was often engaged in duties from morning to night time that a common prayer of his before leaving his tent was something of this kind,- "Lord, I am going this day to do the duty whereunto I am called. I may some-times forget Thee. I cannot have my thoughts at all times as fully fixed upon Thee as I wish. But, Lord, if I this day I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me." This is the thought that every believer should lay hold upon who has much to do in the business of this world. Rising from his bed in the morning, going from his room every morning, leaving his house every morning, let him bear in mind, "There is One living in heaven who intercedes for me, while I am following my lawful calling. Although I may be absorbed in business, and obliged to give up all the powers of my poor weak mind to it, still there lives One who never forgets me." He may say, as Lord Falkland said, "Lord, if I this day forget Thee, do not Thou forget me."

Last of all, would you know the secret of comfort in looking forward to that heaven whereunto every believer desires to go? I believe there are few children of God who do not sometimes feel anxious, troubled, and cast down, when they think quietly about the eternal habitation towards which they are travelling. The nature of it, the manner of it, the employments of it, their own apparent unfitness and uniqueness for it, will sometimes perplex their minds. These thoughts will

sometimes come across the believer's mind, especially in times of sickness, fill-ing him with heaviness, and making his heart sink. Now I know no remedy against these thoughts to be compared to the recollection of the continual inter-cession of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Christ is gone into heaven to be the forerunner of a people who are to follow after Him. He is gone to prepare a place for them, and the place whereto He goes is the place whereto His people are to go by and by. When they go there they will find all things made ready,-a place for every one, and a fitting and proper place too, through the intercession of their Lord and Saviour. There never will be a time when their company will not be liked in heaven There never will be a time when their old sins,-the sins of their youth and their backslidings, their wickedness before conversion, their profligacy, it may be, before the grace of God came into their hearts,-there never will be a day when all these sins shall come up against them, and make them feel abashed and ashamed in heaven. Christ will be in the midst. Christ will ever stand inter-ceding. Where Christ is, there His people will be. Where He lives, His perfect merit, His spotless righteousness, His

intercession, will make them perfect in the sight of God the Father. They will stand in heaven, seen in Christ, clothed in Christ, members of Christ, part of Christ; and so will possess a firm and solid and eternal title to the eternal joys which shall be hereafter.

I will now conclude this tract by a few words of application to all into whose hands it may fall. My hearts desire and prayer to God is that the words I have been writing may yet bear fruit in your soul. In order that they may do so, I offer a few words of faithful and affectionate counsel.

1. I would offer counsel, first, to all who are anxious and troubled respecting their soul's salvation, and yet know not what to do. Reader, if you are such a per-son, I charge you and entreat you, I beseech you and invite you, to come into the way of which I have been speaking in this tract. I beseech you to come to God by the old and tried way,-the way of faith in Jesus Christ. Draw near to God, pleading the name of Jesus. Begin this very day to cry mightily unto God, in the name of Jesus, on behalf of your soul. Say not you have anything to plead for yourself. You have nothing to plead. Your life, your thoughts, your ways, all alike condemn you. Say nothing about yourself but this,-that you are a sinner, a great sinner, a guilty sinner, a condemned sinner; but because you are a sinner, you turn to God. Come unto Him in the name of Jesus, saying, you have heard that through Jesus a sinner may come near Him. Tell Him that you are a sinner, a great sinner, and an unworthy one. But tell Him that you come in the faith of His promises, in the confidence of His own Bible invitation; and in the name of Jesus, and for the sake of Jesus, and on account of Jesus, you ask to be received, heard, pardoned, forgiven, and accepted. Tell Him that you wish to have your name-even that name of yours, connected hitherto with worldliness, thoughtlessness, carelessness, and sin added to the list of God's dear children.

Will you say that you are afraid to come to God? Your fear is needless. You shall not be cast out, if you will but come in the way of faith in Christ. Our God is not "austere man." Our Father in heaven is full of mercy, love, and grace. I yield to none in desire to exalt the love, mercy, and tenderness of God the Father. I will not concede, for one moment, that what is called an Evangelical ministry will not magnify the mercy, love, and compassion of God the Father as much as any ministry on earth. We know that God is holy. We know He is just. We be-lieve that He can be angry with them that go on still in sin. But we also believe that to those who draw near to Him in Christ Jesus, He is most merciful, most loving, and most tender, most compassionate. We tell you that the cross of

Jesus Christ was the result and consequence of that love. The cross was not the cause and reason of God's mercy, but the result and consequence of the everlasting love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, towards a poor, lost, and bankrupt world. Draw near in faith, dear reader, by that living way, Christ Jesus, to the Father. Think not for a moment-the unworthy thought shall never prove true-that so drawing near to God the Father by Christ, God the Father will not receive you. He will receive you gladly. As the father did to the prodigal son when he ran to meet him,-fell on his neck and kissed him,-so will God the Father do to that soul that draws near to Him in the name of Christ.

2. In the next place, I would cheer those readers who have walked in the way of God, and yet are afraid of falling. Why should you be afraid? What should make you fear? What should make you suppose that you shall ever be allowed to fall away, while Jesus Christ lives at the right hand of God to make intercession for you? All the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is pledged upon your behalf. He has undertaken to care for all the flock that God the Father has committed into His hand. He will care for it. He has cared for it. He went to the cross for it. He died for it. He is ever at the right hand of God, and has not ceased to care for it. Every member of that flock-the weakest, the feeblest member of that flock-is equally dear to the Lord and Saviour, and none shall pluck the least of Christ's sheep out of God's hand. Can you stop the tides of the sea, and make them not rise at your command? Can you make the waters stay when the tide begins to fall? Can you prevent the sun in heaven going down in the west, or prevent the same sun from rising tomorrow morning in the east? You cannot do it: the thing is impossible And all the power of devils, all the power of the world, and all the enemies of the Christian, shall not be able to pluck out of the hand of Jesus Christ one single soul who has been brought by the Spirit's teaching to true union with Christ, and for whom Jesus Christ intercedes. The days of Christ's weakness have passed away. He was "crucified through weakness," and was weak on our account when He went to the cross. The days of His weakness are over: the days of His power have begun. Pilate shall no more condemn Him: He shall come to condemn Pilate. All power is His in heaven and earth, and all that power is en-gaged on behalf of His believing people.

3. Finally, let me gladden all believers who read this tract, by reminding them that Christ is yet to come again. The Great High Priest is yet to come forth from the holy of holies, to bless all the people who have believed on Him. One part of His work He did when He died upon the cross; another part of His work He is still doing,-interceding for us at God's right hand. But the third part of the High Priest's office remains yet to be done. He has yet to come forth from the holy of holies, as the high priest did upon the day of atonement,- to come forth from within the veil to bless the people. That part of Christ's work is yet to come. He is now gone into Heaven itself,-He is within the holy of holies: He is gone be-hind the veil. But our Great High Priest-a greater one than Aaron's-shall yet come forth one day. He shall come in power and great glory. He shall come as He left the world, when He went up in the clouds of heaven. He shall come to gather from the north and from the south, from the east and from the west, all who have loved His name and confessed Him before men,-all who have heard His voice and followed Him. He shall gather them together into one happy com-pany. There shall be no more weakness, and no more sorrow,-no more parting, and no more separation,-no more sickness, and no more death,-no more dis-puting, and no more controversy,-no more fighting with the world, the flesh, and devil,-and, best of all, no more sin. That day shall be a happy day indeed, when the High Priest comes forth to do the third, last

part of His work-to bless His believing people.

"He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20) _____

Chapter 4

Against Ritualism

Church Association Tracts

No. IV. THE TEACHING OF THE RITUALISTS NOT THE

TEACHING OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

by

Rev. John Charles Ryle D.D. The Ritualists have two devices which it is well to notice.

First, they represent themselves as Catholics, and say they are eager to revive the traditions and worship of the Primitive Church. This representation is contrary to the fact. The Church of England took that course at her Reformation; all that was pure, primitive, and Catholic, both in worship, faith, and order, she retained. She cast off only the fictions, idolatry, and error by which Roman Priest-craft and Italian ambition had disfigured the Apostolic faith.

But the Reformation and the works of our Reformed Church is denounced by Ritualists as mutilated, Antichristian, and a pestilent heresy, while, in fact, the Ritualists are merely reintroducing the ceremonies and dogmas which our fathers cast off as idolatrous and superstitious. When therefore they call themselves Catholics, they mean Romanists.

Their second device, when they meet their countrymen, is to disguise and cloak their opinions.

They appeal to that just sentiment which prevails, the desire to reclaim and instruct the masses. They represent themselves as devoted to this duty. Whereas, when you watch their acts and visit their churches, you find them doing the work of Roman priests, endeavouring by appeals to remorse, by demands for confession, by offers of absolution, by sacrifices of masses, by urging of prayers to Saints and the Virgin, by appeals to the senses, music, incense, shows and dresses, to allure to Church the frivolous, careless, and dissipated. The result of this is, what it is in all European countries where Rome prevails, to bring power, repute, and gifts to the priest; to leave unchanged the vices and appetites of the people.

Ritualism then is in its faith and forms Romanism; and, in order not to misrepresent it, we shall take its own organs to describe its practices, and learn its words and ways from its tracts, magazines, catechisms, manuals of devotion, and the newspapers, which the Ritualists publish.

1. They declare that the doctrine of Rome and England is the same,1 they attend the Roman mass,2 and recommend others to do the same3 and they pray for union with the corrupt Church of Rome.4

1 “The breach between us and Rome is not so wide as is commonly thought.”—Dr. Pusey's Eirenicon, p. 207.

“What I have said to the Gallican [i.e. Romish] Bishops, and what they have clearly understood, is this, ‘that I believe the Council of Trent, whatever its look may be, and our Articles, whatever their look may be, each could be so explained as to be reconcilable one with the other.’” Speech by Dr. Pusey, at Annual Meeting of the English Church Union, 1866. See E. C. U. Circular, for July, 1866, p. 197.

“None but those who have reduced ignorance to a system, now deny that the differences between the authoritative documents of Rome and England are Infinitesimal—that the priesthood is the same, the Liturgy virtually the same, and the doctrine the same.”—Church Times, June 18, 1869.

2 “We have attended mass in a hundred great cities of the continent, and found out that there is not of necessity an idol in every foreign Church; but that it is very possible to worship with a Roman priest, and not only to receive no harm, but some good.”—Rev. W. J. E. Bennett’s Essay on “Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833,” in the Church and the World, p. 19. 1867.

3 “If the traveller should assist at Protestant worship, he is aiding and abetting that the doctrine, heresy, and schism from which he prays in the Litany to be delivered. If he does go to the Anglican chapel, he is nevertheless bound to be present at an early Mass in the Roman parish church.”—Church News, July 7, 1889

4 “It is the distinct duty of all who pray for the peace of Jerusalem to repudiate foreign Lutheranism, Calvinism, &c., and to do their utmost to show that the English Church of which they are members, is really one with the Church of Rome in faith, orders, and sacraments; whilst the Protestant bodies are branches cut off from the True Vine of which the Roman and Anglican and Eastern Communions are living boughs.”—Church News, July 7, 1869.

“We had been chosen by God to be the colonists of all newly discovered lands, and we stood, like Aaron, between the living and the dead—between the living Church and the dead and decaying forms of a corrupt Protestantism. We were bound to come forward with our message to both—to the living, that they be not high-minded, but fear; to the dead, that they arise and return to the pure bosom of their mother the Catholic Church.”—From Notice of Sermon by Rev. Dr. Littledale on the Anniversary of the A. P. U. C. in the Church Times, Sept. 10, 1869.

2. They revile Protestantism. They call it heresy,5 a pest,6 a cancer,7 a monstrous figment,8 and they vilify the Reformation and the Reformers9 in terms equally coarse;10 and yet they quietly remit in incumbencies and curacies within the Church of the Reformation.

5 A writer in The Church and the World (Ed. 1866, p. 237) says, “Our place is appointed among us Protestants, and in a communion deeply tainted in its practical system by Protestant heresy, but our duty is the expulsion of the evil, and not flight from it.”

“They (the ministers) carry on a school, and are indefatigable in visiting the poor, and in infusing into the veins of an ignorant and unsuspicious populace the poison of Protestant heresy.”

6 “Pest of Protestantism.”—Church News, May 5th, 1869.

7 But we should much prefer seeing attention centred on theological matters and questions of discipline, and extirpating that ulcerous cancer of Protestantism, which must be fatal, sooner or later, to any Church that does not use moral steel and fire upon it.”—Church Times, Sept. 3, 1869.

8 “By way of protest against the monstrous figment of Protestantism.”—Ibid.

“We are bound to correct one of the speakers [at the Islington Clerical Meeting] who remarked that the Tractarian School, whatever its good points may be, loses sight of the distinctive doctrines of the Reformation. We do not lose sight of them at all. We are busy in hunting them down, and have no intention of foregoing the chase till we have extirpated them. That is plain speaking enough, we trust.”—Church Times, Jan. 28th, 1870.

9 “Anathema to the Principle of Protestantism.”—Palmer’s Letter to Golightly.

10 Dr. Littledale, in his Lecture on Innovations, calls the Reformers a set of miscreants, all utterly unredeemed villains.

3. They propose to abandon, and labour for the abolition of, the xxxix Articles of Religion,11 which “contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God’s Word.”

11 “First of all come the xxxix Articles, those Protestant Articles, tacked on to Catholic Liturgy, those forty-stripes-save-one, as some have called them, laid on the back of the Anglican priesthood—How are they to be got over?”—Essay by Rev. L. Blenkinsopp on “Reunion of the Church,” in the Church and the World, 1866, p. 202.

See proposal of Dr. Pusey that the Universities should abandon subscription to the xxxix Articles as the practical qualification for orthodox Church of England Protestant teaching, in Letter to the President of the Wesleyan conference, 1868.

“It will soon become the duty of Churchmen to labour actively for the abolition of the Articles, which have long ago done their work and are really of extremely little use now, discrediting us (as they do) in the eyes of foreign Catholics.”—Church News, July 29, 1868.

“We have never seen the use of retaining the Thirty-nine Articles at all.”—Church Times, March 12th, 1869.

“The abolition of the Thirty-nine Articles, the adoption of Edward VI. First Communion Office…would win for the Disestablished Church the respect of Christendom.”—Church Times, Sep. 3rd. 1869.

4, They hold with the Church of Rome that there are seven Sacraments,12 whereas our xxvth Article declares that there are two Sacraments ordained of Christ in the Gospel—Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

12 See Article on “The Seven Sacraments,” in Tracts for the Day, edited by Rev. O. Shipley.

In the Prayer Book for the Young, or complete Guide to Public and Private Devotion for youthful members of the English Church, “Confirmation,” “Confession,” “Visitation of the Sick,” “Holy Orders” and “Matrimony” are enumerated among the Sacraments, p. 10.

Rev. Orby Shipley states in his “Sermons on Sin,” that “there are seven Sacraments and personal extensions of the incarnation of God”—“Baptism,” “Confirmation,” “Eucharist,” “Marriage,” “Orders,” “Extreme Unction,” “Penance.” And he adds, “The seventh and last sacramental extension of the Incarnation of our God, I need not tell you, my brethren, in theological language,

is termed the “Sacrament of Penance.”—pp. 43 to 50.

5. They pray to the Virgin Mary and elevate her to a throne in heaven;13 and our Church declares such adoration to be superstitious and idolatrous.

13 “Blessed Mary, Mother of God, ever Virgin, pray for us.”—Litany of the Blessed Virgin, in Invocation of Saints and Angels, by Rev. O. Shipley p. 66.

“Hail Queen of heaven; hail Mistress of the Angels, hail root, hail gate, wherefrom the light of the world is sprung! Rejoice, O Glorious Virgin, pre-eminently fair, and very lovely, hail! Mayst thou pray Christ for us.”—Monastic Breviary, used at Rev. J. L. Lyne’s Monastery at Laleham Covent at London, &c. p. 80.

See The Female Glory, edited by Rev. Orby Shipley, M.A.., 1869.

6. They pray to saints and invoke their intercession.14 Our Church terms such prayers “repugnant to the Word of God.” (Art. xxii.) St. Paul says there is “one Mediator between God and man.”—1 Tim. ii. 5.

14 “O holy Michael, Prince of the Heavenly Host pray for us.” “O Raphael, pray for us”—Invocation of Saints and Angels edited by Rev. O. Shipley pp. 45, 46.

“Of our patron saint. Most Holy Confessor of the Lord ( ) mayst thou intercede to Christ for us.”—Little Office book. p. 17.

“I pray that Blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, our Blessed Father Benedict, all the Saints (and you, my brothers) may pray for me to the Lord our God.—Monastic Breviary, used at Rev. J. L. Lyne’s Monastery at Laleham, &c., p. 7

7. They set up images of the Virgin and of the saints; and introduce into their churches the Romish pictures of ‘the Twelve Stations of the Cross’ and publish forms of prayer to be said at each Station,15 as in the Roman Catholic Church; whereas our Church warns us that images “if they be publicly suffered in churches will lead to idolatry.” (Art. xxxv, and Homily against Peril of Idolatry)

15 See Decorations in Ritualistic Churches—St. Michael’s and All Angels, Shoreditch, and others.

See the ‘Way of the Cross’ in the Treasury of Devotion, pp. 191 to 200.

8. They pervert the Communion Table into an Altar, the Communion into a Mass, and the Clergyman into a sacrificing Priest, who elevates material elements incorporating the Deity, and direct these to be adored by the worshipper with genuflection and prostration;16 whereas our Church declares that the Mass “overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament” (Art. xxviii), and that such worship is “idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians.” (Communion Service.)

16 “This prayer we say (to use the word common to us all) in the Mass which we now offer in many places daily on our altars.”—Rev. W. J. E. Bennett’s Essay. “Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833” in the Church and the World. p. 19. 1867.

“Grant that the Sacrifice, which I a miserable sinner have offered before Thy Divine Majesty may be acceptable unto Thee, and through thy mercy maybe a propitiation for me, and all for whom I

have offered It."—Priest's Prayer Book, p. 13.

Evidence before the Royal Ritual Commission. Question 2608.—Do you consider yourself a Sacrificing Priest? Answer by Rev. W. J. E. Bennett.—"Yes."

"THE PRIEST AT THE ALTAR IS VIRTUALLY CHRIST HIMSELF."—Catechism of Theology, p. 58

"Q.—Is not the Holy Eucharist also a Sacrifice?—A.—Yes"—Catechism, p. 35. Oxford. 1863.

"May the Lord receive this Sacrifice, etc."—Little Prayer Book, p. 18.

"Now kneel upright, your hands clasped upon your breast; follow the Priest in silent awe, for Jesus thy God is very nigh thee, he is about to descend upon the altar, surrounded by the Fire of the Holy Ghost, and attended by the angels. At the Consecration and Elevation prostrate yourself to the dust and say, 'Hail Body of my God hail Body of my Redeemer—I adore—I adore—I adore thee."— Manual of Devotions and Directions Members of the Church of England, intended especially the Young.

9. They enjoin the reservation of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, whereas our xxxviiith Article says:—"The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

"Celebration in private rooms should be avoided as much as possible. For this purpose it is well to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the church (where this may be done), but especially in collegiate and monastic chapels, where it should always be reserved. The priest should, on due notice being given, carry it from thence in the pyx (in both kinds of course), to the sick man's house..... The priest carries the blessed Sacrament in a monstrance (as described in appendix for reservation in both kinds), or he will convey it in the chalice, the Holy Body being placed previously therein by him, soaked in a few drops of the precious Blood, the chalice being covered with a white veil, and burse, with a corporal folded inside."—The Ritual of the Anglican Clergy, p. 23.

10. They pray for the souls of the Dead, and they declare their belief in Purgatory, and in the power of the priest to relieve from its penalties;17 whereas our Church declares purgatory to be "a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded on no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God." (Art. xxii.)

17 "What seems to be agreed upon is:—That, meantime, the souls of those persons are benefited by the prayers and Offerings of the Church, and by Alms given in their behalf; that those who have not died beyond the pale of salvation receive mitigation of their sufferings and ultimate release; and that, possibly, those who are lost also gain a mitigation of their sufferings, which mitigation may last through Eternity." —Article on Purgatory in Tracts for the Day edited by Rev. O. Shipley, p. 29.

"We beseech thee, O Lord God Almighty, for the souls of the faithful departed"—Altar Manual, edited by a Committee of Clergy, p 34.

The souls of the departed thus abiding in their place of rest may be the subjects of prayer to those who are still alive upon the earth," because "the souls that are departed are not in their

perfection.'—Church's Broken Unity, by Rev. W. J. E. Bennett, p. 122.

"Accept this Sacrifice, which, to the honour of thy Name, we have offered for the faithful, both living and departed, and for all is our sins and offences."—Altar Meal. p.36.

"The state of the departed souls, whether in pain or pleasure, is not yet final. The truth is that they are in custody, easy or harsh, awaiting "Trial."

"The best and holiest men (and much more the average believers) leave this world bearing the stains of earthly sins and error, which must be cleansed somewhere before they can be fitted for heaven."—Prayer for the Dead, by Rev. Dr. Littledale, p. 2.

See Dr. Pusey's Address, headed, "The prayers for departed Companions of the Society of the Love of Jesus."—p. 127, 8.

Also notices at the doors of Ritualistic Churches, "Of your Charity pray for—," and then follow the names of persons sick and dead.

11. They omit the Prayers for the Queen, the Royal Family and Parliament,18 and are agitating for a separation of Church and Sate.19

18 In Ritualistic Churches the State Prayers are generally omitted.

"There does not seem to be any great reason for retaining the prayer for the Queen, bearing in mind the very full and emphatic terms in which her Majesty is mentioned in the Canon. Most people, we suspect, would be exceedingly glad if this prayer, as well as the Comfortable Words and the Addresses were dropped."— Church Times, Jan. 20, 1866.

19 "I referred to an extreme faction in the Church of very modern date that does not conceal its ambition to destroy the connection between Church and State."—Letter from the late Premier to Rev. A. Baker, dated 9th April, 1863.

See Rev. W. J. E. Bennett's Sermon at Bristol, on May 2, 1869 advocating the separation of Church and State, and speaking of their connection as an adulterous love between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. —Ch. Times, May 7, 1869.

12. They also introduce the Romish practices of Extreme Unction,—Incensing persons and things,— Substituting wafers for bread at the Communion Service,'—Using Holy Water,—Consecrating and censing Palm branches on Palm Sunday, —Consecrating ashes, and rubbing them on persons' foreheads on Ash Wednesday,—Censing candles and sprinkling them with Holy Water on Candlemas day.

See Essay on " Unction of the Sick " in Tracts for the day edited by Rev. O. Shipley, where the writer speaks of "the Sacrament of Unction" p. 342, and adds (p. 359) "The principal effect then of Unction is the removal of the relics of Sin; its consequential effect, the remission of the guilt of any Sin it may find in the soul."

"The recognized consecration of chrism and holy oil for various rites cannot be much longer postponed. It will certainly come in somehow"—Dr. Littlerdale's Letter to the Archbishop on "Catholic Revision." p. 28.

Liturgy of Church of Sarum dedicated by permission to Bp. of Salisbury.

13. They advocate the Procession and Veneration of Relics.

See instructions for Procession and Veneration of Relics in Oratory Worship.

“It is well, when the relics are to be exposed, to erect a resting-place for them just within the chancel, or in some place calculated to facilitate the veneration of the faithful,” p. 32.

Then follow details of the service, and it concludes by saying, “After the Te Deum the officient and his ministers should proceed to the chancel gates, and there hold the inner relic-case to be kissed by the faithful, wiping the glass after each osculation with a piece of cotton wool”.—p. 34.

14. They encourage and enjoin habitual auricular confession to a priest, and seek to restore Judicial Absolution by a Priest, and the Romish Sacrament of Penance;20 whereas our Church says, “to maintain their auricular confession withal they greatly deceive themselves and do shamefully deceive others.” “It is most evident and plain that this auricular confession hath not the warrant of God's word.”—Second part of homily on Repentance.

20 Mr. Dodsworth, writing to Dr. Pusey, eighteen years ago, says :—” Both by precept and .example you have been amongst the most earnest to maintain Catholic principles. By your constant and common practice of administering the Sacrament of Penance; by encouraging ever-where, if not enjoining, auricular confession, and giving special priestly absolution, &c.

Mr. Maskell, addressing Dr. Pusey about the same time, wrote, “He (Mr. Dodsworth) knew that you have done more than encourage Confession in very many cases; that you have warned people of the danger of deferring it, have insisted on it as the only remedy, have pointed out the inevitable dangers of the neglect of it, and have promised the highest blessings in the observance, until you had brought penitents in fear and trembling upon their knees before you.”

Dr. Pusey, in a Letter to the Times Nov. 29th, 1866, says: “During the twenty-eight years in which I have received Confession, I never had once to refuse absolution.”

In the “Ordinance of Confession” the Rev. W. Gresley, MA., Prebendary of Lichfield, has given very minute directions both to penitent and confessor. He also says that the priest when he hears confessions, should wear his robes of office and then at p. 96 he speaks thus about absolution:—

“The giving Absolution is not a matter of course, but is dependent on the judgment of the priest. He has power to retain as well as remit sins—to give absolution or refuse it.” Awful thought!

“Listen carefully to all the Priest says to you, be sure to remember the penance he gives you, and receive the Absolution thankfully.”—Little Prayer Book, p. 83.

“The essential form of Absolution is not to be put forth after the manner of a prayer, but as by authority, being a judicial act.”—The Priest in Absolution, p. 50.

“Confession is one of the lesser Sacraments, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ by means of which those sins which we commit after Baptism are forgiven,” &c.— Prayer Book for the Young, p. 71.

15. They are restoring Monasteries and Convents. The Rev. J. T. Lyne (Father Ignatius) has established a Monastery at Laleham, a Convent of Sisters of St. Benedict in London; and there are convents of Benedictines in London, Newcastle, and Norwich, and a Priory of Benedictine nuns at Feltham.

“The Rev. R. M. Benson, MA., Incumbent of St. John the Evangelist, Oxford, and a prominent member of the High Church party (Ritualistic?) in that city, has been holding a ‘Retreat’ at his Monastery in Marston-street, Oxford, which has been attended by a large number of clergymen from all parts of the United Kingdom. During its corrtinuance the brethren, as they are called, give themselves up to fasting and prayer, maintaining the strictest silence and reserve. The Services in the chapel attached to the Monastery are incessant, the members of the Brotherhood appearing to spend the whole of their time between prayers in the chapel and meditations in their cells. The whole of the brethren are clothed in long black cassocks, confined at the waist by a cord, and wear large black felt hats.”— Morning Advertiser, Oct. 1869,

See account of service at what is called the Feltham Nunnery, quoted is the Guardian, September 9th, 1868 in which it is stated that—

“The Priest commenced with the Communion Service of the Church of England, the young lady who was to receive the veil was dressed as a bride. The novice’s habit, scapular, girdle, and sandals, wimple and cloak, were solemnly blessed, her long black hair was all cut off, her white dress changed for a Benedictine frock, the white veil solemnly blessed and incensed, and then placed over her head, and she took the three vows for one year. The nuns are entirely enclosed, never go out, only see visitors at a grating in the Convent parlour, and then their faces are covered, and they obey the strict Benedictine rule.”

In the same account it is stated that in a previous week a nun took the black veil in the house with ceremonies still more striking and solemn.

16. They recommend the celibacy of Priests.

“All Catholics who seriously desire the spiritual well-being of our Church ought earnestly to long to see some such discipline as that which prevails in the Holy Eastern Church established among ourselves—to have some stringent law or Canon enacted making the reception of at least Priest's Orders a bar to subsequent marriage on pain of perpetual irregularity.”—Church News Oct. 13th, 1869.

The Rev. W. Humphrey in an essay, “The Three Vows” in The Church and the World, enjoins the necessity of the three vows of Chastity, Obedience, and Poverty, and says, “Perpetual continence is requisite in order to the perfection of Religion.”—p. 517.

“We are perfectly convinced that until the celibate life for men, and especially for priests, is very widely recognized and practised among us, we shall be lacking in an important feature necessary to the perfection of a Christian Church.”—Church News, April 7th, 1869.

17. They deny the sole authority of God’s Word. For its supremacy, they substitute the traditions of the dark ages, introduced by an ambitious priesthood, to enrich and aggrandize their order.19 With a clear note, our Church rebukes those views, declaring that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation” (Art. vi.); and that “while each Church has the right and the power to

decree ceremonies”—(Art. xx.)—“it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God’s Word written;” and “whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as in article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” (Art. vi.)

19 “If all the Bibles in the world could be gathered together tomorrow into one place and cast into the sea, I see nothing to hinder the Christian mission spreading in the world, in the same way as it spread between tine years 33 and 80 A.D.. (or whatever date may be assigned for the completion of the New Testament Canon). Neither, to take a practical case, which involves no such extravagant hypothesis, do I think that a Christian Priest, sent to a heathen land to win converts to the Faith, has any need to take a Bible with him, or any call to use it with the heathen previous to their baptism, or in any sense to treat it as a necessary element in the work of conviction.”—Kiss of Peace. Sequel 59.

“In the sense in which it is commonly understood at this day, Scripture, it is plain, is not, on Anglical principles, the Rule of Faith.”—Tracts for the Times, No. 90, p. 11, republished with Preface by Dr. Pusey, 1865.

“I most firmly believe, O my God, whatever thy Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches.”—Little Prayer Book, pp. 13, 14.

“There are a great many persons who are under the impression that the Bible is intended to teach us our religion. Let me say most distinctly and definitely that this is a thorough mistake.”—An Open Bible. Lecture by Rev. J. E. Vaux, p. 18.

“If we would decide between conflicting opinions on fundamental doctrines, we must appeal to the Universal Church. Her voice will tell us ‘What is Truth.’”—Ib. p. 17.

The Church is not the Church of the Rome, but the Bible is the Book of the Church.”—Ibid. p. 15.

18. Even on the Primacy of the Pope, which by acts of Parliament and by the Order of our Reformed Church was rejected, these men are now approaching Popery with their entreaties. They set up Associations to promote reunion with Rome: they desecrate public worship by prayers for it; they hail the Papal Council; they declare the identity of our Articles with the Papal Creed; and the language, in which some of their leaders have lately expressed themselves, leaves no doubt as to their design. In St. Alban’s, Holborn, Dr. Littledale, accompanied by three other Priests, asked all present to pray.

“That Pentecostal fires might descend upon that great Council which was about to assemble under the chief Bishop of the Church, so that some of the scandals of the last 300 years might be removed.”

One of their organs expressed plainly the sentiments of the party: The cry of the earnest and devout in our Communion to the successor of St. Peter is ‘Come over and help us.’ Will he stop his ears and beat back the hands stretched towards him, or will he advance half way and fall on our neck and kiss us? We are quite content to allow that we have been, as a Church, separate, degraded by the State to keep swine, and famished on the husks it has cast to us, but we do not forget that we are sons.”—Church News, Sept. 15, 1869.

We cannot wonder that in a Roman Catholic newspaper, a letter from an Ecclesiastic of high position is given, which states:—

“It is notably impossible for the Holy Father and the Council to ignore the reunion with the Holy See expressed by so many pious Anglicans.” From information “received from Catholics in England, from Archbishop Manning downwards,”— “the present spirit of the more advanced Anglicans is all that could be desired.”— Weekly Register, Sept. 4.

Therefore, it is no exaggeration to describe the Ritualistic party as Romanists, who have reached already with bold advance the worst errors and idolatries of the Church of Rome.

The conspiracy now is organized, its practice open, its purpose avowed. To unprotenstantize our Church and to overthrow our reformed faith is their deliberate and unconcealed design. Nor is the evil or the danger small; in some cases the laity have been corrupted by their teaching and have imbibed Romish errors, but the great majority of our laity are shocked and startled to find such heresies suffered within our Church, and they ask, with wonder and impatience, why is nothing done? what are the heads of our Church doing?

One conclusion is, that the faithful members of our Protestant Church must look for a remedy under God, not to others but to themselves.

Union is as necessary as Action. If the faithful members of our Church are, through God's blessing, permitted to resist the two great dangers of Ritualistic and Romish superstition on the one hand, and Unbelief on the other, they must learn to think, to deliberate and act together, but above all to be earnest in prayer. This course was pursued by the members of the early Church; and ended by God’s blessing in harmonious agreement. This should be our course. That which we must look for, which alone will serve us, is the cordial union of Clergy and Laity, and their united prayer to Him who ordereth all things according to his good pleasure.

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57th Thousand.

Chapter 5

Apostolic fears

(chapter taken from)

KNOTS UNTIED.

BEING

PLAIN STATEMENTS ON DISPUTED POINTS IN RELIGION,

FROM THE

STANDPOINT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCHMAN.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

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Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels," etc.,

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[1900AD edition] XVIII. APOSTOLIC FEARS.

“I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”- 2 Corinthians 11:3. THE text which heads this page, contains one part of the experience of a very famous Christian. No servant of Christ perhaps has left such a mark for good on the world as the Apostle St. Paul. When he was born, the whole Roman Empire, excepting one little corner, was sunk in the darkest heathenism; when he died, the mighty fabric of heathenism was shaken to its very centre, and ready to fall. And none of the agents whom God used to produce this marvellous change did more than Saul of Tarsus, after his conversion. Yet even in the midst of his successes and usefulness we find him crying out, “I fear.”

There is a melancholy ring about these words which demands our attention. They show a man of many cares and anxieties. He who supposes that St. Paul lived a life of ease, because he was a chosen Apostle, wrought miracles, founded Churches, and wrote inspired Epistles, has yet much to learn. Nothing can be more unlike the truth. The eleventh chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians tells a very different tale. It is a chapter which deserves attentive study. Partly from the opposition of the heathen philosophers and priests, whose craft was in danger,-partly from the

bitter enmity of his own unbelieving countrymen,-partly from false or weak brethren,-partly from his own thorn in the flesh,-the great Apostle of the Gentiles was like his Master,-“a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” (Isaiah 53:3)

But of all the burdens which St. Paul had to carry, none seems to have weighed him down so much as that to which he refers, when he writes to the Corinthians,-“the care of all the Churches.” (2 Corinthians 11:28) The scanty knowledge of many primitive Christians, their weak faith,-their shallow experience,-their dim hope,-their low standard of holiness,-all these things made them peculiarly liable to be led astray by false teachers, and to depart from the faith. Like little children, hardly able to walk, they required to be treated with immense patience. Like exotics in a hothouse, they had to he watched with incessant care. Can we doubt that they kept their Apostolic founder in a state of constant tender anxiety? Can we wonder that he says to the Colossians, “What great conflict I have for you”?-and to the Galatians, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him who called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel;”-“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?”(Colossians 2:1; Galatians 1:6; Galatians 3:1) No attentive reader can study the Epistles without seeing this subject repeatedly cropping up. And the text I have placed at the head of this paper is a sample of what I mean:-“I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” That text contains three important lessons, which I wish to press on the attention of all my readers. I believe in my conscience they are lessons for the times.

I. First, the text shows us a spiritual disease to which we are all liable, and which we ought to fear. That disease is corruption of our minds:-“I fear, lest your minds he corrupted.”

II. Secondly, the text shows us an example which we ought to remember, as a beacon:-“The serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety.”

III. Thirdly, the text shows us a point about which we ought specially to be on our guard. That point is corruption “from the simplicity that is in Christ.” The text is a deep mine, and is not without difficulty. But let us go down into it boldly, and we shall find it contains much precious metal.

I. First, then, there is a spiritual disease, which we ought to fear: “Corruption of mind.”

I take “corruption of mind” to mean injury of our minds by the reception of false and unscriptural doctrines in religion. And I believe the sense of the Apostle to be, “I fear lest your minds should imbibe erroneous and unsound views of Christianity. I fear lest you should take up, as truths, principles which are not the truth. I fear lest you should depart from the faith once delivered to the saints, and embrace views which are practically destructive to the Gospel of Christ.

The fear expressed by the Apostle is painfully instructive, and at first sight may create surprise. Who would have thought that under the very eyes of Christ's own chosen disciples,-while the blood of Calvary was hardly yet dry, while the age of miracles had not yet passed away,-who would have thought that in a day like this there was any danger of Christians departing from the faith? Yet nothing is more certain than that “the mystery of iniquity” began already to work before the Apostles were dead, (2 Thessalonians 2:7) “Even now,” says St. John, “There are many Antichrists.” (1 John 2:18) And no fact in Church history is more clearly proved than this,-that false doctrine has never ceased to be the plague of Christendom for the last eighteen centuries. Looking forward with the eye of a prophet, St. Paul might well say, “I fear”-“I fear not merely the

corruption of your morals, but of your minds.”

The plain truth is that false doctrine has been the chosen engine which Satan has employed in every age to stop the progress of the Gospel of Christ. Finding himself unable to prevent the Fountain of Life being opened, he has laboured incessantly to poison the streams which flow from it. If he could not destroy it, he has too often neutralized its usefulness by addition, subtraction, or substitution. In a word, he has “corrupted men's minds.”

(a) False doctrine soon overspread the Primitive Church after the death of the Apostles, whatever some may please to say of primitive purity. Partly by strange teaching about the Trinity and the Person of Christ, partly by an absurd multiplication of new-fangled ceremonies, partly by the introduction of monasticism and a man-made asceticism, the light of the Church was soon dimmed and its usefulness destroyed. Even in Augustine's time, as the preface to the English Prayer-book tells us, “Ceremonies were grown to such a number that the estate of Christian people was in worse case concerning this matter than were the Jews.” Here was the corruption of men's minds.

(b) False doctrine in the middle ages so completely overspread the Church, that the truth as it is in Jesus was well nigh buried or drowned. During the last three centuries before the Reformation, it is probable that very few Christians in Europe could have answered the question, What must I do to be saved? “Popes and Cardinals, Abbots and Priors, Archbishops and Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Monks and Nuns, were, with a few rare exceptions, steeped in ignorance and superstition. They were sunk into a deep sleep, from which they were only partially roused by the earthquake of the Reformation. Here, again, was the “corruption of men's minds.”

(c) False doctrine, since the days of the Reformation, has continually been rising up again, and marring the work which the Reformers began. Neologianism in some districts of Europe, Socinianism in others, formalism and indifferentism in others, have withered blossoms which once promised to bear good fruit, and made Protestantism a mere barren form. Here, again, has been the “corruption of the mind.”

(d) False doctrine, even in our own day and under our own eyes, is eating out the heart of the Church of England and periling her existence. One school of Churchmen does not hesitate to avow its dislike to the principles of the Reformation, and compasses sea and land to Humanize the Establishment.-Another school, with equal boldness, speaks lightly of inspiration, sneers at the very idea of a supernatural religion, and tries hard to cast overboard miracles as so much lumber.-another school proclaims liberty to every shade and form of religious opinion, and tells us that all teachers are equally deserving our confidence, however heterogeneous and contradictory their opinions, if they are only clever, earnest, and sincere. To each and all the same remark applies. They illustrate the “corruption of men's minds.”

In the face of such facts as these, we may well lay to heart the words of the Apostle in the text which heads the paper. Like him we have abundant cause to feel afraid. Never, I think, was there such need for English Christians to stand on their guard. Never was there such need for faithful ministers to cry aloud and spare not. “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?” (1 Corinthians 14:8)

I charge every loyal member of the Church of England to open his eyes to the peril in which his own Church stands, and to beware lest it takes damage through apathy and a morbid love of

peace. Controversy is an odious thing; but there are days when it is a positive duty. Peace is an excellent thing; but, like gold, it may be bought too dear. Unity is a mighty blessing; but it is worthless if it is purchased at the cost of truth. Once more I say, Open your eyes and be on your guard.

The nation that rests satisfied with its commercial prosperity, and neglects its national defences, because they are troublesome or expensive, is likely to become a prey to the first Alaric, or Attila, or Tamerlane, or Napoleon, who chooses to attack it. The Church which is “rich, and increased with goods,” may think it has “need of nothing,” because of its antiquity, orders, and endowments. It may cry “Peace, peace,” and flatter itself it shall see no evil. But if it is not careful about the maintenance of sound doctrine among its ministers and members, it must never be surprised if its candlestick is taken away.

I deprecate, from the bottom of my heart, despondency or cowardice at this crisis. All I say is, let us exercise a godly fear. I do not see the slightest necessity for forsaking the old ship, and giving it up for lost. Bad as things look inside our ark, they are not a whit better outside. But I do protest against that careless spirit of slumber which seems to seal the eyes of many Churchmen, and to blind them to the enormous peril in which we are placed by the rise and progress of false doctrine in these days. I protest against the common notion so often proclaimed by men in high places, that unity is of more importance than sound doctrine, and peace more valuable than truth. And I call on every reader who really loves the Church of England to recognize the dangers of the times, and to do his duty, manfully and energetically, in resisting them by united action and by prayer. It was not for nothing that our Lord said, “He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.” (Luke 22:36) Let us not forget St. Paul's words, “Watch ye: stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men: be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13) Our noble Reformers bought the truth at the price of their own blood, and handed it down to us. Let us take heed that we do not basely sell it for a mess of pottage, under the specious names of unity and peace.

II. Secondly, the text shows us an example we shall do well to remember, as a beacon: “The serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety.”

I need hardly remind my readers that St. Paul in this place refers to the story of the fall in the third chapter of Genesis, as a simple historical fact. He does not afford the least countenance to the modern notion that the book of Genesis is nothing more than a pleasing collection of myths and fables. He does not hint that there is no such being as the devil, and that there was not any literal eating of the forbidden fruit, and that it was not really in this way that sin entered into the world. On the contrary, he narrates the story of the third of Genesis as a veracious history of a thing that really took place.

You should remember, moreover, that this reference does not stand alone. It is a noteworthy fact that several of the most remarkable histories and miracles of the Pentateuch are expressly mentioned in the New Testament, and always as historical facts. Cain and Abel, Noah's ark, the destruction of Sodom, Esau's selling his birthright, the destruction of the first-born in Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the brazen serpent, the manna, the water flowing from the rock, Balaam's ass speaking,-all these things are named by the writers of the New Testament, and named as matters of fact and not as fables. Let that never be forgotten. Those who are fond of pouring contempt on Old Testament miracles, and making light of the authority of the Pentateuch,

would do well to consider whether they know better than our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles. To my mind, to talk of Genesis as a collection of myths and fables, in the face of such a text of Scripture as we have before us in this paper, sounds alike unreasonable and profane. Was St. Paul mistaken or not, when he narrated the story of the temptation and the fall? If he was, he was a weak-minded, credulous person, and may have been mistaken on fifty other subjects. At this rate there is an end of all his authority as a writer! From such a monstrous conclusion we may well turn away with scorn. But it is well to remember that much infidelity begins with irreverent contempt of the Old Testament.

The point, after all, which the Apostle would have us mark in the history of Eve's fall, is the “subtlety” with which the devil led her into sin. He did not tell her flatly that he wished to deceive her and do her harm. On the contrary, he told her that the thing forbidden was a thing that was “good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise.” (Genesis 3:6) He did not scruple to assert that she might eat the forbidden fruit and yet “not die.” He blinded her eyes to the sinfulness and danger of transgression. He persuaded her to believe that to depart from God's plain command was for her benefit and not for her ruin. In short, “he beguiled her by his subtlety.”

Now this “subtlety,” St. Paul tells us, is precisely what we have to fear in false doctrine. We are not to expect it to approach our minds in the garment of error, but in the form of truth. Bad coin would never obtain currency if it had not some likeness to good. The wolf would seldom get into the fold if he did not enter it in sheep's clothing. Popery and infidelity would do little harm if they went about the world under their true names. Satan is far too wise a general to manage a campaign in such a fashion as this. He employs fine words and high-sounding phrases, such as “Catholicity, Apostolicity, Unity, Church order, sound Church views, free thought, broad sense, kindly judgment, liberal interpretation of Scripture,” and the like, and thus effects a lodgement in unwary minds. And this is precisely the “subtlety” which St. Paul refers to in the text. We need not doubt that he had read his Master's solemn words in the Sermon on the Mount: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” (Matthew 7:15)

I ask your special attention to this point. Such is the simplicity and innocence of many Churchmen in this day, that they actually expect false doctrine to look false, and will not understand that the very essence of its mischievousness, as a rule, is its resemblance to God's truth. A young Churchman, for instance, brought up from his cradle to hear nothing but Evangelical teaching, is suddenly invited some day to hear a sermon preached by some eminent teacher of semi-Romish, or semi-sceptical opinions. He goes into the church, expecting in his simplicity to hear nothing but heresy from the beginning to the end. To his amazement he hears a clever, eloquent sermon, containing a vast amount of truth, and only a few homoeopathic drops of error. Too often a violent reaction takes place in his simple, innocent, unsuspicious mind. He begins to think his former teachers were illiberal, narrow, and uncharitable, and his confidence in them is shaken, perhaps for ever. Too often, alas! it ends with his entire perversion, and at last he is enrolled in the ranks of the Ritualists or the Broad Churchmen! And what is the history of the whole case? Why, a foolish forgetfulness of the lesson St. Paul puts forward in this text. “As the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety,” so Satan beguiles unwary souls in the nineteenth century by approaching them under the garb of truth.

I beseech every reader of this paper to remember this part of my subject, and to stand upon his guard. What more common than to hear it said of some false teacher in this day,-“He is so good, so devoted, so kind, so zealous, so laborious, so humble, so self-denying, so charitable, so earnest, so fervent, so clever, so evidently sincere, there can be no danger and no harm in hearing him. Besides, he preaches so much real Gospel: no one can preach a better sermon than he does sometimes! I never can and never will believe he is unsound.”-Who does not hear continually such talk as this? What discerning eye can fail to see that many Churchmen expect unsound teachers to be open vendors of poison, and cannot realize that they often appear as “angels of light,” and are far too wise to be always saying all they think, and showing their whole hand and mind. But so it is. Never was it so needful to remember the words, “The serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety.”

I leave this part of my subject with the sorrowful remark that we have fallen upon times when suspicion on the subject of sound doctrine is not only a duty but a virtue. It is not the avowed Pharisee and Sadducee that we have to fear, but the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It is the “show of wisdom” with which Ritualism is invested that makes it so dangerous to many minds. (Colossians 2:23) It seems so good, and fair, and zealous, and holy, and reverential, and devout, and kind, that it carries away many well-meaning people like a flood. He that would be safe must cultivate the spirit of a sentinel at a critical post. He must not mind being laughed at and ridiculed, as one who “has a keen nose for heresy.” In days like these he must not be ashamed to suspect danger. And if any one scoffs at him for so doing, he may well be content to reply, “The serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety.”

III. The third and last lesson of the text remains yet to be considered. It shows us a point about which we ought to be especially on our guard. That point is called “The simplicity that is in Christ.”

Now the expression before us is somewhat remarkable, and stands alone in the New Testament. One thing at any rate is abundantly clear: the word simplicity means that which is single and unmixed, in contradistinction to that which is mixed and double. Following out that idea, some have held that the expression means “singleness of affection towards Christ;”-we are to fear lest we should divide our affections between Christ and any other. This is no doubt very good theology; but I question whether it is the true sense of the text.-I prefer the opinion that the expression means the simple, unmixed, unadulterated, unaltered doctrine of Christ,-the simple “truth as it is in Jesus,” on all points,-without addition, subtraction, or substitution. Departure from the simple genuine prescription of the Gospel, either by leaving out any part or adding any part, was the thing St. Paul would have the Corinthians specially dread. The expression is full of meaning, and seems specially written for our learning in these last days. We are to be ever jealously on our guard, lest we depart from and corrupt the simple Gospel which Christ once delivered to the saints.

The expression before us is exceedingly instructive. The principle it contains is of unspeakable importance. If we love our souls and would keep them in a healthy state, we must endeavour to adhere closely to the simple doctrine of Christ, in every jot, tittle, and particular. Once add to it or take away anything from it, and you risk spoiling the Divine medicine, and may even turn it into poison. Let your ruling principle be,-“No other doctrine but that of Christ; nothing less, and nothing more!” Lay firm hold on that principle, and never let it go. Write it on the table of your heart, and never forget it.

(1) Let us settle it, for example, firmly in our minds, that there is no way of peace but the simple way marked out by Christ. True rest of conscience and inward peace of soul will never come from anything but direct faith in Christ Himself and His finished work. Peace by auricular confession, or bodily asceticism, or incessant attendance at Church services, or frequent reception of the Lord's Supper, is a delusion and a snare. It is only by coming straight to Jesus Himself, labouring and heavy laden, and by believing, trusting communion with Him, that souls find rest. In this matter let us stand fast in “the simplicity that is in Christ.”

(2) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is no other priest who can be in any way a Mediator between yourself and God but Jesus Christ. He Himself has said, and His word shall not pass away, “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” (John 14:6) No sinful child of Adam, whatever be his orders, and however high his ecclesiastical title, can ever occupy Christ's place, or do what Christ alone is appointed to do. The priesthood is Christ's peculiar office, and it is one which He has never deputed to another. In this matter also let us stand fast in “the simplicity that is in Christ.”

(3) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is no sacrifice for sin except the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. Listen not for a moment to those who tell you that there is any sacrifice in the Lord's Supper, any repetition of Christ's offering on the cross, or any oblation of His body and blood, under the form of consecrated bread and wine. The one sacrifice for sins which Christ offered was a perfect and complete sacrifice, and it is nothing short of blasphemy to attempt to repeat it. “By one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:14) In this matter also let us stand fast in the “simplicity that is in Christ.”

(4) Let us settle it next in our minds that there is no other rule of faith, and judge of controversies, but that simple one to which Christ always referred,-the written Word of God. Let no man disturb our souls by such vague expressions as “the voice of the Church, primitive antiquity, the judgment of the early Fathers,” and the like tall talk. Let our only standard of truth be the Bible, God's Word written. “What saith the Scripture?”-“What is written?”-“How readest thou?”-“To the law and the testimony!”-“Search the Scriptures.” (Romans 4:3; Luke 10:26; Isaiah 8:20; John 5:39) In this matter also let us stand fast in the “simplicity that is in Christ.”

(5) Let us settle it next in our minds that there are no other means of grace in the Church which have any binding authority, excepting those well-known and simple ones which Christ and the Apostles have sanctioned. Let us regard with a jealous suspicion all ceremonies and forms of man's invention, when they are invested with such exaggerated importance as to thrust into the background God's own appointments. It is the invariable tendency of man's inventions to supersede God's ordinances. Let us beware of making the Word of God of none effect by human devices. In this matter also let us stand fast in the “simplicity that is in Christ.

(6) Let us settle it next in our minds that no teaching about the sacraments is sound which gives them a power of which Christ says nothing. Let us beware of admitting that either baptism or the Lord's Supper can confer grace “ex opere operato,”-that is, by their mere outward administration, independently of the state of heart of those who receive them. Let us remember that the only proof that baptized people and communicants have grace, is the exhibition of grace in their lives. The fruits of the Spirit are the only evidences that we are born of the Spirit and one with Christ, and not the mere reception of the sacraments. In this matter also let us stand fast in the “simplicity that is in Christ.”

(7) Let us settle it next in our minds that no teaching about the Holy Ghost is safe which cannot be reconciled with the simple teaching of Christ. They are not to be heard who assert that the Holy Ghost actually dwells in all baptized people, without exception, by virtue of their baptism, and that this grace within such people only needs to be “stirred up.” The simple teaching of our Lord is, that He dwells only in those who are His believing disciples, and that the world neither knows, nor sees, nor can receive the Holy Spirit. (John 14:17) His indwelling is the special privilege of Christ's people, and where He is He will be seen. On this point also let us stand fast in the “simplicity that is in Christ.”

(8) Finally, let us settle it in our minds that no teaching can be thoroughly sound, in which truth is not set forth in the proportion of Christ and the Apostles. Let us beware of any teaching in which the main thing is an incessant exaltation of the Church, the ministry, or the sacraments, while such grand verities as repentance, faith, conversion, holiness, are comparatively left in a subordinate and inferior place. Place such teaching side by side with the teaching of the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles. Count up texts. Make a calculation. Mark how little comparatively is said in the New Testament about baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Church, and the ministry; and then judge for yourself what is the proportion of truth. In this matter also, I say once more, let us stand fast in the “simplicity that is in Christ.”

The simple doctrine and rule of Christ, then-nothing added, nothing taken away, nothing substituted-this is the mark at which we ought to aim. This is the point from which departure ought to be dreaded. Can we improve on His teaching? Are we wiser than He? Can we suppose that He left anything of real vital importance unwritten, or liable to the vague reports of human traditions? Shall we take on ourselves to say that we can mend or change for the better any ordinance of His appointment? Can we doubt that in matters about which He is silent we have need to act very cautiously, very gently, very moderately, and must beware of pressing them on those who do not see with our eyes? Above all, must we not beware of asserting anything to be needful to salvation of which Christ has said nothing at all? I only see one answer to such questions as these. We must beware of anything which has even the appearance of departure from the “simplicity that is in Christ.”

The plain truth is that we cannot sufficiently exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as the great Head of the Church, and Lord of all ordinances, no less than as the Saviour of sinners. I take it we all fail here. We do not realize how high and great and glorious a King the Son of God is, and what undivided loyalty we owe to One who has not deputed any of His offices, or given His glory to another. The solemn words which John Owen addressed to the House of Commons, in a sermon on the “Greatness of Christ,” deserve to be remembered. I fear the House of Commons hears few such sermons in the present day.

“Christ is the way: men without Him are Cains, wanderers, vagabonds. He is the truth: men without Him are liars, like the devil of old. He is the life: men without Him are dead in trespasses and sins. He is the light: men without Him are in darkness, and go they know not whither. He is the vine: men that are not in Him are withered branches prepared for the fire. He is the rock: men not built on Him are carried away with a flood. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the author and ender, the founder and finisher of our salvation. He that hath not Him hath neither beginning of good nor shall have end of misery. Oh, blessed Jesus, how much better were it not to be than to

be without Thee! never to be born than not to die in Thee! A thousand hells come short of this, eternally to want Jesus Christ." This witness is true. If we can say Amen to the spirit of this passage it will be well with our souls. And now let me conclude this paper by offering a few parting words of counsel to any one into whose hands it may fall. I offer them not as one who has any authority, but one who is affectionately desirous to do good to his brethren. I offer them especially to all who are members of the Church of England, though I believe they will be found useful by all English Christians. And I offer them as counsels which I find helpful to my own soul, and as such I venture to think they will be helpful to others.

(1) In the first place, if we would be kept from falling away into false doctrine, let us arm our minds with a thorough know-ledge of God's Word. Let us read our Bibles from beginning to end with daily diligence, and constant prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and so strive to become thoroughly familiar with their contents. Ignorance of the Bible is the root of all error, and a superficial acquaintance with it accounts for many of the sad perversions and defections of the present day. In a hurrying age of railways and telegraphs, I am firmly persuaded that many Christians do not give time enough to private reading of the Scriptures. I doubt seriously whether English people did not know their Bibles better two hundred years ago than they do now. The consequence is, that they are "tossed to and fro by, and carried about with, every wind of doctrine," and fall an easy prey to the first clever teacher of error who tries to influence their minds. I entreat my readers to remember this counsel, and take heed to their ways. It is as true now as ever, that the good textuary is the only good theologian, and that a familiarity with great leading texts is, as our Lord proved in the temptation, one of the best safeguards against error. Arm yourself then with the sword of the Spirit, and let your hand become used to it. I am well aware that there is no royal road to Bible knowledge. Without diligence and pains no one ever becomes "mighty in the Scriptures." "Justification," said Charles Simeon, with his characteristic quaintness, "is by faith, but knowledge of the Bible comes by works." But of one thing I am certain: there is no labour which will be so richly repaid as laborious regular daily study of God's Word.

(2) In the second place, if we would keep a straight path, as Churchmen, in this evil day, let us be thoroughly acquainted with the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. Those Articles, I am bold to say, are the authorized Confession of the Church of England, and the true test by which the teaching of every clergyman ought to he tried. The "teaching of the Prayer-book" is a common phrase in many months, and the Prayer-book is often held up as a better standard of Church-manship than the Articles. But I venture to assert that the Articles, and not the Prayer-book, are the Church's standard of Church doctrine. Let no one suppose that I think lightly of the Prayer-book, because I say this. In loyal love to the Liturgy, and deep admiration of its contents, I give place to no man. Taken for all in all, it is an incomparable book of devotion for the use of a Christian congregation. But the Church's Prayer-book was never meant to be the Church's fixed standard of Bible doctrine, in the same way that the Articles are. This was not meant to be its office: this was not the purpose for which it was compiled. It is a manual of devotion; it is not a Confession of faith. Let us value it highly; but let us not exalt it to the place which the Articles alone can fill, and which common sense, statute law, and the express opinion of eminent divines agree in assigning to them.

I entreat every reader of this paper to search the Articles, and to keep up familiar acquaintance with them by reading them carefully at least once a year. Settle it in your mind that no man has a

right to call himself a sound Churchman who preaches, teaches, or maintains anything contrary to the Church's Confession of faith. I believe the Articles in this day are unduly neglected. I think it would be well if in all middle-class schools connected with the Church of England, they formed a part of the regular system of religious instruction. Like the famous Westminster Confession in Scotland, they would be found a mighty barrier against the tendency to return to Rome.

(3) The third and last counsel which I venture to offer is this: Let us make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with the history of the English Reformation. My reason for offering this counsel is my firm conviction that this highly important part of English history has of late years been undeservedly neglected. Thousands of Churchmen now-a-days have a most inadequate notion of the amount of our debt to our martyred Reformers. They have no distinct conception of the state of darkness and superstition in which our fathers lived, and of the light and liberty which the Reformation brought in. And the consequence is that they see no great harm in the Romanizing movement of the present day, and have very indistinct ideas of the real nature and work of Popery. It is high time that a better state of things should begin. Of one thing I am thoroughly convinced: a vast amount of the prevailing apathy about the Romanizing movement of the day may be traced up to gross ignorance, both of the true nature of Popery and of the Protestant Reformation.

Ignorance, after all, is one of the best friends of false doctrine. More light is one of the great wants of the day, even in the nineteenth century. Thousands are led astray by Popery or infidelity from sheer want of reading and information. Once more I repeat, if men would only study with attention the Bible, the Articles, and the History of the Reformation, I should have little fear of their “minds being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” They might not, perhaps be “converted” to God, but at any rate they would not be “perverted” from the Church of England.

Chapter 6

Archbishop Laud

[chapter taken from]

LIGHT FROM OLD TIMES;

OR, Protestant Facts and Men WITH AN INTRODUCTION FOR OUR OWN DAYS.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

”EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS,” “KNOTS UNTIED,” ETC., ETC.

”If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to

the battle?"- 1 Corinthians 14:8.

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ARCHBISHOP LAUD AND HIS TIMES.

WILLIAM LAUD, Archbishop of Canterbury, was beheaded on Tower Hill, London, in the year 1645. He was one of five Archbishops in historical times who died violent deaths. Alphege was killed by the Danes in 1009, in Ethelred's reign. Thomas à Becket was suddenly murdered in Canterbury Cathedral, in the reign of Henry II. Simon Sudbury was beheaded by Wat Tyler, in the reign of Richard II. Cranmer was burned by Papists at Oxford, in the days of Queen Mary. Laud alone died by Protestant hands, in Charles the First's time, at the beginning of the Long Parliament.

Now what have we got to do with Archbishop Laud in this present century? Many, I venture to suspect, are ready to ask that question. Two centuries have passed away since Laud died. Steam, electricity, railways, free trade, reform, education, science, have changed everything in England. Why rake up the melancholy story of a barbarous deed done in semi-barbarous times? What is Laud to us, or we to Laud, that we need trouble ourselves with him and his history?

Questions like these, I make bold to say, are rather short-sighted and inconsiderate. History, it has been wisely said, is “philosophy teaching by examples,” and of no history is that saying so true as of the history of the Church. History, it has again been said, “has a strange tendency to repeat itself,” and a close study of the history of the past will help us greatly to conjecture what will happen in the future. It is my firm belief that we have a great deal to do with Laud, and that a knowledge of Laud's times is of great importance in the present day. I will go further. I believe that the history of Laud throws broad and clear light on the present position of the Church of England.

I must begin by throwing myself on the kind indulgence of my readers, and soliciting a large measure of patience and consideration. My subject is an historical one. Few men, except Froude and Macaulay, can make history anything but dry and dull. When king Ahasuerus could not sleep, the chronicles, or history of his own times, were read to him.-My subject, moreover, is peculiarly surrounded with difficulties. Never was there a character so differently estimated as that of Laud. According to some, he was a Papist and a monster of iniquity; according to others, he was a blessed martyr and an angel of light. Between the violent abuse of Prynne, on the one hand, and the preposterous admiration of Heylin, Wharton, Lawson, and even Le Bas, on the other, it is extremely hard to find out the truth. In short, the subject is a tangled skein, and at this distance of time it is difficult to unravel it.-Nevertheless, I shall boldly try to set before my readers “the thing as it is.” After careful investigation my own mind is thoroughly made up. I hold that, wittingly or unwittingly, meaningly, or unmeaningly, intentionally or unintentionally, Laud did more harm to the Church of England than any Churchman that ever lived. He inflicted a wound that will never be healed; he worked mischief that will never be repaired.

Laud was born in the year 1573, about thirty-five years after the beginning of the Reformation, in the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and came forward as a public man about the time of James the First's accession, in 1603. I ask particular attention to these dates. A moment's reflection will show that he appeared on the stage of English Church history at a most critical period: that is to say, within the first seventy-five years after the commencement of the glorious English Reformation.

Seventy-five years only! How short a time that seems! Yet how many events of deepest interest to us all were crowded into that period. Within those seventy-five years the seed of Protestantism was first sown by Henry the Eighth, though I fully admit from low, carnal, and worldly motives,-Then came the short but glorious reign of Edward the Sixth, when the tender plant grew with hot-bed rapidity under the fostering care of Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and Hooper.-Then came the bloody reign of Mary, when it was cut down to the very ground by the ferocious proceedings of Bonner and Gardiner,-Then came the happy reaction, on Elizabeth's accession to the throne, and the final re-establishment of the Church of England on the basis which it now occupies,

But even Elizabethan times, I am sorry to say, were not times of unmixed good to the Church of England. The truth must be spoken on this point. In our thankfulness for the good Elizabeth did we are rather apt to overlook the harm which was done in her reign. Things were left undone that ought to have been done, and done that ought not to have been done. Partly from the Queen's characteristic Tudor love of power, and jealousy of the Bishops, and partly from her anxious desire to conciliate and win over the Papists, the work of the Reformation was not carried forward so

energetically as it might have been. The Zurich letters, published by the Parker Society, contain many hints about this. If Jewel and his companions had not been incessantly thwarted and hampered by royal interference, our Church's worship and organization would probably have been made far better than it is. If Grindal had not been snubbed and stopped in the matter of the “prophesyings,” the English clergy would have been a far better body than they were. His letter to the Queen on that painful occasion deserves unmixed admiration. Partly again, from the universal ignorance of toleration which prevailed among all parties, conscientious men were often persecuted for trifling offences, and the ground was prepared for an abundant crop of dissent in after times. Fuller, the historian, records some curious correspondence between Cecil, and other Privy Councillors and Archbishop Whitgift, on this subject. I am sorry to appear to depreciate Elizabeth. But truth is truth, and ought to be known; and we cannot properly understand Laud, unless we understand the times which immediately preceded him.1

One bright point, however, should never be forgotten in estimating the reign of Elizabeth. The standard of doctrine in the Church of England was sound, clear, Scriptural, and unmistakable. Rightly or wrongly, nothing was tolerated in pulpits which was not thoroughly Protestant, and thoroughly agreeable to all the Thirty-nine Articles. A clergyman who preached up the real presence of Christ's body and blood, under the forms of bread and wine in the sacrament,-or recommended the practice of private confession to a priest,-or advocated prayer to the Virgin Mary,-or elevated the consecrated elements over his head in the Lord's Supper and adored them,-or taught a gross, “opus operatum,” view of baptismal regeneration,-or publicly denied the doctrine of predestination, or imputed righteousness, or justification by faith,-or reviled the memory of Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer,-or called Edward the Sixth “a young tiger-cub,”-or sneered at the Articles as “forty stripes save one,”-or recommended reunion with the Church of Rome,-or hesitated to call the Pope Antichrist,-such a man, I say boldly, unless he had been a very insignificant person, would have had a very hard time of it in the days of Good Queen Bess! The “powers that be” would have come down upon him like a thunderbolt. These were subjects which were hardly even allowed to be controverted; you must either hold strong Protestant views about them, or hold your tongue. In short, however faulty and deficient in many things, the Church of England in Queen Elizabeth's time was in theory down-right Protestant and Evangelical. Weak, by reason of her infancy, the Church may have been; defective in many points, judged by our light, no doubt she was; marred and damaged by stupid intolerance she certainly was; but at no period was her general standard of doctrine so Scriptural and so Protestant as in the days of Elizabeth. Men and women were yet alive who had seen Rogers and Bradford burned in Smithfield,-who had heard old Latimer say to Ridley at the stake, “Courage, we shall light a candle which shall never be extinguished,”-who had watched gallant Hooper patiently agonizing in the fire for three quarters of an hour under the shadow of Gloucester Cathedral. Men and women in England had not yet forgotten these things. There was a wide-spread feeling that Popery was a false religion, and Protestantism was God's truth; that Popish doctrine in every shape was to be held in abhorrence, and that Reformation doctrines ought never to be given up. All classes held this, with very few exceptions, from the statesman in the Council Chamber down to the apprentice-boy in the shop. In short, the days of Elizabeth, with all their faults, were Protestant days. The nation was professedly a Protestant nation, and gloried in the name. This is a point which ought never to be forgotten. Well would it have been for our country if Elizabethan Protestantism had been as real and deep as it seemed.

Such were the critical times in which William Laud was allowed by God to come forward, and become a power in England. Such was the state of things which he found in our Church. How he deliberately set himself to oppose the current theology of his day,-how he “practised and prospered” for forty years, how he worked night and day to compass his ends, as “thorough” as Lord Strafford in driving on toward his mark,- how he rallied round him in an Arminian cave of Adullam every Churchman who was discontented with the doctrines of the Reformation, how he gradually leavened our Church with a distaste for true Protestantism, and a dislike for what he was pleased to call “Calvinism,”-how, even after ruining Church and State by his policy, he left behind him a school of Churchmen which has done immense harm to our Church, -all these are historical facts, which would fill a volume if fully described. In a paper like the present one they can only be briefly pointed out. The utmost that I shall attempt to do is to supply a bare outline of Laud's life, and a brief estimate of his character, and to show the policy he had in view, the manner in which he carried it out, and the consequences to which it led. A few practical lessons for ourselves will then form a fitting conclusion to the whole.

(a) William Laud was born at Reading in the year 1573, and was the son of respectable parents of the middle class. He received his early education at the Grammar School of his native town, and in the year 1589 entered St. John's College, Oxford. Little is known of his boyhood and youth, except that he was physically weak and puny, but intellectually vigorous, and a young man of untiring industry and application. His master at Reading School was so convinced from observation that he was one of those boys who are sure to rise in the world, that he used to say, “When you are a great little man, remember Reading School.”

At Oxford he gradually, though slowly, made himself known and felt. In 1593 he was elected Fellow of his College, and after losing two years from illness was made Master of Arts in 1598, and ordained Deacon by Young, Bishop of Rochester, in 1600, and Priest in 1601.

Of his ways and pursuits during the first ten years of his Oxford life very little is known, except the suspicious fact that Buckeridge, a notoriously unsound divine, was his tutor. It is evident that he was a careful observer of the times, and one who thought for himself. Even at the period of his ordination he had already taken up a theological line of his own. Bishop Young is said to have observed that his studies had not been confined to the ordinary system of Geneva, but that his divinity was built “on the noble foundation of the fathers, the councils, and the ecclesiastical historians.” Praise like this is suspicious. When a man makes an idol of Fathers and councils, and disparages the theology of the Reformation, we may be sure there is a screw loose in his theology. Wood, the author of “Athena Oxonienses,” says that, even in his first ten years at Oxford, he was esteemed “a very forward, confident, and zealous man.” Put together Bishop Young's and Wood's remarks, and you have the first ingredients of a very dangerous Churchman. I venture the conjecture, that these eleven quiet years at St. John's, Oxford, were the seed-time of all the mischief that Laud over did, and fixed the unhappy bias which characterized his whole career.

His appointment to read a divinity lecture at St. John's in 1602 was the first occasion when Laud came forward as the opponent of popular Protestantism, and the avowed advocate of a new style of theology. The precise nature of the opinions he propounded is not recorded, but according to Heylin it was something like “the perpetual visibility of the Church of Christ, derived from the Apostles to the Church of Rome, and continued in that Church until the Reformation.” What it was

that he said exactly we do not know; but it is pretty clear that he took up ground about the Church of Rome which was quite opposed to the views of the Homilies, Jewel, and the Reformers, and most distasteful to the thorough Protestants of the University. The immediate result was, that the lecturer came into collision with no less a person than Dr. George Abbot, then Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, Head of University College, and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury,-a man of great ability and deservedly high character. The after-consequences were, that from that day forward Abbot regarded Laud as a dangerous man, and Laud became marked and known as a very lukewarm Protestant, if not a friend of Popery, and an open enemy to the pure Gospel of Christ.

After serving the office of Proctor in 1603, Laud took his degree as Bachelor of Divinity in 1604. The propositions he undertook to defend in his exercises for that degree, supplied additional proof of his theological tendencies, and increased the suspicion with which he was regarded. According to his biographers he maintained, first, the “necessity of baptism;” and secondly, that “there could be no true Church without diocesan Bishops.” The precise nature of his statements, again, is not known; but it is evident, from the stir which the exercises made, that they were thought unscriptural and unsound hitherto by Protestant Churchmen. It seems most probable that, like the promoters of the “Tracts for the Times,” he maintained apostolical succession and baptismal regeneration. Whatever it was that he said, it is a fact that he was severely attacked by Dr. Holland, rector of Exeter, who was at that time Regius Professor of Divinity. As usual, nothing came of the attack, and Laud held his ground. Moral evidence of a man's theological unsoundness, and legal proof of it, are totally different things.

After damaging himself seriously, in 1605, by countenancing and solemnizing a most discreditable marriage between the earl of Essex and Lady Rich, Laud got into another theological difficulty at Oxford in 1606. He delivered a sermon in St. Mary's of such a Romish tendency, that he was called in question for it by Dr. Airay, provost of Queen's, at that time Vice-Chancellor. Again we are left in ignorance of the nature of the sermon, and again we only know that, as usual, Laud contrived to escape public censure. But, like many others in a similar position, though not legally condemned, he established a strong impression in many minds that he was a thoroughly unsound divine, and deeply tainted with Romanizing opinions. Such, in short, was the scandal raised by this discourse, that the famous Joseph Hall, afterwards Bishop of Norwich, took occasion to address a remarkable letter of expostulation to the preacher, which, as an indication of the estimate then made of Laud's character, deserves quoting at length. He says:

“I would I knew where to find you; then I could tell how to take direct aim. Whereas now I must pore and conjecture. To-day you are in the tents of the Romanists, to-morrow in ours, the next day between both and against both. Our adversaries think you ours. We think you theirs. Your conscience finds you with both and neither. I flatter you not. This, of course, is the worst of all tempers. Heat and cold have their uses. Lukewarmness is good for nothing, but to trouble the stomach. Those that are spiritually hot find acceptation. Those that are stark cold have lesser reckoning. The mean between both is much worse, as it comes nearer to good and yet attains it not. How long will you be in this indifferency? Resolve one way, and know at last what you do hold, what you should.

Cast off either your wings or your teeth; and, casting off this bat-like nature, be either a bird or a beast. To die wavering or uncertain, yourself will grant fearful. If you must settle, when begin you?

If you must begin, why not now? It is dangerous deferring that whose want is deadly, and whose opportunity is doubtful. God crieth with Jehu, 'Who is on my side? who?' Look at last out of your window to Him, and in a resolute courage cast down the Jezebel that hath bewitched you. Is there any impediment which delay will abate? Is there any which a just answer cannot remove? If you would rather waver, who can settle you? But if you love not inconstancy, tell us why you stagger? Be plain, or else you will never be firm."2

In 1607, in the thirty-fourth year of his age, Laud began at last to climb the ladder of ecclesiastical preferment. A man of his stamp, who had come forward as an opponent of Protestant and Evangelical theology, was sure not to lack patrons. Such men "speak of the world, and the world heareth them." (1 John 4:5) In fact from this date, until he became a Bishop, I can hardly find three years in which Laud did not obtain some piece of preferment. In 1607 he was made Vicar of Stamford, in Northamptonshire; in 1608, Rector of North Kibworth, in Leicestershire, and Chaplain to Neile, Bishop of Rochester; in 1609, Rector of West Tilbury, Essex; in 1610, Rector of Cuckstone, Kent, and then of Norton in the same county; in 1611, President of St. John's College, Oxford, and Chaplain to the King; in 1614, Prebendary of Buckden, in the Diocese of Lincoln; in 1615, Archdeacon of Huntingdon; in 1616, Dean of Gloucester; in 1618, Rector of Ibstock in Leicestershire; in 1620, Canon of Westminster; and in 1622, Rector of Crick, in Northamptonshire.3 Such a number of successive preferments probably were never heaped on one man in an equal space' of time! How many of them he held at once I am unable to ascertain. What he did at his various livings, whether he resided much, whether he preached much, whether he left any spiritual marks for good, are all points about which no information remains. Except the fact, that in each parish he always assigned an annual pension to twelve poor persons, laid aside one-fifth of his income for charitable purposes, put the glebe house in repair, and saw that the church was supplied with becoming furniture, I can find nothing recorded. As to any evangelistic work, bearing fruit in men's souls, in Stamford, North Kibworth, West Tilbury, Cuckstone, Norton, Ibstock, or Crick, we are left entirely in the dark. In truth, there is no evidence that work of this kind was at any time much in Laud's line.

Two public incidents in Laud's life during the thirteen years between 1607 and 1620 deserve special notice. One throws strong light on the estimate which was formed of him in the place where he was best known,-the University of Oxford; the other supplies a striking example of the thorough unbending style in which he drove on his own schemes for unprotestantizing the Church of England, and thrust them down men's throats in the face of opposition.

The first of these incidents is the public rebuke which he received at Oxford, in consequence of a sermon which he preached before the University on Shrove Tuesday, 1614. This sermon contained matter so offensive to Protestant Churchmen, that the Vice-Chancellor, Robert Abbot, brother of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, a man of great piety and learning, thought fit to give it a public answer the following Easter Sunday, in a sermon at St. Mary's.

The following passage from Abbot's sermon is highly important, as showing what Laud's theological opinions really were:

"Some men," said Abbot in his sermon, "are partly Romish and partly English, as occasion serves them; so that a man may say unto them, 'Art thou for us or for our adversaries?' They are men who

under pretence of truth, and preaching against the Puritans, strike at the heart and root of the faith and religion now established among us. This preaching against the Puritans was the practice of Parsons and Campian the Jesuits, when they came into England to seduce young students. When many of them were afraid to lose their places, if they should professedly be thus, the counsel they then gave them was, that they should speak freely against the Puritans, and that would suffice. These men cannot plead that they are only accounted Papists because they speak against the Puritans, but because they speak nothing against the Papists. If they do at any time speak anything against the Papists, they do but beat about the bush; and that but softly, for fear of awakening and disquieting the birds that are in it. They speak nothing but that wherein one Papist will speak against another, or against equivocations and the Pope's temporal authority, and the like; and perhaps against some of their blasphemous opinions. But on the points of free-will, justification, concupiscence being sin after baptism, inherent righteousness, and certainty of salvation, the Papists beyond the sea can say they are wholly theirs, and the recusants at home make their brags of them. And in all things they keep so near the brink, that upon any occasion they may step over to them."

I make no comment on this passage: it speaks for itself. My readers will probably agree with me, that it would have been well if Vice-Chancellors of Oxford had always spoken as plainly and faithfully as Robert Abbot, and that Laud is not the only person who has required such public rebuke to be given. I only ask then to mark carefully the charges against Laud which the passage contains. It shows clearly and unmistakably what was the Oxford estimate, and the real nature of Laud's theology.

The other incident to which I ask attention in this period of Laud's life is the collision which took place between him and the Bishop of Gloucester, immediately after his appointment to the Deanery of Gloucester, in the year 1616. His very first act, on taking office in the Cathedral, was to remove the communion table from the place where it had long stood, in the midst of the choir, to the wall at the east end, where he ordered it to stand altar-wise. The change may seem a trifling one to many now, accustomed, as we have been, for 200 years, to see the table in this position; but a right understanding of the old position of the table throws broad light on the famous expression, "On the north side." The change appeared a very serious matter to all good Protestants in 1616, as tending to bring back the Papal notion of an altar, and to encourage the idea of a sacrifice, and a priest, and the Mass, in the Lord's Supper. The people of Gloucester were of all English citizens the least likely to approve the slightest appearance of a leaning towards Popery. They had not forgotten good Bishop Hooper, and the doctrine he had so often preached about the Lord's Supper before his martyrdom. Miles Smith, the Bishop of Gloucester, a holy and learned man, and one of the leading translators of the Authorised version of the Bible, was more offended by the change than any one, and declared, if it was carried into effect, he would never enter the Cathedral again. But none of these things moved Laud; in spite of Bishop and people the table was moved. The Dean had his own way. The Bishop was publicly set at nought, and never entered his own Cathedral again, though living within fifty yards of it, until the day of his death, in 1624. The feelings of the Protestant people of Gloucester were deeply wounded. It is a striking and significant fact, that afterwards, when the Commonwealth wars began, no place resisted the Cavaliers and fought for Parliament so stubbornly as this very city of Gloucester!

This unhappy transaction requires little comment from me. Like the affair of Abbot's sermon, however, it gives another insight into Laud's character. It shows him determined to carry out his own views without regard to the offence they might give to the feelings of Protestant Churchmen. It shows him, like many in modern times, perfectly indifferent to his Bishop's wishes and opinions the very moment they ran counter to his own. Here is the very man who preached up Apostolical Succession at Oxford, flying in the face of a venerable Bishop, and trampling contemptuously on his conscientious scruples!

It shows him, above all, beginning his official duties in a public position, by making a great and suspicious stir about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and attaching an ominous importance to the precise position of the Lord's Table. Need I remind many of my readers, that the first step of the whole Tractarian movement was exactly in the same direction? To exalt the Lord's Supper into a position neither warranted by the Bible, the Articles, nor the Prayer-book, and to invest the Lord's Table and all around it with a superstitious sanctity, these were among the first lessons taught by that school of which so many scholars have passed over to the Church of Rome. “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.”4

In 1621, after five years at Gloucester Deanery, Laud's ambition was once more gratified, and his power of mischief greatly increased, by his elevation to the bench as Bishop of St. David's. To thrust upon the bench, once filled by Latimer and Jewel, a man who had been publicly opposed by three Vice-Chancellors and a Regius Professor of Divinity, required of course no small influence and exertion. Laud's friends were found equal to the occasion. For the appointment, he was mainly indebted to the Marquis of Buckingham, and to Williams, the well-known Bishop of Lincoln. King James, at any rate, seems to have given a very unwilling consent to his nomination. Partly, no doubt, from the character which Laud had notoriously obtained as a very lukewarm Protestant; partly from the open distrust with which Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, regarded him; and partly from a certain shrewdness in discerning unsound doctrine, the King raised serious objections to Laud being made a Bishop. The conversation on the subject between his majesty and Bishop Williams, preserved by Hackett in his life of Williams, is a very curious one, and shows plainly that the British Solomon (as people called James) was not quite such a fool as he was often thought to be.-“'I keep Laud back,' said the king, 'from all place of rule and authority, because I find that he hath a restless spirit, and cannot see when matters are well; but loves to toss and change, and bring matters to a pitch of reformation floating in his own brain, which may endanger the steadfastness of that which is at a good pass, God be praised. I speak not at random: he hath made himself known to me to be such an one.' To this Williams could only reply that Laud was 'of a great and tractable wit, and would presently see the way to come out of his error.' At last, wearied out by Williams' importunity, the King said, 'Is there no way but you must carry it? Then take him to you: but on my soul, you will repent it;' and went away in a rage, using other words of fierce and ominous import.”-How true a prophet the King was, and how bitterly Williams afterwards smarted under Laud's base ingratitude, are notorious historical facts. But this was the way, and this the ladder, by which Laud climbed to the episcopal bench in 1621, in the forty-eighth year of his age.5

We have now reached the period of Laud's life when his unhappy influence began to be felt most powerfully in every department of Church and State. For the next twenty years after 1621, his history is so intermixed with the history of every great movement in our country, that to go fully into

it would be to overload my subject, and make a plain biographical paper a volume of history. I cannot pretend to do anything of the kind. The utmost I shall attempt to do is to supply the leading incidents of his story, and the dates at which they occurred.

In 1622 I find he was appointed “Confessor” to the Duke of Buckingham. In 1626 he was made Bishop of Bath and Wells, and Dean of the Chapel Royal. In 1628 he became Bishop of London. In 1630 he became Chancellor of Oxford. In 1633 he rose to be Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of Dublin University. In 1640 he began at last to fall from his high estate, and in 1641 he was committed to the Tower.

How he conducted himself throughout these last twenty years of his life,-how he plunged into politics with as much energy as any layman, how he became the intimate friend of such men as Buckingham, Strafford, Windebank, and others of doubtful character,-how he contrived to get the reputation of having a hand in everything that went on both in Church and State,-how he managed to make himself the most unpopular man in England, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland,-how at last not a mistake could be made, either political or ecclesiastical, without the cry being raised, “Is not the hand of Laud in all this?”-all these things are duly recorded in the historians of the times. They are far too many, and would occupy too much time to be detailed here.

One general remark applies to all his career throughout these twenty years. He was always consistent, always the same, always in mischief, always playing the same game, always driving at the same end, always advocating the same theological principles, for which he had made himself notorious at Oxford. In 1622, before he had been a Bishop a year, I find him assisting in the issue of six royal injunctions to the Clergy, in which, among other things, it is ordered, “that no one, under the degree of a Bishop or Dean, shall preach on such deep points as predestination, or election, or the universality, efficacy, resistibility, or irresistibility of God's grace.”-In 1621 I find him procuring the suppression of an admirable association for buying up presentations and appointing good clergymen, mainly got up by the famous Dr. Gouge. The association was broken up, and the money subscribed was confiscated,-In 1631 I find him consecrating the Church of St. Catherine Cree, London, with such superstitious ceremonies and idolatrous veneration of the Lord's Table and the elements of bread and wine, that he made every one suppose he longed to re-introduce downright Popery.-In 1632 I find him prosecuting Sherfield, Recorder of Salisbury, for breaking a painted window in St. Edmund's Church, Salisbury, which the vestry had ordered to be removed, and this with such savage severity that the unfortunate man was fined £1,000 by the Star Chamber.-In 1633 I find him first offending the feelings of the nation about the Sabbath by reviving and republishing “The Book of Sports,” and then ungratefully trampling on the feelings of Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, by visiting his diocese as metropolitan, and opposing his known opinion about the Lord's Table.-In 1634 I find him persecuting the French and Walloon congregations in London, and pressing the Irish Church only too successfully to give up its admirable Articles.-In 1636 I find him preparing and sending down to Scotland the notorious Scotch liturgy, in which the Real Presence is as plainly taught as any Papist could wish, and setting all Scotland in a flame by attempting to introduce it in public worship.-In 1637 I find him forbidding the migration to America of a large body of Puritans, among whom was the famous Oliver Cromwell, and compelling some of the very men, who afterwards upset Church and State, to remain in England against their will.-In the same year I find him prosecuting Prynne, Burton, and Bastwick, for publishing violent writings,

and actually punishing them with a fine of £5,000 each, imprisonment for life, and the hideous penalty of having their ears cut off.-In 1640 I find him transgressing one of the first principles of our constitution by getting canons passed in Convocation without the consent of Parliament.-This list of monstrous follies might easily be increased. To enter into the particulars of them is, of course, impossible. For twenty years a petty warfare was kept up by him and his allies on the Episcopal bench against some of the holiest and best ministers of the land. The catalogue of famous men, who, at one time or another, during Laud's day of power, were prosecuted, silenced, fined, imprisoned, or driven to retire to the Continent, is a melancholy roll, and of itself speaks volumes. John Rogers, Daniel Rogers, Thomas Hooker, Dod, Hildersham, Ward, Cotton, Bridge, Ames, Sheppard, Burroughs, Greenhill, Calamy, Whateley, Wilkinson, Goodwin, were all men who had more divinity in their little fingers than Laud had in his whole body. Yet every one of them was visited with Laud's displeasure, and, in one way or another, disgracefully treated. In short, the public came to the conclusion that Laud and his companions thought Puritanism a greater sin than open immorality, and trifling acts of nonconformity worse than breaking the ten commandments! It really came to this, that men said you might lie, or swear, or get drunk, and little notice would be taken; but to be a Puritan, or a Nonconformist, was to commit the unpardonable sin!

Never, I think, did mortal man labour so unceasingly to advance his own particular theological views as Laud, and never did any one seem so blind to the mischievous effects of his proceedings. Had half the zeal he displayed in snubbing Calvinists, persecuting Puritans, promoting Arminians, and making advances towards Rome, been shown by Grindal, Whitgift, and Abbot, in propagating Evangelical religion, it would have been a great blessing to the Church of England. Unhappily, we see in his case, as in many others, how much “wiser in their generation” the children of this world are than the children of light. Besides, untiring activity is far more often the characteristic of the friends of error than of the friends of truth. Pharisees, Jesuits, heresiarchs, in every age, will compass sea and land, and leave no stone unturned, to accomplish their ends, while the so-called Protestant soldier slumbers and sleeps. It was so in the days of Laud; I fear it is too much the case in the present day.

The end came at last. The patience of the English people was at length fairly exhausted. After a long and unseemly endeavour to govern without a parliament, that unhappy monarch, Charles the First, was obliged to summon the famous Long Parliament in 1640. From the very first meeting of the House of Commons the Archbishop of Canterbury's doom was sealed. Hollis, Pym, Dering, and their companions, attacked Strafford and Laud without delay, and gave them no respite till they had brought them to the scaffold. The virulence of the attack made upon both these great officials, the singular unanimity with which the proceedings were carried on, the strong language which men of all parties, even quiet people like Lord Falkland, used in speaking of the Church of England, are all most curious facts, and should be studied in “Rushworth's Collections,” May's “History of the Long Parliament,” or “Stoughton's Church of the Civil Wars.” They all help to show the deep dissatisfaction which Laud's policy had long created in the mind of the public, and the intensity of the dislike with which he was personally regarded. Englishmen are notoriously slow to move, and curiously backward to resist constituted authority. When, therefore, Englishmen moved with such tremendous violence as the House of Commons moved against Laud, it is impossible not to feel that a very strong sense of long-standing grievances must have existed.

Laud was kept a prisoner from the 18th December, 1640, to the 10th of January, 1645, and the greater part of that time he was confined to the Tower. The articles laid to his charge were fourteen in number. In substance they were as follows (I copy Le Bas):-

1. That he had traitorously endeavoured to subvert the fundamental laws of the realm, and to persuade the King that he might levy money without the consent of Parliament.

2. That he had encouraged sermons and publications tending to the establishment of arbitrary power.

3. That he had interrupted and prevented the course of justice at Westminster Hall.

4. That he had traitorously and corruptly sold justice, and advised the King to sell judicial and other offices.

5. That he had surreptitiously caused a book of canons to be published without lawful authority, and had unlawfully enforced subscription to it.

6. That he had assumed a Papal and tyrannical power, both in ecclesiastical and temporal matters.

7. That he had laboured to subvert God's true religion, and to introduce Papal superstition and idolatry.

8. That he had usurped the nomination to many ecclesiastical benefices, and promoted persons who were Popishly affected, or otherwise unsound in doctrine or corrupt in manners.

9. That he had committed the licensing of books to chaplains notoriously disaffected to the reformed religion.

10. That he had endeavoured to reconcile the Church of England to the Church of Rome, and held intelligence with priests and the Pope, and had permitted a Popish hierarchy to be established in this kingdom.

11. That he had silenced many godly ministers, hindered the preaching of God's Word, cherished profaneness and ignorance, and caused many of the King's subjects to forsake the country.

12. That he had endeavoured to raise discord between the Church of England and other Reformed Churches, and had oppressed the Dutch and French congregations in England.

13. That he had laboured to introduce innovations in religion and government into the kingdom of Scotland, and to stir up war between the two countries.

14. That to preserve himself from being questioned for these traitorous practices, he had laboured to divert the ancient course of parliamentary proceeding, and to incense the King against all Parliaments.

Such were the charges brought against the unfortunate Archbishop, and upon these, with the addition of ten minor articles, he was finally brought to trial in March, 1644. It will be seen, by comparison of dates, that he lingered in prison for four years. It must have been a bitter time for the fallen Prelate! The execution of his friend Strafford, the battles of the civil war, the King's

ill-success, and the imposition of a fine of £20,000 on himself, no doubt were not the least part of his sorrows. At one time, in 1643, a motion was actually made in the House of Commons that Laud should be transported, untried and unheard, to New England, in America; and it is by no means quite clear that some of his enemies would not have been glad to get rid of him in this fashion. But the motion fell to the ground, and at length, in the autumn of 1644, he was finally placed on his trial.

Of the trial itself I shall say but little. It was perhaps as unfair and discreditable to English history as any State trial that figures in our chronicles. The prosecution was committed to Prynne, who was the virulent and bigoted personal enemy of the prisoner. Laud's own private papers and diary were seized and relentlessly used, and he had to defend himself under immense disadvantages. As the case went on, the evidence on many points was manifestly insufficient, and would never have satisfied a really fair and impartial court. Those who wish to read up the subject should study Prynne's own narrative of this trial, in a folio called “Canterbury's Doom.” But it is as clear as daylight that Laud's condemnation was a foregone conclusion with his judges. In spite of a defence which even Prynne admits was “full, gallant, and pithy,” in spite of a conspicuous absence of legal proof that he had committed anything worthy of death, at length, after great delays, the Archbishop of Canterbury was found guilty and sentenced to die.

Of his execution at Tower Hill, on the 9th of January, 1645, I shall also say little. The only favour shown him on this occasion was, that he was beheaded and not hanged. His demeanour on the scaffold was courageous, dignified, calm, and in every way honourable to him. His address before death was worthy of a better cause. In fact, you may say of him, as it was said of another, “Nothing in all his life became him so much as the leaving of it.” That his execution was as much a judicial murder as that of Sir Thomas More or Cranmer, I feel no doubt at all: but I cannot for a moment admit that he deserves to be called a “martyr.” It is the cause, not the amount of suffering, which makes the martyr. That Laud met his death bravely and gallantly, I fully admit: but I never can admit that he had done nothing to exasperate men's minds against him, or that he was wholly innocent of everything laid to his charge, or that he died in support of a good cause.

We have now traced the life of Laud from his cradle to his grave. It only remains for me to point out the great and instructive lessons which his life appears to teach us, and the broad and clear light which it throws on the position of the Church of England at the present day. But before I do this, I wish to say a few words on three disputed points. These points are Laud's real character, his real policy and aims, and the real consequences of his policy. I am well aware that this is debateable ground. In walking over it I cannot expect that all will agree with me. But I give my opinion freely, and men must take it for what it is worth.

(a) His real character, then: What was it? What is the estimate that we ought to put on him? The answer, as is often the case, lies in my judgment between two extremes. Laud was neither so good nor so bad a man as he is often represented. To call him a saint, a martyr, an English Cyprian, on one side, is simply ridiculous. I can discover no warrant for such extravagant praise. To paint him as a monster of iniquity, and a child of the devil, on the other side, is equally absurd. The charge falls to the ground as “not proven.”-Let us give him his due. He was not an immoral or a covetous man. Few archbishops seem to have spent so little on themselves, and to have given so largely and liberally of their substance to promote learning and to strengthen the material part of

the Church of England. He was a zealous and earnest Churchman. No one can deny that he spent himself and was spent in the promotion of what he thought sound “Church Views,” and conscientiously believed he was doing right. But earnestness alone, if not rightly directed, is a very mischievous thing. Experience abundantly proves that, in every age of the Church, well-meaning and conscientious men, when they are narrow-minded, short-sighted, ignorant of human nature, and obstinate, are the greatest causes of trouble. Never did man prove it so thoroughly as Laud.

He was not, I believe, a Jesuit or a Papist. His conference with Fisher, and his successful dealings with Chillingworth, completely negative that supposition. But to call him a sound Protestant Churchman is simply absurd. He never disguised his dislike to thorough Protestant theology, and laboured all his life to discourage it. The mere fact that he was twice offered a cardinal's hat by the Pope, after he became Archbishop of Canterbury, of itself speaks volumes. It shows the general impression that he made on the minds of foreigners.

That he was a spiritually-minded man, and really received the Gospel of God's grace into his heart, is a point of which we have very scanty proofs. This is a delicate matter. God forbid that we should judge him! Yet it is vain to deny that there is an absence of any-thing like thoroughly Evangelical, experimental religion in his literary remains. There is a painful lack of anything really calculated to do good to hearts and souls. His seven sermons are poor things, and not worthy to be compared even with the discourses of men of his own school, like Andrews. His private “Diary” contains much superstition and weakness. His letters are not spiritual or striking. It is not too much to say that you will find more good divinity in ten pages of such men as his contemporaries, Usher, Davenant, Hall, and Sibbes, than in all the works of Laud. The plain truth must be spoken. Laud was much more a political Churchman, an ecclesiastical Ahithophel, a zealous champion of his party, his cause, and his order, than a minister of Christ, a preacher of the Gospel, a shepherd of souls. For the work of the former character he laid himself out entirely, and laboured in it night and day. For the work of the latter character he had no vocation, and gave himself no time. It was not work in his line. What he really was, and what he really felt personally in his heart of hearts, is a question which I cannot pretend to solve. The last day alone will declare it. In hope and charity I leave it alone.

(b) Laud's real policy next demands our attention. What was it? What was he driving at all his life? What did he want to do? What was his object and aim? I do not believe, with some, that he really desired to Romanize the Church of England, or meant and intended, if possible, to reunite it with the Church of Rome. I think those who say this go too far, and have no sufficient ground for their assertions. But I decidedly think, that what he did labour to effect was just as dangerous, and would sooner or later have brought back downright Popery, no matter what Laud meant or intended. I believe that Laud's grand idea was to make the Church of England less Protestant, less Calvinistic, less Evangelical, than it was when he found it. I believe he thought that our excellent Reformers had gone too far-that the clock ought to be put back a good deal. I believe his favourite theory was, that we ought to occupy a medium position between the Reformation on the one side, and Rome on the other, and that we might combine the ceremonialism and sacramentalism of St. Peter's on the Tiber with the freedom from corruption and ecclesiastical independence of St. Paul's on the Thames. He did not, in short, want to go back to the Vatican, but he wanted to borrow some of its principles, and plant them in Lambeth Palace. I see in these ideas and theories a key to all his policy. His one aim from St. John's, Oxford, till he was sent to the Tower, was not to

Romanize, but to un-Protestantize the Church of England. Some may think this a nice and too refined a distinction. I do not. A “Romanizer” is one thing, an un-Protestantizer “is another.

This was the explanation of his always opposing what he called “Calvinism.” He would fain have made popular Protestant theology odious by painting the doctrines of grace as inseparable from antinomianism and extreme views of election and reprobation. He knew too well that nothing so damages a theological cause as a cleverly chosen nickname.

This was the explanation of his making so much ado about the position of the Lord's Table. It was not merely to preserve the Table from irreverent and profane uses, but to exalt the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and make a slight approach to the sacrifice of the Mass.

This was the explanation of his advocating extravagant views of the Episcopal office, as if it were essential to a Church. It helped his favourite notion that the Church of England occupied a middle position between the Presbyterian Church of Geneva and the Church of Rome,-an idea, by the way, often brought forward now-a-days, and about as absurd as to say the Isle of Wight occupies a middle position between England and France

This was the explanation of his incessantly persecuting and teasing lecturers, and discouraging doctrinal preaching all over the land. He wished to make people think that the Sacraments, and not the preaching of God's Word, were the principal part of Christianity.

This was the explanation of his introducing, as far as possible, such histrionic ceremonials as those with which he astonished London at the consecration of St. Catherine Cree. He desired to show the public that Churchmen could have as much sensuous and showy religion as Papists; and that, if we did not have the Mass itself, the Communion Service of the Prayer-book might be so managed and manipulated as to make an excellent imitation of it.

This was the explanation of his discouraging and checking all attacks on Popery, whether in the pulpit or the press, and obliging whole passages in many good books of the time to be expurgated and suppressed. He wished to lower the tone of the country about the nature of Popery, and to make people less alive to its enormous evils and less awake to his own movements.

This, in the last place, but not least, was the explanation of his constantly promoting and bringing forward in the Church Arminian and semi-Protestant divines of his own school of theology. Wren, Montague, and Mainwaring, are specimens of the kind of men he delighted to honour. He never threw away an opportunity of this kind. He knew the importance of backing your friends, and of securing all the good things of place, power, and influence for your own party. One plan was always kept in view, and that was to fill up the Bench, as far as possible, with High Churchmen.

Such, I believe firmly, is the true account of Laud's Policy. He had always one aim before him. Of that aim he never lost sight for a day. And while we admire his consistency, his persistency, his dogged tenacity of purpose, we must never forget the real nature of his aim. It was to un-Protestantize the Church of England.

(c) One more question demands a few words. What were the consequences of Laud's policy? I shall say but little on this point. Some people, I believe, who regard him as a slandered person, and venerate him as the reviver of so-called Catholic principles, would tell you that he did a great deal of good. From such I take leave to differ entirely. I hold that he did more harm to the

Reformed Church of England than any man that ever lived-more than Gardiner, Bonner, Cardinal Pole, and Queen Mary, all put together. I have already said that he probably meant well, and acted conscientiously. I quite believe that he thought his policy was doing God and the Church of England good service. But the consequences of his policy, both direct and indirect, were disastrous, mischievous, and evil in the extreme. Let me show you what they were.

One direct consequence of Laud's policy was a wide-spread decline of sound Protestant feeling among the clergy, from which our Church has never recovered. The principles and opinions of a forward, pushing Archbishop like him, who practically had the key of all patronage in his pocket, were only too greedily swallowed by many. A school of divines was rapidly gathered and consolidated within our pale, which has weakened our Church most seriously from that period. How deep and wide-spread this decline was may be gathered from the Memoirs of Panzani, the Romish emissary to England in Laud's days, where he gives an account of the state of things in this country. He particularly mentions that Laud's great friend, Bishop Montague, told him privately, in 1636, that-“he and many of his brethren were prepared to conform themselves to the method and discipline of the Gallican Church;”-“that there were only three Bishops on the bench that could be counted violently bent against the Church of Rome: viz., Morton, Davenant, and Hall;”-and “as for the aversion to Popery which we discover in our sermons and printed books,” said Montague, “they are things of form, chiefly to humour the populace and not to be much regarded.” Pretty language this from an English Bishop! But what an idea it gives us of the rapid spread of Laud's theology!

But another direct consequence of Laud's policy was of a very different kind. There arose throughout the land a spirit of thorough alienation of the middle classes from the Church of England. The mass of English people gradually began to dislike a religious body which they saw principally occupied in persecuting Puritanism, silencing preachers, checking zeal, exalting forms, deifying sacraments, and complimenting Popery. The multitude seldom draws nice distinctions. It measures institutions chiefly by their working and administration, and cares little for theories and great principles. Little by little men's minds throughout the country began to connect episcopacy with tyranny, the liturgy with formality, and the Church of England with fines, imprisonments, and punishments. Baxter's autobiography gives a vivid picture of the universal feeling of the kind which prevailed. Hence, when the Long Parliament assembled, there was a most painful unanimity of ill-feeling towards the poor old Church of England. The members representing all the counties and boroughs in England, with few exceptions, were found thoroughly dissatisfied with the Establishment; and the assailants, both in number and influence, completely swamped and overwhelmed the defenders. And all this was the doing of Laud! He had disgusted the bulk of the laity, lost the middle classes, and turned the Church's friends into foes.

The last and worst direct consequence of Laud's policy was the temporary destruction of the Church of England. An ecclesiastical revolution took place, which swelled at length into a kind of reign of terror. The pent-up feelings of the middle classes, once let loose, broke out into a hurricane, before which everything in the frame-work of the Church of England was clean swept away. Bishops, and deans, and clergy, and Liturgy, were all shovelled off the stage like so much rubbish. Good things as well as bad were involved in one common ruin. A bloody civil war broke out. Charles I. followed Strafford and Laud to the scaffold. Everything in Church and State was turned upside down. Order at last was only kept by the iron hand of a military dictator, Oliver

Cromwell. The crown and the mitre were both alike proscribed, excommunicated, and rolled in the dust. And all this was the doing of Laud! He sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

Such were the direct consequences of Laud's policy. I wish they had been all the harm that he did. But, unhappily, there were other indirect consequences, of which we feel the bad effects to this very day. The whole balance of English feeling about the Church of England was completely disarranged and disturbed by his proceedings. Equilibrium has never been recovered.

A pendulum was set swinging by his mischievous folly, which has now oscillated violently for over 200 years. First came a strong reaction in favour of the Church when the Stuarts returned to the throne at the Restoration, having learned nothing and forgotten nothing. Moderation and tolerance, you will remember, were then thrown to the winds. The wretched Act of Uniformity was passed, by which 2,000 of the best clergy of the age were turned out of our pale, and lost to our ranks for ever.-Then came a long and dreary time of exhaustion and stagnation, a time during which the Church of England, like a torpid sloth, existed indeed, and hung on the State tree, but scarcely lived, moved, or breathed.-Then came, after a century, the revival of true Protestant religion under the auspices of those glorious clergymen Wesley and Whitefield; but a revival which our Bishops could neither understand, appreciate, direct, manage, utilise, encourage, or retain.-Then came the permanent establishment of Methodism and a vast increase of nonconformity.-Finally, we see in our own days the spectacle of a pure Protestant Church in England which has allowed half the population to stray out of its fold and slip out of its fingers, and is neither liked, nor trusted, nor valued by the great majority of dissentients! And what was the first cause of all this? I answer again, in one sentence, the fatal policy of Archbishop Laud! He sowed the seed of which we reap the consequences. He made a whole generation of Englishmen hate the Church of England and feel no confidence in her; and the feeling survives and lingers down to the present day.

It only remains for me now to point out the leading lessons which Laud's history ought to teach us. I have done my best to show you the man, and his character, and his policy, and the consequences of it. On each of these topics, you will readily believe, much more might be said. But I am obliged to skim the surface of things, and leave much to be filled up by my readers. If I can only set men thinking and reading, and send them to such books as Marsden's “History of the Puritans,” and Stoughton's “Ecclesiastical History,” I shall, even in this short sketch, have not laboured in vain. Let me now try to make some practical use of the whole subject.-

1. The first lesson that I draw from the subject is this. Laud's history shows us, that any attempt to un-Protestantize the Church of England is fraught with peril and mischief to the Establishment. Any man-no matter how high his rank-Archbishop, Bishop, Dean, or Archdeacon; no matter how high his character-earnest, zealous, conscientious, learned, devout, charitable, and self-denying;-any man who tries to reintroduce Romish doctrines and Romish ceremonies into the Church of England, is an enemy to the Establishment, and is damaging its best interests.

I am no more infallible than the Pope. I have no access to peculiar information more than other men. But it is my firm and decided conviction, that the bulk of Churchmen in our days will not have Romanism brought back within our pale. Some, perhaps, of the aristocracy and the nobility may approve a sensuous, histrionic religion, and see no harm in a nearer approximation to the ways of Rome. But the majority of the middle classes, and the most intelligent of the lower orders, will not have Romanism in any shape, or at any price; and if you try to thrust it down their throats, they will

just leave the Church to shift for itself, and walk away. There will be no more reign of terror, or ecclesiastical earthquakes. There will be no repetition of State trials. The Lauds and Montagues on our bench, if any, will not be taken to Tower Hill and beheaded. But the middle classes will just leave bishops, deans, and clergy alone in their glory, and forsake the Establishment. The cry will be raised,-“This is not our rest, for it is polluted with Romanism: we must depart hence. To your tents, O Israel!”

And what will happen then? Verily, the Church will perish for want of Churchmen. Generals, and colonels, and band, alone, do not make up an army; and bishops, and deans, and choristers, and clergy, alone, do not make up a Church. Disestablishment will come as a matter of course. The Church of a minority will not be long spared on this side of St. George's Channel any more than on the other. The tender mercies of liberal statesmen may perhaps leave the poor old Church, her cathedrals, and parish churches, and possibly some part of her endowments. But if the “multitude of people” is, the glory of a church as well as of a prince, the glory of the Church of England will have passed away for ever. “Ichabod” will be written over empty naves and choirs. The Establishment will split up, or become one of the sects, like the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the page of history will record that she made shipwreck of all her greatness by the suicidal attempt to recede from Protestantism and reintroduce Popery.

No! If I know anything of the middle classes and intelligent lower orders, they wish to have a Protestant Establishment, or no Establishment at all. They may not be hard readers or deep thinkers. But they know what Romanism was 350 years ago, and they do not want it back. They know what priestly tyranny, and the sacrifice of the Mass, and the odious confessional, did before the Reformation. They have an innate, instinctive, wholesome dislike of the slightest symptom of any return to these things. They cannot draw nice distinctions; they are apt to call a spade a spade, and to give things their right names. And if they see any attempt to imitate Romanism in our churches, and to counterfeit Romish ceremonies, their suspicions are roused at once. The clergyman who rouses these suspicions, I say boldly, however earnest, conscientious, well-meaning, and charitable, is no friend to the Church of England, and is doing immense harm.

2. The second lesson of the subject is this. Laud's history shows us what harm may be done to a Church by a very small party. Great is the power of a minority when it acts together, and is united. Great is the influence of a few determined men when they combine for mischief, see their object clearly, and endeavour incessantly and unscrupulously to carry it out. Laud's beginnings at St. John's, Oxford, were very small, but his latter end greatly increased.

This is a point, I venture to say, which is far too much overlooked. Nothing has injured the Church of England so much in the last thirty years as the habit of underrating and despising the Tractarian movement. How small it seemed, when it first began under Newman, Pusey, Keble, and Richard Froude. It was a cloud which looked no bigger than a man's hand! To what portentous proportions, comparatively, it has now grown. A black thunder-storm seems to overspread one half the heavens.

Well do I remember a valued Oxford friend, now dead, calling the attention of Bishop Sumner (of Chester) and Chancellor Raikes to this subject, fifty years ago, in a private conversation. Well do I remember the quiet smile of incredulity with which those venerable men listened, evidently thinking us young, short-sighted alarmists. “It was but a temporary delusion; it would soon pass

away.” Nubecula est; transibit. I thought, then, that they did not rightly estimate the extent of the danger. I suspect they both lived to change their minds.

Let us, then, not underrate the power of Ritualism because its adherents seem a small party, and the churches where they play at Popery are comparatively few in number. The party is not so small as it appears. It has many sympathisers throughout the country, who only wait for the time when they can show their colours, and at the first shift of wind will put to sea. It must not be despised because it is small. Minorities often prove winners in the long run.

No? We ought to remember the great Duke of Wellington's maxim, that it is a cardinal mistake in war, and a cause of great disasters, to undervalue your enemy. We must make up our mind that the Ritualistic movement of this day is a very serious affair, and that it requires the utmost exertions of sound Churchmen to prevent it ruining the Church of England. When we can afford to despise a little spark in a powder magazine, a little crack in a sea-wall embankment, a little leak in a ship, a little flaw in a chain cable, a few traitors in the garrison of a citadel, then, and not till then, it will be time to pooh-pooh Ritualism, because its avowed adherents, like Laud's party at first, seem at present comparatively few.

3. The last lesson I draw from our subject is this. Laud's history shows us the immense importance of the laity taking timely interest in the condition of the Church of England. Nothing, it is clear to me, preserved the Church of England from returning bodily to Popery, two hundred years ago, but the active interference of the laity. I do not say it would have happened in Laud's time. I do not think he ever meant the Pope at Lambeth to be subject to the Pope at the Vatican. But I do believe that another twenty years of unopposed, systematic, persistent un-Protestantizing would have “educated “a generation of semi-Papists, and paved the way for downright Popery. From this we were not preserved by the bishops and clergy, but by the laity taking up the matter in the House of Commons. I grant their remedies were violent, and their surgery coarse and savage. They let blood profusely, and did great harm in some directions, if they did good in others. But one thing I always maintain was done by Hollis, Dering, Pym, Hampden, and their companions. They prevented the nation going back to Babylon. They stamped out Popery for the time in the Church of England. Even the civil war was better than the return of Popery.

I hope the laity of this day will never forget this. They are the real hope of the Church of England. Our future depends greatly on their conduct and line of action. If they sit still and let things take their own course, I see nothing but evil before us. If they arise in their might, like their forefathers, and demand that there shall be no Romish innovations, no un-Protestantizing practices allowed in our communion, there is yet ground for hope. It is not too late to win a battle. Once let the laity raise the old cry,-“Nolumus leges Anglice mutari; We will have a Protestant Establishment or none at all,” -and I shall not despair of the Church of England.

One thing, in conclusion, is very clear. Whatever we may think about Laud, the Church of England is in a very critical position. Every one who reflects must confess this. Her rowers have brought her into troubled waters.

Rent and torn by conflicting parties, her very existence is in peril. Never was there a Church which had within her pale such totally opposite schools of theology. This state of things cannot last. The question may well rise in many minds, “What shall be the end? We cannot go on as we are. Will

the sick man live, or will he die?”

As usual in such cases, advice is plentiful, the doctors are many, and the prescriptions abound-some homeopathic and some allopathic. Every one has his “panacea” and his “Eirenicon.” “Only use it,” he cries, “and the Church will be cured.” Wider terms of communion, relaxation of creeds and articles, liturgical revision, synodical action, increase of the Episcopate, union of the Western Churches,-all these are remedies gravely propounded and earnestly thrust on our attention. Each has its advocates, and each is warranted to cure. I have not the slightest faith in any of these healing measures. Two or three of them are downright mischievous. The best of them is not the medicine for the time. I regard them all as utterly beside the mark, and unable to touch the disease.

My own mind is thoroughly made up. I know of only one cure and remedy for the ailments of our beloved Church. That remedy is a revival among us of thorough Protestant principles and Protestant theology,-the principles of the glorious Reformation, the theology of Latimer, and Hooper, and Jewel. Whether God will grant us such a revival I cannot tell: perhaps our days are numbered. Without such a revival I have little hope for the future. We shall only fall lower and lower, and at last our candlestick will be removed, like that of Ephesus. Give us such a revival, and I hope everything. The laity would rally round us once more,-the Spirit of God would be poured on our congregations. God, even the Lord God of our fathers, would give us His blessing.

I said the laity would rally round us. I say it advisedly. At present a large number of the best of them ride at single anchor, and hold by the Church of England with a very loose hand. They are tired, wearied, and disgusted with the undisturbed growth and progress of semi-Popery. They see no use in Protestant Bishops and Articles, if Romanism is allowed to sit in the house of God. They may not be deep theologians, or very conversant with Catholic principles and primitive antiquity. But they are not hard to satisfy. They know and feel what does them good. They want plain Protestant worship, and plain Protestant preaching, and if they cannot have these in the Establishment they will soon migrate and swarm off elsewhere. The bulk of our middle classes and educated lower orders in the Church do not want chasubles, copes, dalmatics, birettas, banners, processions, incense, pastoral staffs, crucifixes, incessant bowings, turnings, and genuflections, or any such pernicious trumpery. Such things are mere gaudy toys, which may please children, and satisfy idle young men and women, and the whole herd of the ignorant, the weak-minded, and the superstitious. But they do not meet the wants of the middle-aged, the hard-headed, the hard-working men and women of the middle and lower orders, They want food,-food for heart, and food for conscience; and if they do not find it in the Established Church of England, they will walk off and seek it elsewhere. Give them plain, simple, hearty Bible worship,-plain, simple, hearty Bible preaching,-give them the old, old story of Christ upon the cross, the real work of the Holy Ghost felt and experienced in the inner man,-give them the noble lessons of repentance, faith, holiness,-give them these, and they will never forsake the Church of England.6 I repeat it emphatically. A return to downright Protestant principles and Protestant theology is the Church's want in the present day. It is the only medicine which will heal the Church's disease.

I now wind up my paper with a short passage from the pen of a great man, which deserves special attention, partly because of his name and character, and partly because he wrote it with death before his eyes. The man I speak of is Lord William Russell, who was beheaded in Lincoln's Inn

Fields on a false charge of treason, in the reign of James the Second, 1683. The book I find it in is the life of Lord W. Russell, written by the late Earl Russell in 1820. The paper in which the passage occurs was given by the noble sufferer to his friends only a few moments before his execution. He says:

“I did believe, and do still believe, that Popery is breaking in upon this nation, and that those who advance it will stop at nothing to carry on their designs. . . . I am heartily sorry that so many Protestants give their helping hand to it. But I hope God will preserve the Protestant religion and this nation, though I am afraid it will pass under very great trials and very great sufferings.”

Solemn words these, and painfully prophetic! Well would it be for this country, in the nineteenth century, if English Peers and English Prelates, English Members of Parliament and English Clergymen, saw the danger of Popery “breaking in upon this nation” as clearly as did, in the seventeenth century, the dying patriot, Lord W. Russell.

NOTE.-The following extracts from Mr. Hallam's “Constitutional History of England” appear to me to deserve particular attention. I think so, because they contain the deliberate opinion of a well-read layman, of no extreme theological views, and of one who has justly obtained a world-wide reputation on account of his learning, his correct judgment, and his impartiality:

“Laud's talents, though enabling him to acquire a large portion of theological learning, seem to have been by no means considerable. There cannot be a more contemptible work than this Diary; and his letters to Strafford display some smartness, but no great capacity. He managed, indeed, his own defence when impeached with some ability; but on such occasions ordinary men are apt to put forth a remarkable readiness and ability,”…“Though not literally destitute of religion, it was so subordinate to worldly interest, and so blended in his mind with the impure alloy of temporal pride, that he became an intolerant persecutor of the Puritan clergy, not from bigotry, which in its usual sense he never displayed, but systematic policy. And being subject, as his friends call it, to some infirmities of temper-that is, choleric, vindictive, harsh, and even cruel to a great degree-he not only took a prominent share in the severities of the Star Chamber, but perpetually lamented that he was restrained from going further lengths,”-HALLAM'S Constit. Hist. of England, vol. ii. p. 54.

“All the innovations of the school of Laud were so many approaches in the exterior worship of the Church to the Roman model. Pictures were set up or repaired; the Communion Table took the name of an altar; it was sometimes made of stone; obeisances were made to it; the crucifix was sometimes placed upon it; the dress of the officiating priests became more gaudy; churches were consecrated with strange and mystical pageantry. These petty superstitions, which would of themselves have disgusted a nation accustomed to despise as well as abhor the pompous rites of the Catholics, became more alarming from the evident bias of some leading Churchmen to parts of the Romish theology. The doctrine of a real presence, distinguishable only by vagueness of definition from that of the Church of Rome, was generally held, Montague, Bishop of Chichester, already conspicuous and justly reckoned the chief of the Romanizing faction, went a 'considerable length towards admitting the invocation of saints. Prayers for the dead, which lead at once to the tenet of purgatory, were vindicated by many. In fact, there was hardly any distinctive opinion of the Church, of Rome which had not its abettors among the Bishops, or those who wrote under their patronage.”-Ibid. p. 86, edit. 1832.

FOOTNOTES

1 The reader who cares to look into this subject will find a remarkable letter to Whitgift in favour of the persecuted Nonconformists, dated 1583, and signed by Burleigh, Warwick, Howard, Hatton, Shrewsbury, Leicester, Croft, Walsingham-eight leading privy councillors,-See Fuller's “Church History,” vol, iii, p, 37, Tegg's Edition.

2 Hall's “Letters:” Decade III. Epist, 5.

3 Laud appears to have taken the living of Crick after he became Bishop of St. David's.-See his “Diary.”

4 What Laud really thought about the Lord's Table may be seen in a very painful extract from a speech afterwards delivered by him in the Star Chamber, on the occasion of the prosecution of Prynne in 1637. He there says, “The altar” (a word, we must remember, never used in the Prayer-book), “the altar is the greatest place of God's residence upon earth. I say the greatest, yea, greater than the pulpit; for there it is, 'This is my body,' but in the pulpit it is, 'This is my word,' And a greater reverence, no doubt, is due to the body than to the word of our Lord; and so to the throne where His body is actually present, than to the seat where His word useth to be proclaimed.”

5 Hackett's story is corroborated by one told by Bishop Burnet. “I have heard,” says Bishop Burnet, “my own father relate it from the mouth of old Sir William Armourer, who was of King James the First's court, being bred up from a page, that his Majesty, as Laud (then only Bishop of St. David's) walked by, but at some distance, took Prince Charles by the arm, and in his Scottish dialect said to him, 'Son, ken [see] you yon knave Laud? He has a restless head: he'll ne'er ha' done till he has lost his own head and endangered yours.'”-Memorials of Princess Sophia, pp. 54, 55.

6 “The Times “of March 29, 1869, says most truly, “Ritualistic services may attract curious or admiring crowds, but they neither bring the poor to church nor bring religion into the homes of the poor.”

Are we Sanctified?

U HChurch Association Tracts

No. IV. THE TEACHING OF THE RITUALISTS NOT THE

TEACHING OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

by

Rev. John Charles Ryle D.D. The Ritualists have two devices which it is well to notice.

First, they represent themselves as Catholics, and say they are eager to revive the traditions and worship of the Primitive Church. This representation is contrary to the fact. The Church of England took that course at her Reformation; all that was pure, primitive, and Catholic, both in worship, faith, and order, she retained. She cast off only the fictions, idolatry, and error by which Roman Priest-craft and Italian ambition had disfigured the Apostolic faith.

But the Reformation and the works of our Reformed Church is denounced by Ritualists as mutilated, Antichristian, and a pestilent heresy, while, in fact, the Ritualists are merely reintroducing the ceremonies and dogmas which our fathers cast off as idolatrous and superstitious. When therefore they call themselves Catholics, they mean Romanists.

Their second device, when they meet their countrymen, is to disguise and cloak their opinions.

They appeal to that just sentiment which prevails, the desire to reclaim and instruct the masses. They represent themselves as devoted to this duty. Whereas, when you watch their acts and visit their churches, you find them doing the work of Roman priests, endeavouring by appeals to remorse, by demands for confession, by offers of absolution, by sacrifices of masses, by urging of prayers to Saints and the Virgin, by appeals to the senses, music, incense, shows and dresses, to allure to Church the frivolous, careless, and dissipated. The result of this is, what it is in all European countries where Rome prevails, to bring power, repute, and gifts to the priest; to leave unchanged the vices and appetites of the people.

Ritualism then is in its faith and forms Romanism; and, in order not to misrepresent it, we shall take its own organs to describe its practices, and learn its words and ways from its tracts, magazines, catechisms, manuals of devotion, and the newspapers, which the Ritualists publish.

1. They declare that the doctrine of Rome and England is the same,1 they attend the Roman mass,2 and recommend others to do the same3 and they pray for union with the corrupt Church of Rome.4

1 "The breach between us and Rome is not so wide as is commonly thought."-Dr. Pusey's Eirenicon, p. 207.

"What I have said to the Gallican [i.e. Romish] Bishops, and what they have clearly understood, is this, 'that I believe the Council of Trent, whatever its look may be, and our Articles, whatever their look may be, each could be so explained as to be reconcilable one with the other.'" Speech by Dr. Pusey, at Annual Meeting of the English Church Union, 1866. See E. C. U. Circular, for July, 1866, p. 197.

"None but those who have reduced ignorance to a system, now deny that the differences between the authoritative documents of Rome and England are Infinitesimal-that the priesthood is the same, the Liturgy virtually the same, and the doctrine the same."-Church Times, June 18, 1869.

2 "We have attended mass in a hundred great cities of the continent, and found out that there is not of necessity an idol in every foreign Church; but that it is very possible to worship with a Roman priest, and not only to receive no harm, but some good."-Rev. W. J. E. Bennett's Essay on "Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833," in the Church and the World, p. 19. 1867.

3 "If the traveller should assist at Protestant worship, he is aiding and abetting that the doctrine, heresy, and schism from which he prays in the Litany to be delivered. If he does go to the Anglican chapel, he is nevertheless bound to be present at an early Mass in the Roman parish church."-Church News, July 7, 1889

4 "It is the distinct duty of all who pray for the peace of Jerusalem to repudiate foreign Lutheranism, Calvinism, &c., and to do their utmost to show that the English Church of which they are members, is really one with the Church of Rome in faith, orders, and sacraments; whilst the Protestant bodies are branches cut off from the True Vine of which the Roman and Anglican and Eastern Communions are living boughs."-Church News, July 7, 1869.

"We had been chosen by God to be the colonists of all newly discovered lands, and we stood, like Aaron, between the living and the dead-between the living Church and the dead and decaying forms of a corrupt Protestantism. We were bound to come forward with our message to both-to the living, that they be not high-minded, but fear; to the dead, that they arise and return to the pure bosom of their mother the Catholic Church."-From Notice of Sermon by Rev. Dr. Littledale on the Anniversary of the A. P. U. C. in the Church Times, Sept. 10, 1869.

2. They revile Protestantism. They call it heresy,5 a pest,6 a cancer,7 a monstrous figment,8 and they vilify the Reformation and the Reformers9 in terms equally coarse;10 and yet they quietly remit in incumbencies and curacies within the Church of the Reformation.

5 A writer in The Church and the World (Ed. 1866, p. 237) says, "Our place is appointed among us Protestants, and in a communion deeply tainted in its practical system by Protestant heresy, but our duty is the expulsion of the evil, and not flight from it."

"They (the ministers) carry on a school, and are indefatigable in visiting the poor, and in infusing into the veins of an ignorant and unsuspicious populace the poison of Protestant heresy."

6 "Pest of Protestantism."-Church News, May 5th, 1869.

7 But we should much prefer seeing attention centred on theological matters and questions of discipline, and extirpating that ulcerous cancer of Protestantism, which must be fatal, sooner or later, to any Church that does not use moral steel and fire upon it."-Church Times, Sept. 3, 1869.

8 "By way of protest against the monstrous figment of Protestantism."-Ibid.

"We are bound to correct one of the speakers [at the Islington Clerical Meeting] who remarked that the Tractarian School, whatever its good points may be, loses sight of the distinctive doctrines of the Reformation. We do not lose sight of them at all. We are busy in hunting them down, and have no intention of foregoing the chase till we have extirpated them. That is plain speaking enough, we trust."-Church Times, Jan. 28th, 1870.

9 "Anathema to the Principle of Protestantism."-Palmer's Letter to Golightly.

10 Dr. Littledale, in his Lecture on Innovations, calls the Reformers a set of miscreants, all utterly unredeemed villains.

3. They propose to abandon, and labour for the abolition of, the xxxix Articles of Religion,11 which "contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God's Word."

11 "First of all come the xxxix Articles, those Protestant Articles, tacked on to Catholic Liturgy, those forty-stripes-save-one, as some have called them, laid on the back of the Anglican priesthood-How are they to be got over?"-Essay by Rev. L. Blenkinsopp on "Reunion of the Church," in the Church and the World, 1866, p. 202.

See proposal of Dr. Pusey that the Universities should abandon subscription to the xxxix Articles as the practical qualification for orthodox Church of England Protestant teaching, in Letter to the President of the Wesleyan conference, 1868.

"It will soon become the duty of Churchmen to labour actively for the abolition of the Articles, which have long ago done their work and are really of extremely little use now, discrediting us (as they do) in the eyes of foreign Catholics."-Church News, July 29, 1868.

"We have never seen the use of retaining the Thirty-nine Articles at all."-Church Times, March 12th, 1869.

"The abolition of the Thirty-nine Articles, the adoption of Edward VI. First Communion Office…would win for the Disestablished Church the respect of Christendom."-Church Times, Sep. 3rd. 1869.

4, They hold with the Church of Rome that there are seven Sacraments,12 whereas our xxvth Article declares that there are two Sacraments ordained of Christ in the Gospel-Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

12 See Article on "The Seven Sacraments," in Tracts for the Day, edited by Rev. O. Shipley.

In the Prayer Book for the Young, or complete Guide to Public and Private Devotion for youthful members of the English Church, "Confirmation," "Confession," "Visitation of the Sick," "Holy Orders" and "Matrimony" are enumerated among the Sacraments, p. 10.

Rev. Orby Shipley states in his "Sermons on Sin," that "there are seven Sacraments and personal extensions of the incarnation of God"-"Baptism," "Confirmation," "Eucharist," "Marriage," "Orders," "Extreme Unction," "Penance." And he adds, "The seventh and last sacramental extension of the Incarnation of our God, I need not tell you, my brethren, in theological language, is termed the

"Sacrament of Penance."-pp. 43 to 50.

5. They pray to the Virgin Mary and elevate her to a throne in heaven;13 and our Church declares such adoration to be superstitious and idolatrous.

13 "Blessed Mary, Mother of God, ever Virgin, pray for us."-Litany of the Blessed Virgin, in Invocation of Saints and Angels, by Rev. O. Shipley p. 66.

"Hail Queen of heaven; hail Mistress of the Angels, hail root, hail gate, wherefrom the light of the world is sprung! Rejoice, O Glorious Virgin, pre-eminently fair, and very lovely, hail! Mayst thou pray Christ for us."-Monastic Breviary, used at Rev. J. L. Lyne's Monastery at Laleham Covent at London, &c. p. 80.

See The Female Glory, edited by Rev. Orby Shipley, M.A.., 1869.

6. They pray to saints and invoke their intercession.14 Our Church terms such prayers "repugnant to the Word of God." (Art. xxii.) St. Paul says there is "one Mediator between God and man."- 1 Timothy 2:5.

14 "O holy Michael, Prince of the Heavenly Host pray for us." "O Raphael, pray for us"-Invocation of Saints and Angels edited by Rev. O. Shipley pp. 45, 46.

"Of our patron saint. Most Holy Confessor of the Lord ( ) mayst thou intercede to Christ for us."-Little Office book. p. 17.

"I pray that Blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, our Blessed Father Benedict, all the Saints (and you, my brothers) may pray for me to the Lord our God.-Monastic Breviary, used at Rev. J. L. Lyne's Monastery at Laleham, &c., p. 7

7. They set up images of the Virgin and of the saints; and introduce into their churches the Romish pictures of 'the Twelve Stations of the Cross' and publish forms of prayer to be said at each Station,15 as in the Roman Catholic Church; whereas our Church warns us that images "if they be publicly suffered in churches will lead to idolatry." (Art. xxxv, and Homily against Peril of Idolatry)

15 See Decorations in Ritualistic Churches-St. Michael's and All Angels, Shoreditch, and others.

See the 'Way of the Cross' in the Treasury of Devotion, pp. 191 to 200.

8. They pervert the Communion Table into an Altar, the Communion into a Mass, and the Clergyman into a sacrificing Priest, who elevates material elements incorporating the Deity, and direct these to be adored by the worshipper with genuflection and prostration;16 whereas our Church declares that the Mass "overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament" (Art. xxviii), and that such worship is "idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians." (Communion Service.)

16 "This prayer we say (to use the word common to us all) in the Mass which we now offer in many places daily on our altars."-Rev. W. J. E. Bennett's Essay. "Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833" in the Church and the World. p. 19. 1867.

"Grant that the Sacrifice, which I a miserable sinner have offered before Thy Divine Majesty may be acceptable unto Thee, and through thy mercy maybe a propitiation for me, and all for whom I

have offered It."-Priest's Prayer Book, p. 13.

Evidence before the Royal Ritual Commission. Question 2608.-Do you consider yourself a Sacrificing Priest? Answer by Rev. W. J. E. Bennett.-"Yes."

"THE PRIEST AT THE ALTAR IS VIRTUALLY CHRIST HIMSELF."-Catechism of Theology, p. 58

"Q.-Is not the Holy Eucharist also a Sacrifice?-A.-Yes"-Catechism, p. 35. Oxford. 1863.

"May the Lord receive this Sacrifice, etc."-Little Prayer Book, p. 18.

"Now kneel upright, your hands clasped upon your breast; follow the Priest in silent awe, for Jesus thy God is very nigh thee, he is about to descend upon the altar, surrounded by the Fire of the Holy Ghost, and attended by the angels. At the Consecration and Elevation prostrate yourself to the dust and say, 'Hail Body of my God hail Body of my Redeemer-I adore-I adore-I adore thee."-Manual of Devotions and Directions Members of the Church of England, intended especially the Young.

9. They enjoin the reservation of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, whereas our xxxviiith Article says:-"The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

"Celebration in private rooms should be avoided as much as possible. For this purpose it is well to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the church (where this may be done), but especially in collegiate and monastic chapels, where it should always be reserved. The priest should, on due notice being given, carry it from thence in the pyx (in both kinds of course), to the sick man's house….. The priest carries the blessed Sacrament in a monstrance (as described in appendix for reservation in both kinds), or he will convey it in the chalice, the Holy Body being placed previously therein by him, soaked in a few drops of the precious Blood, the chalice being covered with a white veil, and burse, with a corporal folded inside."-The Ritual of the Anglican Clergy, p. 23.

10. They pray for the souls of the Dead, and they declare their belief in Purgatory, and in the power of the priest to relieve from its penalties;17 whereas our Church declares purgatory to be "a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded on no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God." (Art. xxii.)

17 "What seems to be agreed upon is:-That, meantime, the souls of those persons are benefited by the prayers and Offerings of the Church, and by Alms given in their behalf; that those who have not died beyond the pale of salvation receive mitigation of their sufferings and ultimate release; and that, possibly, those who are lost also gain a mitigation of their sufferings, which mitigation may last through Eternity." -Article on Purgatory in Tracts for the Day edited by Rev. O. Shipley, p. 29.

"We beseech thee, O Lord God Almighty, for the souls of the faithful departed"-Altar Manual, edited by a Committee of Clergy, p 34.

The souls of the departed thus abiding in their place of rest may be the subjects of prayer to those who are still alive upon the earth," because "the souls that are departed are not in their perfection.'-Church's Broken Unity, by Rev. W. J. E. Bennett, p. 122.

"Accept this Sacrifice, which, to the honour of thy Name, we have offered for the faithful, both living and departed, and for all is our sins and offences."-Altar Meal. p.36.

"The state of the departed souls, whether in pain or pleasure, is not yet final. The truth is that they are in custody, easy or harsh, awaiting "Trial."

"The best and holiest men (and much more the average believers) leave this world bearing the stains of earthly sins and error, which must be cleansed somewhere before they can be fitted for heaven."-Prayer for the Dead, by Rev. Dr. Littledale, p. 2.

See Dr. Pusey's Address, headed, "The prayers for departed Companions of the Society of the Love of Jesus."-p. 127, 8.

Also notices at the doors of Ritualistic Churches, "Of your Charity pray for-," and then follow the names of persons sick and dead.

11. They omit the Prayers for the Queen, the Royal Family and Parliament,18 and are agitating for a separation of Church and Sate.19

18 In Ritualistic Churches the State Prayers are generally omitted.

"There does not seem to be any great reason for retaining the prayer for the Queen, bearing in mind the very full and emphatic terms in which her Majesty is mentioned in the Canon. Most people, we suspect, would be exceedingly glad if this prayer, as well as the Comfortable Words and the Addresses were dropped."- Church Times, Jan. 20, 1866.

19 "I referred to an extreme faction in the Church of very modern date that does not conceal its ambition to destroy the connection between Church and State."-Letter from the late Premier to Rev. A. Baker, dated 9th April, 1863.

See Rev. W. J. E. Bennett's Sermon at Bristol, on May 2, 1869 advocating the separation of Church and State, and speaking of their connection as an adulterous love between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. -Ch. Times, May 7, 1869.

12. They also introduce the Romish practices of Extreme Unction,-Incensing persons and things,-Substituting wafers for bread at the Communion Service,'-Using Holy Water,-Consecrating and censing Palm branches on Palm Sunday, -Consecrating ashes, and rubbing them on persons' foreheads on Ash Wednesday,-Censing candles and sprinkling them with Holy Water on Candlemas day.

See Essay on " Unction of the Sick " in Tracts for the day edited by Rev. O. Shipley, where the writer speaks of "the Sacrament of Unction" p. 342, and adds (p. 359) "The principal effect then of Unction is the removal of the relics of Sin; its consequential effect, the remission of the guilt of any Sin it may find in the soul."

"The recognized consecration of chrism and holy oil for various rites cannot be much longer postponed. It will certainly come in somehow"-Dr. Littlerdale's Letter to the Archbishop on "Catholic Revision." p. 28.

Liturgy of Church of Sarum dedicated by permission to Bp. of Salisbury.

13. They advocate the Procession and Veneration of Relics.

See instructions for Procession and Veneration of Relics in Oratory Worship.

"It is well, when the relics are to be exposed, to erect a resting-place for them just within the chancel, or in some place calculated to facilitate the veneration of the faithful," p. 32.

Then follow details of the service, and it concludes by saying, "After the Te Deum the officient and his ministers should proceed to the chancel gates, and there hold the inner relic-case to be kissed by the faithful, wiping the glass after each osculation with a piece of cotton wool".-p. 34.

14. They encourage and enjoin habitual auricular confession to a priest, and seek to restore Judicial Absolution by a Priest, and the Romish Sacrament of Penance;20 whereas our Church says, "to maintain their auricular confession withal they greatly deceive themselves and do shamefully deceive others." "It is most evident and plain that this auricular confession hath not the warrant of God's word."-Second part of homily on Repentance.

20 Mr. Dodsworth, writing to Dr. Pusey, eighteen years ago, says :-" Both by precept and .example you have been amongst the most earnest to maintain Catholic principles. By your constant and common practice of administering the Sacrament of Penance; by encouraging ever-where, if not enjoining, auricular confession, and giving special priestly absolution, &c.

Mr. Maskell, addressing Dr. Pusey about the same time, wrote, "He (Mr. Dodsworth) knew that you have done more than encourage Confession in very many cases; that you have warned people of the danger of deferring it, have insisted on it as the only remedy, have pointed out the inevitable dangers of the neglect of it, and have promised the highest blessings in the observance, until you had brought penitents in fear and trembling upon their knees before you."

Dr. Pusey, in a Letter to the Times Nov. 29th, 1866, says: "During the twenty-eight years in which I have received Confession, I never had once to refuse absolution."

In the "Ordinance of Confession" the Rev. W. Gresley, MA., Prebendary of Lichfield, has given very minute directions both to penitent and confessor. He also says that the priest when he hears confessions, should wear his robes of office and then at p. 96 he speaks thus about absolution:-

"The giving Absolution is not a matter of course, but is dependent on the judgment of the priest. He has power to retain as well as remit sins-to give absolution or refuse it." Awful thought!

"Listen carefully to all the Priest says to you, be sure to remember the penance he gives you, and receive the Absolution thankfully."-Little Prayer Book, p. 83.

"The essential form of Absolution is not to be put forth after the manner of a prayer, but as by authority, being a judicial act."-The Priest in Absolution, p. 50.

"Confession is one of the lesser Sacraments, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ by means of which those sins which we commit after Baptism are forgiven," &c.- Prayer Book for the Young, p. 71.

15. They are restoring Monasteries and Convents. The Rev. J. T. Lyne (Father Ignatius) has established a Monastery at Laleham, a Convent of Sisters of St. Benedict in London; and there are

convents of Benedictines in London, Newcastle, and Norwich, and a Priory of Benedictine nuns at Feltham.

"The Rev. R. M. Benson, MA., Incumbent of St. John the Evangelist, Oxford, and a prominent member of the High Church party (Ritualistic?) in that city, has been holding a 'Retreat' at his Monastery in Marston-street, Oxford, which has been attended by a large number of clergymen from all parts of the United Kingdom. During its corrtinuance the brethren, as they are called, give themselves up to fasting and prayer, maintaining the strictest silence and reserve. The Services in the chapel attached to the Monastery are incessant, the members of the Brotherhood appearing to spend the whole of their time between prayers in the chapel and meditations in their cells. The whole of the brethren are clothed in long black cassocks, confined at the waist by a cord, and wear large black felt hats."- Morning Advertiser, Oct. 1869,

See account of service at what is called the Feltham Nunnery, quoted is the Guardian, September 9th, 1868 in which it is stated that-

"The Priest commenced with the Communion Service of the Church of England, the young lady who was to receive the veil was dressed as a bride. The novice's habit, scapular, girdle, and sandals, wimple and cloak, were solemnly blessed, her long black hair was all cut off, her white dress changed for a Benedictine frock, the white veil solemnly blessed and incensed, and then placed over her head, and she took the three vows for one year. The nuns are entirely enclosed, never go out, only see visitors at a grating in the Convent parlour, and then their faces are covered, and they obey the strict Benedictine rule."

In the same account it is stated that in a previous week a nun took the black veil in the house with ceremonies still more striking and solemn.

16. They recommend the celibacy of Priests.

"All Catholics who seriously desire the spiritual well-being of our Church ought earnestly to long to see some such discipline as that which prevails in the Holy Eastern Church established among ourselves-to have some stringent law or Canon enacted making the reception of at least Priest's Orders a bar to subsequent marriage on pain of perpetual irregularity."-Church News Oct. 13th, 1869.

The Rev. W. Humphrey in an essay, "The Three Vows" in The Church and the World, enjoins the necessity of the three vows of Chastity, Obedience, and Poverty, and says, "Perpetual continence is requisite in order to the perfection of Religion."-p. 517.

"We are perfectly convinced that until the celibate life for men, and especially for priests, is very widely recognized and practised among us, we shall be lacking in an important feature necessary to the perfection of a Christian Church."-Church News, April 7th, 1869.

17. They deny the sole authority of God's Word. For its supremacy, they substitute the traditions of the dark ages, introduced by an ambitious priesthood, to enrich and aggrandize their order.19 With a clear note, our Church rebukes those views, declaring that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation" (Art. vi.); and that "while each Church has the right and the power to decree ceremonies"-(Art. xx.)-"it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written;" and "whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be

required of any man, that it should be believed as in article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." (Art. vi.)

19 "If all the Bibles in the world could be gathered together tomorrow into one place and cast into the sea, I see nothing to hinder the Christian mission spreading in the world, in the same way as it spread between tine years 33 and 80 A.D.. (or whatever date may be assigned for the completion of the New Testament Canon). Neither, to take a practical case, which involves no such extravagant hypothesis, do I think that a Christian Priest, sent to a heathen land to win converts to the Faith, has any need to take a Bible with him, or any call to use it with the heathen previous to their baptism, or in any sense to treat it as a necessary element in the work of conviction."-Kiss of Peace. Sequel 59.

"In the sense in which it is commonly understood at this day, Scripture, it is plain, is not, on Anglical principles, the Rule of Faith."-Tracts for the Times, No. 90, p. 11, republished with Preface by Dr. Pusey, 1865.

"I most firmly believe, O my God, whatever thy Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches."-Little Prayer Book, pp. 13, 14.

"There are a great many persons who are under the impression that the Bible is intended to teach us our religion. Let me say most distinctly and definitely that this is a thorough mistake."-An Open Bible. Lecture by Rev. J. E. Vaux, p. 18.

"If we would decide between conflicting opinions on fundamental doctrines, we must appeal to the Universal Church. Her voice will tell us 'What is Truth.'"-Ib. p. 17.

The Church is not the Church of the Rome, but the Bible is the Book of the Church."-Ibid. p. 15.

18. Even on the Primacy of the Pope, which by acts of Parliament and by the Order of our Reformed Church was rejected, these men are now approaching Popery with their entreaties. They set up Associations to promote reunion with Rome: they desecrate public worship by prayers for it; they hail the Papal Council; they declare the identity of our Articles with the Papal Creed; and the language, in which some of their leaders have lately expressed themselves, leaves no doubt as to their design. In St. Alban's, Holborn, Dr. Littledale, accompanied by three other Priests, asked all present to pray.

"That Pentecostal fires might descend upon that great Council which was about to assemble under the chief Bishop of the Church, so that some of the scandals of the last 300 years might be removed."

One of their organs expressed plainly the sentiments of the party: The cry of the earnest and devout in our Communion to the successor of St. Peter is 'Come over and help us.' Will he stop his ears and beat back the hands stretched towards him, or will he advance half way and fall on our neck and kiss us? We are quite content to allow that we have been, as a Church, separate, degraded by the State to keep swine, and famished on the husks it has cast to us, but we do not forget that we are sons."-Church News, Sept. 15, 1869.

We cannot wonder that in a Roman Catholic newspaper, a letter from an Ecclesiastic of high position is given, which states:-

"It is notably impossible for the Holy Father and the Council to ignore the reunion with the Holy See expressed by so many pious Anglicans." From information "received from Catholics in England, from Archbishop Manning downwards,"- "the present spirit of the more advanced Anglicans is all that could be desired."- Weekly Register, Sept. 4.

Therefore, it is no exaggeration to describe the Ritualistic party as Romanists, who have reached already with bold advance the worst errors and idolatries of the Church of Rome.

The conspiracy now is organized, its practice open, its purpose avowed. To unprotenstantize our Church and to overthrow our reformed faith is their deliberate and unconcealed design. Nor is the evil or the danger small; in some cases the laity have been corrupted by their teaching and have imbibed Romish errors, but the great majority of our laity are shocked and startled to find such heresies suffered within our Church, and they ask, with wonder and impatience, why is nothing done? what are the heads of our Church doing?

One conclusion is, that the faithful members of our Protestant Church must look for a remedy under God, not to others but to themselves.

Union is as necessary as Action. If the faithful members of our Church are, through God's blessing, permitted to resist the two great dangers of Ritualistic and Romish superstition on the one hand, and Unbelief on the other, they must learn to think, to deliberate and act together, but above all to be earnest in prayer. This course was pursued by the members of the early Church; and ended by God's blessing in harmonious agreement. This should be our course. That which we must look for, which alone will serve us, is the cordial union of Clergy and Laity, and their united prayer to Him who ordereth all things according to his good pleasure.

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57th Thousand.

Chapter 8

Are you Fighting?

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are “pure gold.” Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond’s Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. ARE YOU FIGHTING?

“Fight the good fight of faith”— 1 Timothy 6:12.

It is a curious fact that there is no subject about which most people feel such deep interest as “fighting.” Young men and maidens, old men and little children, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all feel a deep interest in wars, battles, and fighting.

This is a simple fact, whatever way we may try to explain it. We should call that Englishman a dull fellow who cared nothing about the story of Waterloo, or Inkermann, or Balaclava, or Lucknow. We should think that heart cold and stupid which was not moved and thrilled by the events at Sedan, and Strasburg, and Metz, and Paris.

But, reader, there is another warfare of far greater importance than any war that was ever waged by man. It is a warfare which concerns not two or three nations only, but every Christian man and woman born into the world. The warfare I speak of is the spiritual warfare. It is the fight which every one who would be saved must fight about his soul.

This warfare, I am aware, is a thing of which many know nothing. Talk to them about it, and they are ready to set you down as a madman, an enthusiast, or a fool. And yet it is as real and true as any war the world has ever seen. It has its hand-to-hand conflicts and its wounds. It has his watchings and fatigues. It has its sieges and assaults. It has its victories and its defeats. Above all, it has consequences which are awful, tremendous, and most peculiar. In earthly warfare the consequences to nations are often temporary and remediable. In the spiritual warfare it is very different. Of that warfare, the consequences, when the fight is over, are unchangeable and eternal.

Reader, it is of this warfare that St. Paul spake to Timothy, when he wrote those burning words: “Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life.” It is of this warfare that I want to speak to you today. We meet each other at a critical period of the world’s history. Men’s minds are full of “wars and rumours of wars.” Men’s hearts are full of fear while they look at the things which seem coming on the earth. On every side the horizon looks black and gloomy. Who can tell when the storm will burst? Give me your attention for a few moments, while I try to impress on you the solemn words which the Holy Ghost taught St. Paul to write down: “Fight the good fight of faith.”

1. The first thing I have to say is this: True Christianity is a fight.

“True Christianity”—mind that word “true.” Let there be no mistake about my meaning. There is a vast quantity of religion current in the world which is not true, genuine Christianity. It passes muster; it satisfies sleepy consciences; but it is not good money. It is not the real thing which was called Christianity eighteen hundred years ago. There are thousands of men and women who go to churches and chapels every Sunday, and call themselves Christians. Their names are in the baptismal register. They are reckoned Christians while they live. They are married with a Christian marriage-service. They are buried as Christians when they die. But you never see any “fight” about their religion! Of spiritual strife, and exertion, and conflict, and self-denial, and watching, and warring they know literally nothing at all. Such Christianity may satisfy man, and those who say anything against it may be thought very hard and uncharitable; but it certainly is not the Christianity of the Bible. It is not the religion which the Lord Jesus founded, and His Apostles preached. True Christianity is “a fight.”

The true Christian is called to be a soldier, and must behave as such from the day of his conversion to the day of his death, he is not meant to live a life of religious ease, indolence, and security, He must never imagine for a moment that he can sleep and dose along the way to heaven, like one travelling in an easy carriage. If he takes his standard of Christianity from the children of this world he may be content with such notions, but he will find no countenance for them in the Word of God. If the Bible is the rule of his faith and practice, he will find his lines laid down very plainly in this matter. He must “fight.”

With whom is the Christian soldier meant to fight? Not with other Christians. Wretched indeed is that man’s idea of religion who fancies that it consists in perpetual controversy He who is never satisfied unless he is engaged in some strife between church and church, chapel and chapel, sect and sect, party and party, knows nothing yet as he ought to know. Never is the cause of sin so helped as when Christians waste their strength in quarrelling with one another, and spend their time in petty squabbles.

No, indeed! The principal fight of the Christian is with the world, the flesh, and the devil. These are his never-dying foes. These are the three chief enemies against whom he must wage war. Unless he gets the victory over these three, all other victories are useless and vain. If he had a nature like an angel, and was not a fallen creature, the warfare would not be so essential. But with a corrupt heart, a busy devil, and an ensnaring world, he must either “fight” or be lost.

He must fight the flesh. Even after conversion he carries within him a nature prone to evil, and a heart weak and unstable as water. To keep that heart from going astray, there is need of a daily struggle and a daily wrestling in prayer. “I keep under my body,” cries St. Paul, “and bring it into subjection.” “I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity.” “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? …. They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” “Mortify your members which axe upon the earth” (1 Corinthians 9:27; Romans 7:23-24; Galatians 5:24; Colossians 3:5).

He must fight the world. The subtle influence of that mighty enemy must be daily resisted, and without a daily battle can never be overcome. The love of the world’s good things, the fear of the world’s laughter or blame, the secret desire to keep in with the world, the secret wish to do as others in the world do, and not to run into extremes—all these are spiritual foes which beset the Christian continually on his way to heaven, and must be conquered. “The friendship of the world is

enmity with God: whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "The world is crucified unto Me, and I unto the world." "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." "Be not conformed to this world" (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15; Galatians 6:4; 1 John 5:4; Romans 12:2).

He must fight the devil. That old enemy of mankind is not dead. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve he has been going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it, and striving to compass one great end—the ruin of man's soul. Never slumbering and never sleeping, he is always going about as a lion seeking whom he may devour. An unseen enemy, he is always near us, about our path and about our bed, and spying out ail our ways. A murderer and a liar from the beginning, he labours night and day to cast us down to hell. Sometimes by leading into superstition, sometimes by suggesting infidelity, sometimes by one kind of tactics and sometimes by another, he is always carrying on a campaign against our souls. "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." This mighty adversary must be daily resisted if we wish to be saved. But "this kind goeth not out" but by watching and praying, and putting on the whole armour of God. The strong man armed will never be kept out of our hearts without a daily battle. (Job 1:7; 1 Peter 5:8; John 8:44; Luke 22:31; Ephesians 6:11).

Reader, perhaps you think these statements too strong. You fancy that I am going too far, and laying on the colours too thickly. You are secretly saying to yourself, that men and women in England may surely get to heaven without all this trouble and warfare and fighting. Listen to me for a few minutes, and I will show you that I have something to say on God's behalf. Remember the maxim of the wisest general that ever lived in England: "In time of war it is the worst mistake to underrate your enemy, and try to make a little war." This Christian warfare is no light matter. Give me your attention and consider what I say.

What saith the Scripture? "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life. …. Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "Labour for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life." "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." "War a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience" (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:8; Ephesians 6:11-13; Luke 13:24; John 6:27; Matthew 10:34; Luke 22:36; 1 Corinthians 16:18; 1 Timothy 1:18-19). Words such as these appear to me clear, plain and unmistakable. They all teach one and the same great lesson, if we are willing to receive it. That lesson is, that true Christianity is a struggle, a fight, and a warfare.

What says the Baptismal Service of the Church of England? No doubt that service is uninspired, and like every uninspired composition, it has its defects, but to the millions of people all over the globe, who profess and call themselves English Churchmen, its voice ought to speak with some weight. And what does it say? It tells us that over every new member who is admitted into the Church of England the following words are used: "I baptise thee in the name of the Father, the

Son, and the Holy Ghost." "I sign this child with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." Of course we all know that in myriads of eases baptism is a mere form, and that parents bring their children to the font without faith or prayer or thought, and receive no blessing. The man who supposes that baptism in such cases acts mechanically, like a medicine, and that godly and ungodly, praying and prayerless parents all alike get the same benefit for their children, must be in a strange state of mind. But one thing at any rate is very certain. Every baptised Churchman is by his profession a "soldier of Jesus Christ," and is pledged "to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil." He that doubts it had better take up his Prayer-book, and read, and mark, and learn its contents. The worst thing about many very zealous Churchmen is their total ignorance of what their own Prayer book contains.

Reader, whether you are a Churchman or not, one thing is very certain, this Christian warfare is a subject of vast importance. It is not a matter like Church government and ceremonial, about which men may differ, and yet reach heaven at last. Necessity is laid upon us. There are no promises in .the Lord Jesus Christ's Epistles to the Seven Churches, except to those who "overcome."

It is a fight of absolute necessity. Think not that in this war you can remain neutral and sit still. Such a line of action may be possible in the strife of nations, but it is utterly impossible in that conflict which concerns the soul. The boasted policy of non-interference, the "masterly inactivity" which pleases so many statesmen, the plan of keeping quiet and letting things alone—all this will never do in the Christian warfare. Here at any rate no one can escape under the plea that he is "a man of peace." To be at peace with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is to be at enmity with God, and in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. We have no choice or option. We must either fight or be lost.

It is a fight of universal necessity, No rank, or class, or age, can plead exemption, or escape the battle. Ministers and people, preachers and hearers, old and young, high and low, rich and poor, gentle and simple, kings and subjects, landlords and tenants, learned and unlearned, all alike must carry arms and go to war. All have by nature a heart full of pride, unbelief, sloth, worldliness, and sin. All are living in a world beset with snares, traps, and pitfalls for the soul. All have near them a busy, restless, malicious devil. All, from the king in His palace down to the pauper in the workhouse, all must fight if they would be saved.

It is a fight of perpetual necessity. It admits of no breathing time, no armistice, no truce. On weekdays as well as on Sundays, in private as well as in public, at home by the family fireside as well as abroad, in little things like the management of tongue and temper, as well as in great ones like the government of kingdoms—the Christian's warfare must unceasingly go on. The foe we have to do with keeps no holidays, never slumbers, and never sleeps. So long as we have breath in our bodies we must keep on our armour, and remember we are on the enemy's ground. "Even on the brink of Jordan," said a dying saint, "I find Satan nibbling at my heels." We must fight till we die.

Reader, consider well what I have been saying. Take care that your own personal religion is real, genuine, and true. The saddest symptom about many so-called Christians, is the utter absence of anything like conflict and fight in their Christianity. They eat, they drink, they dress, they work, they

amuse themselves, they get money, they spend money, they go through a scanty round of formal religious services once every week. But of the great spiritual warfare—its watchings and strugglings, its agonies and anxieties, its battles and contests—of all this they appear to know nothing at all. Take care that this case is not your own. The worst state of soul is when the “strong man armed keepeth his palace, and his goods are at peace,” when he leads men and women “captive at his will,” and they make no resistance. The worst chains are those which are neither felt nor seen by the prisoner. (Luke 11:21; 2 Timothy 2:26).

Reader, take comfort about your soul, if you know anything of an inward fight and conflict. It is not everything, I am well aware, but it is something. Do you find in your heart of hearts a spiritual struggle? Do you feel anything of the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that you cannot do the things you would? (Galatians 5:17). Are you conscious of two principles within you, contending for the mastery? Do you see anything of war in your inward man? Well, thank God for it! It is a good sign. It is evidence not to be despised. Anything is better than apathy, stagnation, deadness, and indifference. You are in a better state than many. The most part of so-called Christians have no feeling at all. You are evidently no friend of Satan. Like the kings of this world, he wars not against his own subjects. The very fact that he assaults you, should fill your mind with hope. Reader, I say again, take comfort, the child of God has two great marks about him, and of these two you have one. HE MAY BE KNOWN BY HIS INWARD WARFARE, AS WELL AS BY HIS INWARD PEACE.

II. I pass on to the second thing which I have to say, in handling my subject: True Christianity is the fight of faith.

In this respect the Christian warfare is utterly unlike the conflicts of this world. It does not depend on the strong arm, the quick eye, or the swift foot. It is not waged with carnal weapons, but with spiritual. Faith is the hinge on which victory turns. Success depends entirely on believing.

A general faith in the truth of God’s written Word is the primary foundation of the Christian soldier’s character. He is what he is, does what he does, thinks as he thinks, acts as he acts, hopes as he hopes, behaves as he behaves, for one simple reason—he believes certain propositions revealed and laid down in Holy Scripture. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

A religion without doctrine or dogma, is a thing which many are fond of talking of in the present day. It sounds very fine at first. It looks very pretty at a distance. But the moment you sit down to examine and consider it, you will find it a simple impossibility. You might as well talk of a body without bones and sinews. No man will ever be anything or do anything in religion, unless he believes something. Even those who profess to hold the miserable and uncomfortable views of the Deists are obliged to confess that they believe something. With all their bitter sneers against dogmatic theology and Christian credulity, as they call it, they themselves have a kind of faith.

As for true Christians, faith is the very backbone of their spiritual existence. No one ever fights earnestly against the world, the flesh, and the devil, unless he has engraven on his heart certain great principles which he believes. What they are he may hardly know, and certainly not be able to define or write down. But there they are, and consciously or unconsciously they form the roots of his religion. Wherever you see a man, whether rich or poor, learned or unlearned, wrestling

manfully with sin, and trying to overcome it, you may depend there are certain great principles which this man believes. The poet who wrote the famous lines:

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,

He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right,” was a clever man, but a poor divine. There is no such thing as right living without faith and believing.

A special faith in our Lord Jesus Christ’s person, work, and office, is the life, heart and mainspring of the Christian soldier’s character.

He sees by faith an unseen Saviour, who loved him, gave Himself for him, paid his debts for him, bore his sins, carried his transgressions, rose again for him, and appears in heaven for him as his Advocate at the right hand of God. Seeing this Saviour and trusting in Him, he feels peace and hope, and willingly does battle against the foes of his soul.

He sees his own many sins—his weak heart, a tempting world, a-busy devil, and if be looked only at them he might well despair. But he sees also a mighty Saviour, an interceding Saviour, a sympathising Saviour—His blood, His righteousness, His everlasting priesthood—and he believes that all this is his own. Believing this, he cheerfully fights on, with a full confidence that He will prove “more than conqueror through Him that loved him.”

Habitual lively faith in Christ’s presence and readiness to help is the secret of the Christian soldier fighting successfully.

It must never be forgotten that faith admits of degrees. All men do not believe alike, and even the same person has his ebbs and flows of faith, and believes more heartily at one time than another. According to the degree of his faith the Christian fights well or ill, wins victories, or suffers occasional repulses, comes off triumphant, or loses a battle. He that has most faith will always be the happiest and most comfortable soldier. Nothing makes the anxieties of warfare sit so lightly on a man as the assurance of Christ’s love and God’s protection. Nothing enables him to bear the fatigue of watching, struggling, and wrestling against sin, like the indwelling confidence that God is on his side and success is sure. It is the “shield of faith” which quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one. It is the man who can say: “I know whom I have believed,” who can say in time of suffering: “I am not ashamed.”

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” was the man who wrote with the same pen, “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (Ephesians 6:16; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18). The more faith the more victory! The more faith the more inward peace!

Reader, I think it impossible to overrate the value and importance of faith. Well may the Apostle Peter call it “precious” (2 Peter 1:1). Time would fall me if I tried to recount a hundredth part of the victories which by faith Christian soldiers have obtained.

Take down your Bible and read with attention the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Mark the long list of worthies whose names are thus recorded, from Abel down to Moses. Note well what battles they won against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And then remember that

believing did it all. “By it the elders obtained a good report.” (Hebrews 11:2).

Turn to the pages of early Church history. See how the primitive Christians held fast their religion even unto death, and were not shaken by the fiercest persecutions of heathen emperors. For centuries there were never wanting men like Polycarp and Ignatius, who were ready to die rather than deny Christ. Fines, and prisons, and torture, and fire, and sword, were unable to crush the spirit of the noble army of martyrs. The whole power of imperial Rome, the mistress of the world, proved unable to stamp out the religion which began with a few fishermen and publicans in Palestine! And then remember that believing was the Church’s strength. They won their victory by faith.

Examine the story of the Protestant Reformation. Study the lives of its leading champions—Wycliffe, and Huss, and Luther, and Ridley, and Latimer, and Hooper. Mark how these gallant soldiers of Christ stood firm against a host of adversaries, and were ready to die for their principles. What battles they fought! What controversies they maintained! What contradiction they endured! What tenacity of purpose they exhibited against a world in arms! And then remember that believing was the secret of their strength. They overcame by faith.

Consider the men who have made the greatest marks in Church history in the last hundred years. Observe how men like Wesley, and Whitefield, and Venn, and Romaine, stood alone in their day and generation, and revived English religion in the face of opposition from men high in office—and in the face of slander, ridicule, and persecution from nine-tenths of professing Christians in our land. Observe how men like William Wilberforce, and Havelock, and Hedley Vicars, have witnessed for Christ in the most difficult positions, and displayed a banner for Christ even at the regimental mess-table, or on the floor of the House of Commons. Mark how these home witnesses never flinched to the end, and won the respect even of their worst adversaries. And then remember that believing is the key to all their characters. By faith they lived, and walked, and stood, and overcame.

Reader, would you live the life of a Christian soldier? Pray for faith. It is the gift of God; and a gift which those who ask shall never ask for in vain. You must believe before you do. If men do nothing in religion, it is because they do not believe. Faith is the first step toward heaven.

Would you fight the fight of a Christian soldier successfully and prosperously? Pray for a continual growth of faith. Let your dally prayer be that of the disciples—“Lord, increase my faith.” Watch jealously over your faith, if you have any. It is the citadel of the Christian character, on which the safety of the whole fortress depends. It is the point which Satan loves to assail. All lies at His mercy if faith is overthrown. Here, if you love life, you must especially stand on your guard.

III. The last thing I have to say is this: True Christianity is a good fight.

“Good” is a curious word to apply to any warfare. All worldly war is more or less evil. No doubt it is an absolute necessity in many cases, to procure the liberty of nations, to prevent the weak from being trampled down by the strong; but still it is an evil.

It entails an awful amount of bloodshed and suffering. It hurries into eternity myriads who are completely unprepared for their change. It calls forth the worst passions of man. It causes enormous waste and destruction of property. It fills peaceful homes with mourning widows and

orphans. It spreads far and wide poverty, taxation, and national distress. It disarranges all the order of society. It interrupts the work of the Gospel and the growth of Christian missions. In short, war is an immense and incalculable evil, and every praying man should cry night and day: “Give peace in our times.” And yet there is one warfare which is emphatically “good,” and one fight in which there is no evil. That warfare is the Christian warfare. That fight is the fight of the soul.

Now what are the reasons why the Christian fight is a “good fight?” What are the points in which his warfare is superior to the warfare of this world? Let me examine this matter, and open it out in order. I dare not pass the subject, and leave it unnoticed. I want no one to begin the life of a Christian soldier without counting the cost. I would not keep back from any one that the Christian fight, though spiritual, is real and severe. It needs courage, boldness, and perseverance. But I want my readers to know that there is abundant encouragement, if they will only begin the battle. The Scripture does not call the Christian fight “a good fight” without reason and cause. Let me try to shew what I mean.

(a) The Christian’s fight is good because fought under the best of generals. The Leader and Commander of all believers is our Divine Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ—a Saviour of perfect wisdom, infinite love, and almighty power. The Captain of our salvation never falls to lead His soldiers to victory. He never makes any useless movements, never errs in judgement, never commits any mistake. His eye is on all His followers, from the greatest of them even to the least. The humblest servant in His army is not forgotten. The weakest and most sickly is cared for, remembered, and kept unto salvation. The souls whom He has purchased and redeemed with His own blood are far too precious to be wasted and thrown away. Surely this is good!

(b) The Christian’s fight is good, because fought with, the best of helps. Weak as each believer is in himself, the Holy Spirit dwells in him, and his body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. Chosen by God the Father, washed in the blood of the Son, renewed by the Spirit, he does not go a warfare at his own charges, and is never alone. God the Holy Ghost dally teaches, leads, guides, and directs him. God the Father helps him by His almighty power. God the Son intercedes for him every moment, like Moses on the mount, while he is fighting in the valley below. A threefold cord like this can never be broken! His dally provisions and supplies never fall. His commissariat is never defective. His bread and his water are sure. Weak as he seems in himself, like a worm, he is strong in the Lord to do great exploits. Surely this is good!

(c) The Christian fight is a good fight, because fought with the best of promises. To every believer belong exceeding great and precious promises—all yea and amen in Christ—promises sure to be fulfilled because made by Him who cannot He, and has power as well as will to keep His word. “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” “he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.” My sheep “shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, . . . nor things present, nor things to come …. shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:14; Romans 16:20; Php_1:6; Isaiah 43:2; John 10:28; John 6:37; Isaiah 13:5; Romans 8:38-39). Words like these are worth their weight in gold! Who does not know that promises of coming aid have cheered the

defenders of besieged cities like Lucknow, and raised them above their natural strength? Who does not know that the promise of help before night had much to say to the mighty victory of Waterloo? Yet all such promises are as nothing compared to the rich treasure of believers, the eternal promises of God. Surely this is good!

(d) The Christian's fight is a good fight, because fought with the best of issues and results. No doubt it is a war in which there are tremendous struggles, agonising conflicts, wounds, bruises, watchings, fastings, and fatigue. But still every believer, without exception, is "more than conqueror through Him that loved him." No soldiers of Christ are ever lost, missing, or left dead on the battlefield. No mourning will ever need to be put on, and no tears be shed for either private or officer in the army of Christ. The muster-roll, when the last evening comes, will be found precisely the same that it was in the morning. The English Guards marched out of London to the Crimean campaign a magnificent body of men; but many of the gallant fellows laid their bones in a foreign grave, and never saw London again. Far different shall be the arrival of the Christian army in "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Not one shall be found lacking. The words of our great Captain shall be found true: "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none" (John 18:9). Surely this is good!

(e) The Christian's fight is good, because it does good to the soul of him that fights it. All other wars have a bad, lowering, and demoralising tendency. They call forth the worst passions of the human mind. They harden the conscience, and sap the foundations of religion and morality. The Christian warfare alone tends to call forth the best things that are left in man. It promotes humility and charity, it lessens selfishness and worldliness, it induces men to set their affection on things above. The old, the sick, the dying, are never known to repent of fighting Christ's battles against sin, the world, and the devil. Their only regret is that they did not begin to serve Christ long before. The experience of that eminent saint, Philip Henry, does not stand alone. In his last days he said to his family: "I take you all to record that a life spent in the service of Christ is the happiest life that a man can spend upon earth." Surely this is good!

(f) The Christian's fight is a good fight, because it does good to the world. All other wars have a devastating, ravaging, and injurious effect. The march of an army through a land is an awful scourge to the inhabitants. Wherever it goes it impoverishes, wastes, and does harm. Injury to persons, property, feelings, and morals invariably accompanies it. Far different are the effects produced by Christian soldiers. Wherever they live they are a blessing. They raise the standard of religion and morality. They invariably check the progress of drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, profligacy, and dishonesty. Even their enemies are obliged to respect them. Go where you please, you will rarely find that barracks and garrisons do good to the neighbourhood. But go where you please, you will find that the presence of 4 few true Christians is a blessing. Surely this is good!

(g) Finally, the Christian's fight is good, because the end is a glorious reward for all who fight it. Who can tell the wages that Christ will pay to all His faithful people? Who can estimate the good things that our Divine Captain has laid up for those who confess Him before men? A grateful country can give to her successful warriors medals, Victoria crosses, pensions, peerages, honours, and titles. But it can give nothing that will last and endure for ever, nothing than can be carried beyond the grave. Palaces like Blenheim and Strathfield say can only be enjoyed for a few years. The bravest generals and soldiers must go down one day before the king of terrors. Better,

far better, is the position of him who fights under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil, He may get little praise of man while he lives, and go down to the grave with little honour; but he shall have that which is far better, because far more enduring. It shall have "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Surely this is good.

Reader, settle it in your mind that the Christian fight is a good fight, really good, truly good, emphatically good. You see only part of it yet. You see the struggle, but not the end; you see the campaign, but not the reward; you see the cross, but not the crown. You see a few humble, broken-spirited, penitent, praying people, enduring hardships and despised by the world; but you see not the hand of God over them, the face of God smiling on them, the kingdom of glory prepared for them. These things are yet to be revealed. Judge not by appearances. There are more good things about the Christian warfare than you see.

And now, reader, let me conclude my whole subject with a few words of practical application. Our lot is cast in times when the world seems thinking of little else but battles and fighting. The iron is entering into the soul of more than one nation, and the mirth of many a fair district is clean gone. Surely at a time like this a minister may fairly call on men to remember the spiritual warfare. Bear with me while I say a few parting words about the great fight of the soul.

(1) It may be you are struggling hard for the rewards of this world. Perhaps you are straining every nerve to obtain money, or place, or power, or pleasure. Reader, if that be your case, take care. You are sowing a crop of bitter disappointment. Unless you mind what you are about your latter end will be to He down in sorrow.

Thousands have trodden the path you are pursuing, and have awoke too late to find it end in misery and eternal ruin. They have fought hard for wealth, and honour, and office, and promotion, and turned their backs on God, and Christ, and heaven, and the world to come. And what has their end been? Often, far too often, they have found out that their whole life has been a grand mistake. They have tasted by bitter experience the feelings of the dying statesman who cried aloud in his last hours: "The battle is fought: the battle is fought: but the victory is not won."

Reader, for your own happiness' sake resolve this day to join the Lord's side. Shake off your past carelessness and unbelief. Come out from the ways of a thoughtless, unreasoning world. Take up the cross, and become a good soldier of Christ. Fight the good fight of faith, that you may be happy as well as safe.

Think what the children of this world will often do for liberty, without any religious principle. Remember how Greeks, and Romans, and Swiss, and Tyrolese, have endured the loss of all things, and even life itself, rather than bend their necks to a foreign yoke. Let their example provoke you for emulation. If men can do so much for a corruptible crown, how much more should you do for one which is incorruptible! Awake to a sense of the misery of being a slave. For life, and happiness, and liberty, arise and fight.

Fear not to begin and enlist under Christ's banner. The great Captain of your salvation rejects none that come to Him. Like David in the cave of Adullam, he is ready to receive all who come to him, however unworthy they may feel themselves.—None who repent and believe are too bad to be enrolled in the ranks of Christ's army. All who come to Him by faith are admitted, clothed, armed, trained, and finally led on to complete victory. Reader, fear not to begin this very day.

There is yet room for you.

Fear not to go on fighting, if you once enlist. The more thorough and whole-hearted you are as a soldier, the more comfortable will you find your warfare. No doubt you will often meet with trouble, fatigue, and hard fighting, before your warfare is accomplished. But let none of these things move you. Greater is He that is for you than all they that be against you. Everlasting liberty or everlasting captivity are the alternatives before you. Choose liberty, and fight to the last.

(2) Reader, it may be you know something of the Christian warfare, and are a tried and proved soldier already. If that be your case, accept a parting word of advice and encouragement from a fellow-soldier. Let me speak to myself as well as to you. Let us stir up our minds by way of remembrance. There are some things which we cannot remember too well.

Let us remember that if we would fight successfully we must put on the whole armour of God, and never lay it aside till we die. Not a single piece of the armour can be dispensed with. The girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of hope, each and all are needful. Not a single day can we dispense with any part of this armour. Well says an old veteran in Christ's army, who died 200 years ago: "In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory. But here our arms are to be worn night and day. We must walk, work, sleep in them, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ."—Gurnall's "Christian Armour").

Let us remember the solemn words of an old warrior, who went to his rest more than 1800 years ago: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4). May we never forget that saying!

Let us remember that some have seemed good soldiers for a little season, and talked loudly of what they would do, and yet turned back disgracefully in the day of battle. Let us never forget Balaam, and Judas, and Demas, and Lot's wife. Whatever we are, and however weak, let us be real, genuine, true, and sincere.

Let us remember that the eye of our loving Saviour is upon us morning, noon, and night. He will never suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He suffered himself being tempted. He knows what battles and conflicts are, for He Himself was assaulted by the prince of this world. Having such a High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Let us remember that thousands of soldiers before us have fought the same battle that we are fighting, and come off more than conquerors through Him that loved them. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb; and so also may we. Christ's arm is quite as strong as ever, and Christ's heart is just as loving as ever. He that saved men and women before us, is one who never changes. He is able to save to the uttermost both you and me and all who come unto God by Him. Then let us cast doubts and fears away. Let us follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, and are waiting for us to join them.

Finally, let us remember that the time is short, and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. A few more battles and the last trumpet shall sound, and the Prince of Peace shall come to reign on a renewed earth. A few more struggles and conflicts, and then we shall bid an eternal goodbye to sin

and sorrow and death. Then let us fight on to the last, and never surrender. Thus saith the Captain of our salvation: “he that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son” (Revelation 21:7).

Let me conclude all with the words of John Bunyan, in one of the most beautiful parts of “Pilgrim’s Progress.” He is describing the end of one of his best and holiest pilgrims:—

“After this it was noised abroad that Mr. Valiant-for-truth was sent for by a summons, by the same party as the others. And he had this word for a token that the summons was true, ‘The pitcher was broken at the fountain’ (Ecclesiastes 12:6). When he understood it, he called for his friends, and told them of it. Then said he: ‘ I am going to my Father’s house; and though with great difficulty I have got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the troubles I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles, who will now be my Rewarder.’ When the day that he must go home was come, many accompanied him to the riverside, into which, as he went down, he said, ‘O death, where is thy sting?’ And as he went down deeper, he cried, ‘O grave, where is thy victory?’ So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.”

Reader, may our last end be like this!

HYMN.

Thus far the Lord hath led us! in darkness and in day,

Through all the varied stages of the narrow homeward way.

Long since He took that journey, He trod that path alone,

Its trials and its dangers full well Himself hath known.

Thus far the Lord hath led us! The promise has not failed,

The enemy, encountered oft, has never quite prevailed;

The shield of faith has turned aside, or quenched each fiery dart,

The Spirit sword in weakest hands has forced him to depart

Titus far the Lord hath led us! The waters have been high,

But yet in passing through them we felt that He was nigh.

A very present helper in troubles we have found;

His comforts most abounded when our sorrows did abound.

Thus far the Lord hath led us! Our need hath been supplied,

And mercy has encompassed us about on every side,

Still falls the dally manna, the pure rock-fountains flow,

And many flowers of love and hope along the wayside grow.

Thus far the Lord hath led us! and will He now forsake

The feeble ones whom for His own it pleased Him to take?

Oh, never, never! Earthly friends may cold and faithless prove,

But His is changeless pity and everlasting love.

Calmly we look behind us, on joys and sorrows past,

We know that all is mercy now, and shall be well at last;

Calmly we look before us—we fear no future ill,

Enough for safety and for peace, if Thou art with us still.

Yes! “they that know Thy name, Lord, shall put their trust in Thee,”

While nothing in themselves but sin and helplessness they see.

The race Thou hast appointed us with patience we can run,

Thou wilt perform unto the end the work Thou hast began.

Chapter 9

Are you Happy?

Church Association Tracts

No. IV. THE TEACHING OF THE RITUALISTS NOT THE

TEACHING OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

by

Rev. John Charles Ryle D.D. The Ritualists have two devices which it is well to notice.

First, they represent themselves as Catholics, and say they are eager to revive the traditions and worship of the Primitive Church. This representation is contrary to the fact. The Church of England took that course at her Reformation; all that was pure, primitive, and Catholic, both in worship, faith, and order, she retained. She cast off only the fictions, idolatry, and error by which Roman Priest-craft and Italian ambition had disfigured the Apostolic faith.

But the Reformation and the works of our Reformed Church is denounced by Ritualists as mutilated, Antichristian, and a pestilent heresy, while, in fact, the Ritualists are merely reintroducing the ceremonies and dogmas which our fathers cast off as idolatrous and superstitious. When therefore they call themselves Catholics, they mean Romanists.

Their second device, when they meet their countrymen, is to disguise and cloak their opinions.

They appeal to that just sentiment which prevails, the desire to reclaim and instruct the masses. They represent themselves as devoted to this duty. Whereas, when you watch their acts and visit their churches, you find them doing the work of Roman priests, endeavouring by appeals to remorse, by demands for confession, by offers of absolution, by sacrifices of masses, by urging of prayers to Saints and the Virgin, by appeals to the senses, music, incense, shows and dresses, to allure to Church the frivolous, careless, and dissipated. The result of this is, what it is in all European countries where Rome prevails, to bring power, repute, and gifts to the priest; to leave unchanged the vices and appetites of the people.

Ritualism then is in its faith and forms Romanism; and, in order not to misrepresent it, we shall take its own organs to describe its practices, and learn its words and ways from its tracts, magazines, catechisms, manuals of devotion, and the newspapers, which the Ritualists publish.

1. They declare that the doctrine of Rome and England is the same,1 they attend the Roman mass,2 and recommend others to do the same3 and they pray for union with the corrupt Church of Rome.4

1 “The breach between us and Rome is not so wide as is commonly thought.”—Dr. Pusey's Eirenicon, p. 207.

“What I have said to the Gallican [i.e. Romish] Bishops, and what they have clearly understood, is this, ‘that I believe the Council of Trent, whatever its look may be, and our Articles, whatever their look may be, each could be so explained as to be reconcilable one with the other.’” Speech by Dr. Pusey, at Annual Meeting of the English Church Union, 1866. See E. C. U. Circular, for July, 1866, p. 197.

“None but those who have reduced ignorance to a system, now deny that the differences between the authoritative documents of Rome and England are Infinitesimal—that the priesthood is the same, the Liturgy virtually the same, and the doctrine the same.”—Church Times, June 18, 1869.

2 “We have attended mass in a hundred great cities of the continent, and found out that there is not of necessity an idol in every foreign Church; but that it is very possible to worship with a Roman priest, and not only to receive no harm, but some good.”—Rev. W. J. E. Bennett’s Essay on “Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833,” in the Church and the World, p. 19. 1867.

3 “If the traveller should assist at Protestant worship, he is aiding and abetting that the doctrine, heresy, and schism from which he prays in the Litany to be delivered. If he does go to the Anglican chapel, he is nevertheless bound to be present at an early Mass in the Roman parish church.”—Church News, July 7, 1889

4 “It is the distinct duty of all who pray for the peace of Jerusalem to repudiate foreign Lutheranism, Calvinism, &c., and to do their utmost to show that the English Church of which they are members, is really one with the Church of Rome in faith, orders, and sacraments; whilst the Protestant bodies are branches cut off from the True Vine of which the Roman and Anglican and Eastern Communions are living boughs.”—Church News, July 7, 1869.

“We had been chosen by God to be the colonists of all newly discovered lands, and we stood, like Aaron, between the living and the dead—between the living Church and the dead and decaying forms of a corrupt Protestantism. We were bound to come forward with our message to both—to the living, that they be not high-minded, but fear; to the dead, that they arise and return to the pure bosom of their mother the Catholic Church.”—From Notice of Sermon by Rev. Dr. Littledale on the Anniversary of the A. P. U. C. in the Church Times, Sept. 10, 1869.

2. They revile Protestantism. They call it heresy,5 a pest,6 a cancer,7 a monstrous figment,8 and they vilify the Reformation and the Reformers9 in terms equally coarse;10 and yet they quietly remit in incumbencies and curacies within the Church of the Reformation.

5 A writer in The Church and the World (Ed. 1866, p. 237) says, “Our place is appointed among us Protestants, and in a communion deeply tainted in its practical system by Protestant heresy, but our duty is the expulsion of the evil, and not flight from it.”

“They (the ministers) carry on a school, and are indefatigable in visiting the poor, and in infusing into the veins of an ignorant and unsuspicious populace the poison of Protestant heresy.”

6 “Pest of Protestantism.”—Church News, May 5th, 1869.

7 But we should much prefer seeing attention centred on theological matters and questions of discipline, and extirpating that ulcerous cancer of Protestantism, which must be fatal, sooner or later, to any Church that does not use moral steel and fire upon it.”—Church Times, Sept. 3, 1869.

8 “By way of protest against the monstrous figment of Protestantism.”—Ibid.

“We are bound to correct one of the speakers [at the Islington Clerical Meeting] who remarked that the Tractarian School, whatever its good points may be, loses sight of the distinctive doctrines of the Reformation. We do not lose sight of them at all. We are busy in hunting them down, and have no intention of foregoing the chase till we have extirpated them. That is plain speaking enough, we trust.”—Church Times, Jan. 28th, 1870.

9 “Anathema to the Principle of Protestantism.”—Palmer’s Letter to Golightly.

10 Dr. Littledale, in his Lecture on Innovations, calls the Reformers a set of miscreants, all utterly unredeemed villains.

3. They propose to abandon, and labour for the abolition of, the xxxix Articles of Religion,11 which “contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God’s Word.”

11 “First of all come the xxxix Articles, those Protestant Articles, tacked on to Catholic Liturgy, those forty-stripes-save-one, as some have called them, laid on the back of the Anglican priesthood—How are they to be got over?”—Essay by Rev. L. Blenkinsopp on “Reunion of the Church,” in the Church and the World, 1866, p. 202.

See proposal of Dr. Pusey that the Universities should abandon subscription to the xxxix Articles as the practical qualification for orthodox Church of England Protestant teaching, in Letter to the President of the Wesleyan conference, 1868.

“It will soon become the duty of Churchmen to labour actively for the abolition of the Articles, which have long ago done their work and are really of extremely little use now, discrediting us (as they do) in the eyes of foreign Catholics.”—Church News, July 29, 1868.

“We have never seen the use of retaining the Thirty-nine Articles at all.”—Church Times, March 12th, 1869.

“The abolition of the Thirty-nine Articles, the adoption of Edward VI. First Communion Office…would win for the Disestablished Church the respect of Christendom.”—Church Times, Sep. 3rd. 1869.

4, They hold with the Church of Rome that there are seven Sacraments,12 whereas our xxvth Article declares that there are two Sacraments ordained of Christ in the Gospel—Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

12 See Article on “The Seven Sacraments,” in Tracts for the Day, edited by Rev. O. Shipley.

In the Prayer Book for the Young, or complete Guide to Public and Private Devotion for youthful members of the English Church, “Confirmation,” “Confession,” “Visitation of the Sick,” “Holy Orders” and “Matrimony” are enumerated among the Sacraments, p. 10.

Rev. Orby Shipley states in his “Sermons on Sin,” that “there are seven Sacraments and personal extensions of the incarnation of God”—“Baptism,” “Confirmation,” “Eucharist,” “Marriage,” “Orders,” “Extreme Unction,” “Penance.” And he adds, “The seventh and last sacramental extension of the Incarnation of our God, I need not tell you, my brethren, in theological language,

is termed the “Sacrament of Penance.”—pp. 43 to 50.

5. They pray to the Virgin Mary and elevate her to a throne in heaven;13 and our Church declares such adoration to be superstitious and idolatrous.

13 “Blessed Mary, Mother of God, ever Virgin, pray for us.”—Litany of the Blessed Virgin, in Invocation of Saints and Angels, by Rev. O. Shipley p. 66.

“Hail Queen of heaven; hail Mistress of the Angels, hail root, hail gate, wherefrom the light of the world is sprung! Rejoice, O Glorious Virgin, pre-eminently fair, and very lovely, hail! Mayst thou pray Christ for us.”—Monastic Breviary, used at Rev. J. L. Lyne’s Monastery at Laleham Covent at London, &c. p. 80.

See The Female Glory, edited by Rev. Orby Shipley, M.A.., 1869.

6. They pray to saints and invoke their intercession.14 Our Church terms such prayers “repugnant to the Word of God.” (Art. xxii.) St. Paul says there is “one Mediator between God and man.”—1 Tim. ii. 5.

14 “O holy Michael, Prince of the Heavenly Host pray for us.” “O Raphael, pray for us”—Invocation of Saints and Angels edited by Rev. O. Shipley pp. 45, 46.

“Of our patron saint. Most Holy Confessor of the Lord ( ) mayst thou intercede to Christ for us.”—Little Office book. p. 17.

“I pray that Blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, our Blessed Father Benedict, all the Saints (and you, my brothers) may pray for me to the Lord our God.—Monastic Breviary, used at Rev. J. L. Lyne’s Monastery at Laleham, &c., p. 7

7. They set up images of the Virgin and of the saints; and introduce into their churches the Romish pictures of ‘the Twelve Stations of the Cross’ and publish forms of prayer to be said at each Station,15 as in the Roman Catholic Church; whereas our Church warns us that images “if they be publicly suffered in churches will lead to idolatry.” (Art. xxxv, and Homily against Peril of Idolatry)

15 See Decorations in Ritualistic Churches—St. Michael’s and All Angels, Shoreditch, and others.

See the ‘Way of the Cross’ in the Treasury of Devotion, pp. 191 to 200.

8. They pervert the Communion Table into an Altar, the Communion into a Mass, and the Clergyman into a sacrificing Priest, who elevates material elements incorporating the Deity, and direct these to be adored by the worshipper with genuflection and prostration;16 whereas our Church declares that the Mass “overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament” (Art. xxviii), and that such worship is “idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians.” (Communion Service.)

16 “This prayer we say (to use the word common to us all) in the Mass which we now offer in many places daily on our altars.”—Rev. W. J. E. Bennett’s Essay. “Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833” in the Church and the World. p. 19. 1867.

“Grant that the Sacrifice, which I a miserable sinner have offered before Thy Divine Majesty may be acceptable unto Thee, and through thy mercy maybe a propitiation for me, and all for whom I

have offered It."—Priest's Prayer Book, p. 13.

Evidence before the Royal Ritual Commission. Question 2608.—Do you consider yourself a Sacrificing Priest? Answer by Rev. W. J. E. Bennett.—"Yes."

"THE PRIEST AT THE ALTAR IS VIRTUALLY CHRIST HIMSELF."—Catechism of Theology, p. 58

"Q.—Is not the Holy Eucharist also a Sacrifice?—A.—Yes"—Catechism, p. 35. Oxford. 1863.

"May the Lord receive this Sacrifice, etc."—Little Prayer Book, p. 18.

"Now kneel upright, your hands clasped upon your breast; follow the Priest in silent awe, for Jesus thy God is very nigh thee, he is about to descend upon the altar, surrounded by the Fire of the Holy Ghost, and attended by the angels. At the Consecration and Elevation prostrate yourself to the dust and say, 'Hail Body of my God hail Body of my Redeemer—I adore—I adore—I adore thee."— Manual of Devotions and Directions Members of the Church of England, intended especially the Young.

9. They enjoin the reservation of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, whereas our xxxviiith Article says:—"The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

"Celebration in private rooms should be avoided as much as possible. For this purpose it is well to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the church (where this may be done), but especially in collegiate and monastic chapels, where it should always be reserved. The priest should, on due notice being given, carry it from thence in the pyx (in both kinds of course), to the sick man's house..... The priest carries the blessed Sacrament in a monstrance (as described in appendix for reservation in both kinds), or he will convey it in the chalice, the Holy Body being placed previously therein by him, soaked in a few drops of the precious Blood, the chalice being covered with a white veil, and burse, with a corporal folded inside."—The Ritual of the Anglican Clergy, p. 23.

10. They pray for the souls of the Dead, and they declare their belief in Purgatory, and in the power of the priest to relieve from its penalties;17 whereas our Church declares purgatory to be "a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded on no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God." (Art. xxii.)

17 "What seems to be agreed upon is:—That, meantime, the souls of those persons are benefited by the prayers and Offerings of the Church, and by Alms given in their behalf; that those who have not died beyond the pale of salvation receive mitigation of their sufferings and ultimate release; and that, possibly, those who are lost also gain a mitigation of their sufferings, which mitigation may last through Eternity." —Article on Purgatory in Tracts for the Day edited by Rev. O. Shipley, p. 29.

"We beseech thee, O Lord God Almighty, for the souls of the faithful departed"—Altar Manual, edited by a Committee of Clergy, p 34.

The souls of the departed thus abiding in their place of rest may be the subjects of prayer to those who are still alive upon the earth," because "the souls that are departed are not in their

perfection.'—Church's Broken Unity, by Rev. W. J. E. Bennett, p. 122.

"Accept this Sacrifice, which, to the honour of thy Name, we have offered for the faithful, both living and departed, and for all is our sins and offences."—Altar Meal. p.36.

"The state of the departed souls, whether in pain or pleasure, is not yet final. The truth is that they are in custody, easy or harsh, awaiting "Trial."

"The best and holiest men (and much more the average believers) leave this world bearing the stains of earthly sins and error, which must be cleansed somewhere before they can be fitted for heaven."—Prayer for the Dead, by Rev. Dr. Littledale, p. 2.

See Dr. Pusey's Address, headed, "The prayers for departed Companions of the Society of the Love of Jesus."—p. 127, 8.

Also notices at the doors of Ritualistic Churches, "Of your Charity pray for—," and then follow the names of persons sick and dead.

11. They omit the Prayers for the Queen, the Royal Family and Parliament,18 and are agitating for a separation of Church and Sate.19

18 In Ritualistic Churches the State Prayers are generally omitted.

"There does not seem to be any great reason for retaining the prayer for the Queen, bearing in mind the very full and emphatic terms in which her Majesty is mentioned in the Canon. Most people, we suspect, would be exceedingly glad if this prayer, as well as the Comfortable Words and the Addresses were dropped."— Church Times, Jan. 20, 1866.

19 "I referred to an extreme faction in the Church of very modern date that does not conceal its ambition to destroy the connection between Church and State."—Letter from the late Premier to Rev. A. Baker, dated 9th April, 1863.

See Rev. W. J. E. Bennett's Sermon at Bristol, on May 2, 1869 advocating the separation of Church and State, and speaking of their connection as an adulterous love between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. —Ch. Times, May 7, 1869.

12. They also introduce the Romish practices of Extreme Unction,—Incensing persons and things,— Substituting wafers for bread at the Communion Service,'—Using Holy Water,—Consecrating and censing Palm branches on Palm Sunday, —Consecrating ashes, and rubbing them on persons' foreheads on Ash Wednesday,—Censing candles and sprinkling them with Holy Water on Candlemas day.

See Essay on " Unction of the Sick " in Tracts for the day edited by Rev. O. Shipley, where the writer speaks of "the Sacrament of Unction" p. 342, and adds (p. 359) "The principal effect then of Unction is the removal of the relics of Sin; its consequential effect, the remission of the guilt of any Sin it may find in the soul."

"The recognized consecration of chrism and holy oil for various rites cannot be much longer postponed. It will certainly come in somehow"—Dr. Littlerdale's Letter to the Archbishop on "Catholic Revision." p. 28.

Liturgy of Church of Sarum dedicated by permission to Bp. of Salisbury.

13. They advocate the Procession and Veneration of Relics.

See instructions for Procession and Veneration of Relics in Oratory Worship.

“It is well, when the relics are to be exposed, to erect a resting-place for them just within the chancel, or in some place calculated to facilitate the veneration of the faithful,” p. 32.

Then follow details of the service, and it concludes by saying, “After the Te Deum the officient and his ministers should proceed to the chancel gates, and there hold the inner relic-case to be kissed by the faithful, wiping the glass after each osculation with a piece of cotton wool”.—p. 34.

14. They encourage and enjoin habitual auricular confession to a priest, and seek to restore Judicial Absolution by a Priest, and the Romish Sacrament of Penance;20 whereas our Church says, “to maintain their auricular confession withal they greatly deceive themselves and do shamefully deceive others.” “It is most evident and plain that this auricular confession hath not the warrant of God's word.”—Second part of homily on Repentance.

20 Mr. Dodsworth, writing to Dr. Pusey, eighteen years ago, says :—” Both by precept and .example you have been amongst the most earnest to maintain Catholic principles. By your constant and common practice of administering the Sacrament of Penance; by encouraging ever-where, if not enjoining, auricular confession, and giving special priestly absolution, &c.

Mr. Maskell, addressing Dr. Pusey about the same time, wrote, “He (Mr. Dodsworth) knew that you have done more than encourage Confession in very many cases; that you have warned people of the danger of deferring it, have insisted on it as the only remedy, have pointed out the inevitable dangers of the neglect of it, and have promised the highest blessings in the observance, until you had brought penitents in fear and trembling upon their knees before you.”

Dr. Pusey, in a Letter to the Times Nov. 29th, 1866, says: “During the twenty-eight years in which I have received Confession, I never had once to refuse absolution.”

In the “Ordinance of Confession” the Rev. W. Gresley, MA., Prebendary of Lichfield, has given very minute directions both to penitent and confessor. He also says that the priest when he hears confessions, should wear his robes of office and then at p. 96 he speaks thus about absolution:—

“The giving Absolution is not a matter of course, but is dependent on the judgment of the priest. He has power to retain as well as remit sins—to give absolution or refuse it.” Awful thought!

“Listen carefully to all the Priest says to you, be sure to remember the penance he gives you, and receive the Absolution thankfully.”—Little Prayer Book, p. 83.

“The essential form of Absolution is not to be put forth after the manner of a prayer, but as by authority, being a judicial act.”—The Priest in Absolution, p. 50.

“Confession is one of the lesser Sacraments, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ by means of which those sins which we commit after Baptism are forgiven,” &c.— Prayer Book for the Young, p. 71.

15. They are restoring Monasteries and Convents. The Rev. J. T. Lyne (Father Ignatius) has established a Monastery at Laleham, a Convent of Sisters of St. Benedict in London; and there are convents of Benedictines in London, Newcastle, and Norwich, and a Priory of Benedictine nuns at Feltham.

“The Rev. R. M. Benson, MA., Incumbent of St. John the Evangelist, Oxford, and a prominent member of the High Church party (Ritualistic?) in that city, has been holding a ‘Retreat’ at his Monastery in Marston-street, Oxford, which has been attended by a large number of clergymen from all parts of the United Kingdom. During its corrtinuance the brethren, as they are called, give themselves up to fasting and prayer, maintaining the strictest silence and reserve. The Services in the chapel attached to the Monastery are incessant, the members of the Brotherhood appearing to spend the whole of their time between prayers in the chapel and meditations in their cells. The whole of the brethren are clothed in long black cassocks, confined at the waist by a cord, and wear large black felt hats.”— Morning Advertiser, Oct. 1869,

See account of service at what is called the Feltham Nunnery, quoted is the Guardian, September 9th, 1868 in which it is stated that—

“The Priest commenced with the Communion Service of the Church of England, the young lady who was to receive the veil was dressed as a bride. The novice’s habit, scapular, girdle, and sandals, wimple and cloak, were solemnly blessed, her long black hair was all cut off, her white dress changed for a Benedictine frock, the white veil solemnly blessed and incensed, and then placed over her head, and she took the three vows for one year. The nuns are entirely enclosed, never go out, only see visitors at a grating in the Convent parlour, and then their faces are covered, and they obey the strict Benedictine rule.”

In the same account it is stated that in a previous week a nun took the black veil in the house with ceremonies still more striking and solemn.

16. They recommend the celibacy of Priests.

“All Catholics who seriously desire the spiritual well-being of our Church ought earnestly to long to see some such discipline as that which prevails in the Holy Eastern Church established among ourselves—to have some stringent law or Canon enacted making the reception of at least Priest's Orders a bar to subsequent marriage on pain of perpetual irregularity.”—Church News Oct. 13th, 1869.

The Rev. W. Humphrey in an essay, “The Three Vows” in The Church and the World, enjoins the necessity of the three vows of Chastity, Obedience, and Poverty, and says, “Perpetual continence is requisite in order to the perfection of Religion.”—p. 517.

“We are perfectly convinced that until the celibate life for men, and especially for priests, is very widely recognized and practised among us, we shall be lacking in an important feature necessary to the perfection of a Christian Church.”—Church News, April 7th, 1869.

17. They deny the sole authority of God’s Word. For its supremacy, they substitute the traditions of the dark ages, introduced by an ambitious priesthood, to enrich and aggrandize their order.19 With a clear note, our Church rebukes those views, declaring that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation” (Art. vi.); and that “while each Church has the right and the power to

decree ceremonies”—(Art. xx.)—“it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God’s Word written;” and “whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as in article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” (Art. vi.)

19 “If all the Bibles in the world could be gathered together tomorrow into one place and cast into the sea, I see nothing to hinder the Christian mission spreading in the world, in the same way as it spread between tine years 33 and 80 A.D.. (or whatever date may be assigned for the completion of the New Testament Canon). Neither, to take a practical case, which involves no such extravagant hypothesis, do I think that a Christian Priest, sent to a heathen land to win converts to the Faith, has any need to take a Bible with him, or any call to use it with the heathen previous to their baptism, or in any sense to treat it as a necessary element in the work of conviction.”—Kiss of Peace. Sequel 59.

“In the sense in which it is commonly understood at this day, Scripture, it is plain, is not, on Anglical principles, the Rule of Faith.”—Tracts for the Times, No. 90, p. 11, republished with Preface by Dr. Pusey, 1865.

“I most firmly believe, O my God, whatever thy Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches.”—Little Prayer Book, pp. 13, 14.

“There are a great many persons who are under the impression that the Bible is intended to teach us our religion. Let me say most distinctly and definitely that this is a thorough mistake.”—An Open Bible. Lecture by Rev. J. E. Vaux, p. 18.

“If we would decide between conflicting opinions on fundamental doctrines, we must appeal to the Universal Church. Her voice will tell us ‘What is Truth.’”—Ib. p. 17.

The Church is not the Church of the Rome, but the Bible is the Book of the Church.”—Ibid. p. 15.

18. Even on the Primacy of the Pope, which by acts of Parliament and by the Order of our Reformed Church was rejected, these men are now approaching Popery with their entreaties. They set up Associations to promote reunion with Rome: they desecrate public worship by prayers for it; they hail the Papal Council; they declare the identity of our Articles with the Papal Creed; and the language, in which some of their leaders have lately expressed themselves, leaves no doubt as to their design. In St. Alban’s, Holborn, Dr. Littledale, accompanied by three other Priests, asked all present to pray.

“That Pentecostal fires might descend upon that great Council which was about to assemble under the chief Bishop of the Church, so that some of the scandals of the last 300 years might be removed.”

One of their organs expressed plainly the sentiments of the party: The cry of the earnest and devout in our Communion to the successor of St. Peter is ‘Come over and help us.’ Will he stop his ears and beat back the hands stretched towards him, or will he advance half way and fall on our neck and kiss us? We are quite content to allow that we have been, as a Church, separate, degraded by the State to keep swine, and famished on the husks it has cast to us, but we do not forget that we are sons.”—Church News, Sept. 15, 1869.

We cannot wonder that in a Roman Catholic newspaper, a letter from an Ecclesiastic of high position is given, which states:—

“It is notably impossible for the Holy Father and the Council to ignore the reunion with the Holy See expressed by so many pious Anglicans.” From information “received from Catholics in England, from Archbishop Manning downwards,”— “the present spirit of the more advanced Anglicans is all that could be desired.”— Weekly Register, Sept. 4.

Therefore, it is no exaggeration to describe the Ritualistic party as Romanists, who have reached already with bold advance the worst errors and idolatries of the Church of Rome.

The conspiracy now is organized, its practice open, its purpose avowed. To unprotenstantize our Church and to overthrow our reformed faith is their deliberate and unconcealed design. Nor is the evil or the danger small; in some cases the laity have been corrupted by their teaching and have imbibed Romish errors, but the great majority of our laity are shocked and startled to find such heresies suffered within our Church, and they ask, with wonder and impatience, why is nothing done? what are the heads of our Church doing?

One conclusion is, that the faithful members of our Protestant Church must look for a remedy under God, not to others but to themselves.

Union is as necessary as Action. If the faithful members of our Church are, through God's blessing, permitted to resist the two great dangers of Ritualistic and Romish superstition on the one hand, and Unbelief on the other, they must learn to think, to deliberate and act together, but above all to be earnest in prayer. This course was pursued by the members of the early Church; and ended by God’s blessing in harmonious agreement. This should be our course. That which we must look for, which alone will serve us, is the cordial union of Clergy and Laity, and their united prayer to Him who ordereth all things according to his good pleasure.

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57th Thousand.

Church Association Tracts

No. IV. THE TEACHING OF THE RITUALISTS NOT THE

TEACHING OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

by

Rev. John Charles Ryle D.D. The Ritualists have two devices which it is well to notice.

First, they represent themselves as Catholics, and say they are eager to revive the traditions and worship of the Primitive Church. This representation is contrary to the fact. The Church of England took that course at her Reformation; all that was pure, primitive, and Catholic, both in worship, faith, and order, she retained. She cast off only the fictions, idolatry, and error by which Roman Priest-craft and Italian ambition had disfigured the Apostolic faith.

But the Reformation and the works of our Reformed Church is denounced by Ritualists as mutilated, Antichristian, and a pestilent heresy, while, in fact, the Ritualists are merely reintroducing the ceremonies and dogmas which our fathers cast off as idolatrous and superstitious. When therefore they call themselves Catholics, they mean Romanists.

Their second device, when they meet their countrymen, is to disguise and cloak their opinions.

They appeal to that just sentiment which prevails, the desire to reclaim and instruct the masses. They represent themselves as devoted to this duty. Whereas, when you watch their acts and visit their churches, you find them doing the work of Roman priests, endeavouring by appeals to remorse, by demands for confession, by offers of absolution, by sacrifices of masses, by urging of prayers to Saints and the Virgin, by appeals to the senses, music, incense, shows and dresses, to allure to Church the frivolous, careless, and dissipated. The result of this is, what it is in all European countries where Rome prevails, to bring power, repute, and gifts to the priest; to leave unchanged the vices and appetites of the people.

Ritualism then is in its faith and forms Romanism; and, in order not to misrepresent it, we shall take its own organs to describe its practices, and learn its words and ways from its tracts, magazines, catechisms, manuals of devotion, and the newspapers, which the Ritualists publish.

1. They declare that the doctrine of Rome and England is the same,1 they attend the Roman mass,2 and recommend others to do the same3 and they pray for union with the corrupt Church of Rome.4

1 "The breach between us and Rome is not so wide as is commonly thought."-Dr. Pusey's Eirenicon, p. 207.

"What I have said to the Gallican [i.e. Romish] Bishops, and what they have clearly understood, is this, 'that I believe the Council of Trent, whatever its look may be, and our Articles, whatever their look may be, each could be so explained as to be reconcilable one with the other.'" Speech by Dr. Pusey, at Annual Meeting of the English Church Union, 1866. See E. C. U. Circular, for July, 1866, p. 197.

"None but those who have reduced ignorance to a system, now deny that the differences between the authoritative documents of Rome and England are Infinitesimal-that the priesthood is the same, the Liturgy virtually the same, and the doctrine the same."-Church Times, June 18, 1869.

2 "We have attended mass in a hundred great cities of the continent, and found out that there is not of necessity an idol in every foreign Church; but that it is very possible to worship with a Roman priest, and not only to receive no harm, but some good."-Rev. W. J. E. Bennett's Essay on "Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833," in the Church and the World, p. 19. 1867.

3 "If the traveller should assist at Protestant worship, he is aiding and abetting that the doctrine, heresy, and schism from which he prays in the Litany to be delivered. If he does go to the Anglican chapel, he is nevertheless bound to be present at an early Mass in the Roman parish church."-Church News, July 7, 1889

4 "It is the distinct duty of all who pray for the peace of Jerusalem to repudiate foreign Lutheranism, Calvinism, &c., and to do their utmost to show that the English Church of which they

are members, is really one with the Church of Rome in faith, orders, and sacraments; whilst the Protestant bodies are branches cut off from the True Vine of which the Roman and Anglican and Eastern Communions are living boughs."-Church News, July 7, 1869.

"We had been chosen by God to be the colonists of all newly discovered lands, and we stood, like Aaron, between the living and the dead-between the living Church and the dead and decaying forms of a corrupt Protestantism. We were bound to come forward with our message to both-to the living, that they be not high-minded, but fear; to the dead, that they arise and return to the pure bosom of their mother the Catholic Church."-From Notice of Sermon by Rev. Dr. Littledale on the Anniversary of the A. P. U. C. in the Church Times, Sept. 10, 1869.

2. They revile Protestantism. They call it heresy,5 a pest,6 a cancer,7 a monstrous figment,8 and they vilify the Reformation and the Reformers9 in terms equally coarse;10 and yet they quietly remit in incumbencies and curacies within the Church of the Reformation.

5 A writer in The Church and the World (Ed. 1866, p. 237) says, "Our place is appointed among us Protestants, and in a communion deeply tainted in its practical system by Protestant heresy, but our duty is the expulsion of the evil, and not flight from it."

"They (the ministers) carry on a school, and are indefatigable in visiting the poor, and in infusing into the veins of an ignorant and unsuspicious populace the poison of Protestant heresy."

6 "Pest of Protestantism."-Church News, May 5th, 1869.

7 But we should much prefer seeing attention centred on theological matters and questions of discipline, and extirpating that ulcerous cancer of Protestantism, which must be fatal, sooner or later, to any Church that does not use moral steel and fire upon it."-Church Times, Sept. 3, 1869.

8 "By way of protest against the monstrous figment of Protestantism."-Ibid.

"We are bound to correct one of the speakers [at the Islington Clerical Meeting] who remarked that the Tractarian School, whatever its good points may be, loses sight of the distinctive doctrines of the Reformation. We do not lose sight of them at all. We are busy in hunting them down, and have no intention of foregoing the chase till we have extirpated them. That is plain speaking enough, we trust."-Church Times, Jan. 28th, 1870.

9 "Anathema to the Principle of Protestantism."-Palmer's Letter to Golightly.

10 Dr. Littledale, in his Lecture on Innovations, calls the Reformers a set of miscreants, all utterly unredeemed villains.

3. They propose to abandon, and labour for the abolition of, the xxxix Articles of Religion,11 which "contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God's Word."

11 "First of all come the xxxix Articles, those Protestant Articles, tacked on to Catholic Liturgy, those forty-stripes-save-one, as some have called them, laid on the back of the Anglican priesthood-How are they to be got over?"-Essay by Rev. L. Blenkinsopp on "Reunion of the Church," in the Church and the World, 1866, p. 202.

See proposal of Dr. Pusey that the Universities should abandon subscription to the xxxix Articles as the practical qualification for orthodox Church of England Protestant teaching, in Letter to the President of the Wesleyan conference, 1868.

"It will soon become the duty of Churchmen to labour actively for the abolition of the Articles, which have long ago done their work and are really of extremely little use now, discrediting us (as they do) in the eyes of foreign Catholics."-Church News, July 29, 1868.

"We have never seen the use of retaining the Thirty-nine Articles at all."-Church Times, March 12th, 1869.

"The abolition of the Thirty-nine Articles, the adoption of Edward VI. First Communion Office…would win for the Disestablished Church the respect of Christendom."-Church Times, Sep. 3rd. 1869.

4, They hold with the Church of Rome that there are seven Sacraments,12 whereas our xxvth Article declares that there are two Sacraments ordained of Christ in the Gospel-Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

12 See Article on "The Seven Sacraments," in Tracts for the Day, edited by Rev. O. Shipley.

In the Prayer Book for the Young, or complete Guide to Public and Private Devotion for youthful members of the English Church, "Confirmation," "Confession," "Visitation of the Sick," "Holy Orders" and "Matrimony" are enumerated among the Sacraments, p. 10.

Rev. Orby Shipley states in his "Sermons on Sin," that "there are seven Sacraments and personal extensions of the incarnation of God"-"Baptism," "Confirmation," "Eucharist," "Marriage," "Orders," "Extreme Unction," "Penance." And he adds, "The seventh and last sacramental extension of the Incarnation of our God, I need not tell you, my brethren, in theological language, is termed the "Sacrament of Penance."-pp. 43 to 50.

5. They pray to the Virgin Mary and elevate her to a throne in heaven;13 and our Church declares such adoration to be superstitious and idolatrous.

13 "Blessed Mary, Mother of God, ever Virgin, pray for us."-Litany of the Blessed Virgin, in Invocation of Saints and Angels, by Rev. O. Shipley p. 66.

"Hail Queen of heaven; hail Mistress of the Angels, hail root, hail gate, wherefrom the light of the world is sprung! Rejoice, O Glorious Virgin, pre-eminently fair, and very lovely, hail! Mayst thou pray Christ for us."-Monastic Breviary, used at Rev. J. L. Lyne's Monastery at Laleham Covent at London, &c. p. 80.

See The Female Glory, edited by Rev. Orby Shipley, M.A.., 1869.

6. They pray to saints and invoke their intercession.14 Our Church terms such prayers "repugnant to the Word of God." (Art. xxii.) St. Paul says there is "one Mediator between God and man."-1 Tim. ii. 5.

14 "O holy Michael, Prince of the Heavenly Host pray for us." "O Raphael, pray for us"-Invocation of Saints and Angels edited by Rev. O. Shipley pp. 45, 46.

"Of our patron saint. Most Holy Confessor of the Lord ( ) mayst thou intercede to Christ for us."-Little Office book. p. 17.

"I pray that Blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, Blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, our Blessed Father Benedict, all the Saints (and you, my brothers) may pray for me to the Lord our God.-Monastic Breviary, used at Rev. J. L. Lyne's Monastery at Laleham, &c., p. 7

7. They set up images of the Virgin and of the saints; and introduce into their churches the Romish pictures of 'the Twelve Stations of the Cross' and publish forms of prayer to be said at each Station,15 as in the Roman Catholic Church; whereas our Church warns us that images "if they be publicly suffered in churches will lead to idolatry." (Art. xxxv, and Homily against Peril of Idolatry)

15 See Decorations in Ritualistic Churches-St. Michael's and All Angels, Shoreditch, and others.

See the 'Way of the Cross' in the Treasury of Devotion, pp. 191 to 200.

8. They pervert the Communion Table into an Altar, the Communion into a Mass, and the Clergyman into a sacrificing Priest, who elevates material elements incorporating the Deity, and direct these to be adored by the worshipper with genuflection and prostration;16 whereas our Church declares that the Mass "overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament" (Art. xxviii), and that such worship is "idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians." (Communion Service.)

16 "This prayer we say (to use the word common to us all) in the Mass which we now offer in many places daily on our altars."-Rev. W. J. E. Bennett's Essay. "Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833" in the Church and the World. p. 19. 1867.

"Grant that the Sacrifice, which I a miserable sinner have offered before Thy Divine Majesty may be acceptable unto Thee, and through thy mercy maybe a propitiation for me, and all for whom I have offered It."-Priest's Prayer Book, p. 13.

Evidence before the Royal Ritual Commission. Question 2608.-Do you consider yourself a Sacrificing Priest? Answer by Rev. W. J. E. Bennett.-"Yes."

"THE PRIEST AT THE ALTAR IS VIRTUALLY CHRIST HIMSELF."-Catechism of Theology, p. 58

"Q.-Is not the Holy Eucharist also a Sacrifice?-A.-Yes"-Catechism, p. 35. Oxford. 1863.

"May the Lord receive this Sacrifice, etc."-Little Prayer Book, p. 18.

"Now kneel upright, your hands clasped upon your breast; follow the Priest in silent awe, for Jesus thy God is very nigh thee, he is about to descend upon the altar, surrounded by the Fire of the Holy Ghost, and attended by the angels. At the Consecration and Elevation prostrate yourself to the dust and say, 'Hail Body of my God hail Body of my Redeemer-I adore-I adore-I adore thee."-Manual of Devotions and Directions Members of the Church of England, intended especially the Young.

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"We beseech thee, O Lord God Almighty, for the souls of the faithful departed"-Altar Manual, edited by a Committee of Clergy, p 34.

The souls of the departed thus abiding in their place of rest may be the subjects of prayer to those who are still alive upon the earth," because "the souls that are departed are not in their perfection.'-Church's Broken Unity, by Rev. W. J. E. Bennett, p. 122.

"Accept this Sacrifice, which, to the honour of thy Name, we have offered for the faithful, both living and departed, and for all is our sins and offences."-Altar Meal. p.36.

"The state of the departed souls, whether in pain or pleasure, is not yet final. The truth is that they are in custody, easy or harsh, awaiting "Trial."

"The best and holiest men (and much more the average believers) leave this world bearing the stains of earthly sins and error, which must be cleansed somewhere before they can be fitted for heaven."-Prayer for the Dead, by Rev. Dr. Littledale, p. 2.

See Dr. Pusey's Address, headed, "The prayers for departed Companions of the Society of the Love of Jesus."-p. 127, 8.

Also notices at the doors of Ritualistic Churches, "Of your Charity pray for-," and then follow the names of persons sick and dead.

11. They omit the Prayers for the Queen, the Royal Family and Parliament,18 and are agitating for a separation of Church and Sate.19

18 In Ritualistic Churches the State Prayers are generally omitted.

"There does not seem to be any great reason for retaining the prayer for the Queen, bearing in mind the very full and emphatic terms in which her Majesty is mentioned in the Canon. Most people, we suspect, would be exceedingly glad if this prayer, as well as the Comfortable Words and the Addresses were dropped."- Church Times, Jan. 20, 1866.

19 "I referred to an extreme faction in the Church of very modern date that does not conceal its ambition to destroy the connection between Church and State."-Letter from the late Premier to Rev. A. Baker, dated 9th April, 1863.

See Rev. W. J. E. Bennett's Sermon at Bristol, on May 2, 1869 advocating the separation of Church and State, and speaking of their connection as an adulterous love between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. -Ch. Times, May 7, 1869.

12. They also introduce the Romish practices of Extreme Unction,-Incensing persons and things,-Substituting wafers for bread at the Communion Service,'-Using Holy Water,-Consecrating and censing Palm branches on Palm Sunday, -Consecrating ashes, and rubbing them on persons' foreheads on Ash Wednesday,-Censing candles and sprinkling them with Holy Water on Candlemas day.

See Essay on " Unction of the Sick " in Tracts for the day edited by Rev. O. Shipley, where the writer speaks of "the Sacrament of Unction" p. 342, and adds (p. 359) "The principal effect then of Unction is the removal of the relics of Sin; its consequential effect, the remission of the guilt of any Sin it may find in the soul."

"The recognized consecration of chrism and holy oil for various rites cannot be much longer postponed. It will certainly come in somehow"-Dr. Littlerdale's Letter to the Archbishop on "Catholic Revision." p. 28.

Liturgy of Church of Sarum dedicated by permission to Bp. of Salisbury.

13. They advocate the Procession and Veneration of Relics.

See instructions for Procession and Veneration of Relics in Oratory Worship.

"It is well, when the relics are to be exposed, to erect a resting-place for them just within the chancel, or in some place calculated to facilitate the veneration of the faithful," p. 32.

Then follow details of the service, and it concludes by saying, "After the Te Deum the officient and his ministers should proceed to the chancel gates, and there hold the inner relic-case to be kissed by the faithful, wiping the glass after each osculation with a piece of cotton wool".-p. 34.

14. They encourage and enjoin habitual auricular confession to a priest, and seek to restore Judicial Absolution by a Priest, and the Romish Sacrament of Penance;20 whereas our Church says, "to maintain their auricular confession withal they greatly deceive themselves and do shamefully deceive others." "It is most evident and plain that this auricular confession hath not the warrant of God's word."-Second part of homily on Repentance.

20 Mr. Dodsworth, writing to Dr. Pusey, eighteen years ago, says :-" Both by precept and .example you have been amongst the most earnest to maintain Catholic principles. By your constant and common practice of administering the Sacrament of Penance; by encouraging ever-where, if not

enjoining, auricular confession, and giving special priestly absolution, &c.

Mr. Maskell, addressing Dr. Pusey about the same time, wrote, "He (Mr. Dodsworth) knew that you have done more than encourage Confession in very many cases; that you have warned people of the danger of deferring it, have insisted on it as the only remedy, have pointed out the inevitable dangers of the neglect of it, and have promised the highest blessings in the observance, until you had brought penitents in fear and trembling upon their knees before you."

Dr. Pusey, in a Letter to the Times Nov. 29th, 1866, says: "During the twenty-eight years in which I have received Confession, I never had once to refuse absolution."

In the "Ordinance of Confession" the Rev. W. Gresley, MA., Prebendary of Lichfield, has given very minute directions both to penitent and confessor. He also says that the priest when he hears confessions, should wear his robes of office and then at p. 96 he speaks thus about absolution:-

"The giving Absolution is not a matter of course, but is dependent on the judgment of the priest. He has power to retain as well as remit sins-to give absolution or refuse it." Awful thought!

"Listen carefully to all the Priest says to you, be sure to remember the penance he gives you, and receive the Absolution thankfully."-Little Prayer Book, p. 83.

"The essential form of Absolution is not to be put forth after the manner of a prayer, but as by authority, being a judicial act."-The Priest in Absolution, p. 50.

"Confession is one of the lesser Sacraments, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ by means of which those sins which we commit after Baptism are forgiven," &c.- Prayer Book for the Young, p. 71.

15. They are restoring Monasteries and Convents. The Rev. J. T. Lyne (Father Ignatius) has established a Monastery at Laleham, a Convent of Sisters of St. Benedict in London; and there are convents of Benedictines in London, Newcastle, and Norwich, and a Priory of Benedictine nuns at Feltham.

"The Rev. R. M. Benson, MA., Incumbent of St. John the Evangelist, Oxford, and a prominent member of the High Church party (Ritualistic?) in that city, has been holding a 'Retreat' at his Monastery in Marston-street, Oxford, which has been attended by a large number of clergymen from all parts of the United Kingdom. During its corrtinuance the brethren, as they are called, give themselves up to fasting and prayer, maintaining the strictest silence and reserve. The Services in the chapel attached to the Monastery are incessant, the members of the Brotherhood appearing to spend the whole of their time between prayers in the chapel and meditations in their cells. The whole of the brethren are clothed in long black cassocks, confined at the waist by a cord, and wear large black felt hats."- Morning Advertiser, Oct. 1869,

See account of service at what is called the Feltham Nunnery, quoted is the Guardian, September 9th, 1868 in which it is stated that-

"The Priest commenced with the Communion Service of the Church of England, the young lady who was to receive the veil was dressed as a bride. The novice's habit, scapular, girdle, and sandals, wimple and cloak, were solemnly blessed, her long black hair was all cut off, her white

dress changed for a Benedictine frock, the white veil solemnly blessed and incensed, and then placed over her head, and she took the three vows for one year. The nuns are entirely enclosed, never go out, only see visitors at a grating in the Convent parlour, and then their faces are covered, and they obey the strict Benedictine rule."

In the same account it is stated that in a previous week a nun took the black veil in the house with ceremonies still more striking and solemn.

16. They recommend the celibacy of Priests.

"All Catholics who seriously desire the spiritual well-being of our Church ought earnestly to long to see some such discipline as that which prevails in the Holy Eastern Church established among ourselves-to have some stringent law or Canon enacted making the reception of at least Priest's Orders a bar to subsequent marriage on pain of perpetual irregularity."-Church News Oct. 13th, 1869.

The Rev. W. Humphrey in an essay, "The Three Vows" in The Church and the World, enjoins the necessity of the three vows of Chastity, Obedience, and Poverty, and says, "Perpetual continence is requisite in order to the perfection of Religion."-p. 517.

"We are perfectly convinced that until the celibate life for men, and especially for priests, is very widely recognized and practised among us, we shall be lacking in an important feature necessary to the perfection of a Christian Church."-Church News, April 7th, 1869.

17. They deny the sole authority of God's Word. For its supremacy, they substitute the traditions of the dark ages, introduced by an ambitious priesthood, to enrich and aggrandize their order.19 With a clear note, our Church rebukes those views, declaring that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation" (Art. vi.); and that "while each Church has the right and the power to decree ceremonies"-(Art. xx.)-"it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written;" and "whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as in article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." (Art. vi.)

19 "If all the Bibles in the world could be gathered together tomorrow into one place and cast into the sea, I see nothing to hinder the Christian mission spreading in the world, in the same way as it spread between tine years 33 and 80 A.D.. (or whatever date may be assigned for the completion of the New Testament Canon). Neither, to take a practical case, which involves no such extravagant hypothesis, do I think that a Christian Priest, sent to a heathen land to win converts to the Faith, has any need to take a Bible with him, or any call to use it with the heathen previous to their baptism, or in any sense to treat it as a necessary element in the work of conviction."-Kiss of Peace. Sequel 59.

"In the sense in which it is commonly understood at this day, Scripture, it is plain, is not, on Anglical principles, the Rule of Faith."-Tracts for the Times, No. 90, p. 11, republished with Preface by Dr. Pusey, 1865.

"I most firmly believe, O my God, whatever thy Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches."-Little Prayer Book, pp. 13, 14.

"There are a great many persons who are under the impression that the Bible is intended to teach us our religion. Let me say most distinctly and definitely that this is a thorough mistake."-An Open Bible. Lecture by Rev. J. E. Vaux, p. 18.

"If we would decide between conflicting opinions on fundamental doctrines, we must appeal to the Universal Church. Her voice will tell us 'What is Truth.'"-Ib. p. 17.

The Church is not the Church of the Rome, but the Bible is the Book of the Church."-Ibid. p. 15.

18. Even on the Primacy of the Pope, which by acts of Parliament and by the Order of our Reformed Church was rejected, these men are now approaching Popery with their entreaties. They set up Associations to promote reunion with Rome: they desecrate public worship by prayers for it; they hail the Papal Council; they declare the identity of our Articles with the Papal Creed; and the language, in which some of their leaders have lately expressed themselves, leaves no doubt as to their design. In St. Alban's, Holborn, Dr. Littledale, accompanied by three other Priests, asked all present to pray.

"That Pentecostal fires might descend upon that great Council which was about to assemble under the chief Bishop of the Church, so that some of the scandals of the last 300 years might be removed."

One of their organs expressed plainly the sentiments of the party: The cry of the earnest and devout in our Communion to the successor of St. Peter is 'Come over and help us.' Will he stop his ears and beat back the hands stretched towards him, or will he advance half way and fall on our neck and kiss us? We are quite content to allow that we have been, as a Church, separate, degraded by the State to keep swine, and famished on the husks it has cast to us, but we do not forget that we are sons."-Church News, Sept. 15, 1869.

We cannot wonder that in a Roman Catholic newspaper, a letter from an Ecclesiastic of high position is given, which states:-

"It is notably impossible for the Holy Father and the Council to ignore the reunion with the Holy See expressed by so many pious Anglicans." From information "received from Catholics in England, from Archbishop Manning downwards,"- "the present spirit of the more advanced Anglicans is all that could be desired."- Weekly Register, Sept. 4.

Therefore, it is no exaggeration to describe the Ritualistic party as Romanists, who have reached already with bold advance the worst errors and idolatries of the Church of Rome.

The conspiracy now is organized, its practice open, its purpose avowed. To unprotenstantize our Church and to overthrow our reformed faith is their deliberate and unconcealed design. Nor is the evil or the danger small; in some cases the laity have been corrupted by their teaching and have imbibed Romish errors, but the great majority of our laity are shocked and startled to find such heresies suffered within our Church, and they ask, with wonder and impatience, why is nothing done? what are the heads of our Church doing?

One conclusion is, that the faithful members of our Protestant Church must look for a remedy under God, not to others but to themselves.

Union is as necessary as Action. If the faithful members of our Church are, through God's blessing, permitted to resist the two great dangers of Ritualistic and Romish superstition on the one hand, and Unbelief on the other, they must learn to think, to deliberate and act together, but above all to be earnest in prayer. This course was pursued by the members of the early Church; and ended by God's blessing in harmonious agreement. This should be our course. That which we must look for, which alone will serve us, is the cordial union of Clergy and Laity, and their united prayer to Him who ordereth all things according to his good pleasure.

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57th Thousand.

Chapter 10

Able to Save

ABLE TO SAVE. by John Charles Ryle D.D.

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“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” — Hebrews 7:25.

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READER,

There is one subject in religion, about which you can never know too much. That subject is Jesus Christ the Lord. This is the mighty subject which the text that heads this page unfolds,—Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ’s intercession.

I have heard of a book entitled “The Story without an End.” I know no story deserving that title so well as the everlasting Gospel: this is indeed and in truth the story without an end. There is an infinite “fulness” in Christ; there are in Him “unsearchable riches;” there is in Him a “love which passeth knowledge;” He is an “unspeakable gift.” (Colossians 1:19; Ephesians 3:8; Ephesians 3:19; 2 Corinthians 9:15) There is no end to all the riches that are treasured up in Him,—in His person, in His work, in His offices, in His words, in His deeds, in His life, in His death, in His resurrection. I take but one branch of the great subject this day. I am going to speak to you about the intercession and priestly office of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God the holy Ghost bless the consideration of this subject! May He, without whom ministers preach and write in vain, apply the subject with power to your soul! If His blessing goes with this tract, good will be done. If His blessing goes not with it, the words that I write will fall to the ground.

There are three points which I purpose to consider, in opening the text which heads this tract.

I—You have here a description of all true Christians: they are a people who come to God by Christ.

II.—You have the work that Jesus Christ is ever carrying on on behalf of true Christians: He ever lives to make intercession for them.

III.—You have the comfortable conclusion built by St. Paul upon Christ’s work of intercession. He says: “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

I.—You have, first, a description of all true Christians. It is most simple, most beautiful, and most true. Great is the contrast between the description given by the Holy Ghost of a Christian and the description which is given by man. With man it is often enough to say that such a one “is a Churchman,” or that such a one “belongs to this body of Christians or to that.” It is not so when the Holy Ghost draws the picture. The Holy Ghost describes a Christian as a man “who comes unto

God by Christ."

True Christians come unto God. They are not as many, who turn their backs upon Him; who "go into a far country," like the prodigal son; "who go out," like Cain, "from the presence of the Lord"; who are "alienated, strangers and enemies in their mind by wicked works." (Colossians 1:21) They are reconciled to God and friends of God. They are not as many, who dislike everything that belongs to God,—His Word, His day, His ordinances, His people, His house. They love all that belongs to their Master. The very footprints of His steps are dear unto them. His name is as ointment poured forth.—They are not as many, who are content with coming to church, or with coming to chapel, or with coming to the Lord's Table. They go further than that. They "come unto God," and in communion with God they live.

But, more than this, true Christians come unto God in a certain peculiar way. They come unto God by Christ; pleading no other plea, mentioning no other name, trusting in no other righteousness, resting on no other foundation than this,—that Jesus hath lived, Jesus hath died, Jesus hath risen again for their souls.

"I the chief of sinners am,

But Jesus died for me."

This is the way by which the true Christian draws near to God.

Reader, the way of which I have been speaking is an old way. It is well nigh 6,000 years old. All that have ever been saved have drawn near to God by this way. From Abel, the first saint that entered Paradise, down to the last infant that died this morning, they have all come to God only by Jesus Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Christ." (John 14:6)

It is a good way. It is easy for the worldly-wise to sneer at and ridicule it. But all the wit and wisdom of man has never devised a way more perfect, more complete, and that will bear more thoroughly all fair and reasonable investigation. It has been to the Jew a stumbling-block; it has been to the Greek foolishness. But all who have known their hearts, and understood what God demands, have found the way made by Jesus Christ a good way, and a way that stands the fullest examination that can be made as to its wisdom. Therein they find justice and mercy met together, righteousness and peace kissing one another; God a holy God, yet loving, kind, and merciful; man knowing himself a poor, weak sinner, yet drawing near to God with boldness, having access with confidence, looking up into His face without fear, seeing Him in Christ his Father and his Friend.

Not least, it is a tried way. Thousands and tens of thousands have walked in it, and not one of all that number has ever missed heaven. Apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, early fathers, reformers, puritans, men of God in every age, and of every people and tongue: holy men of our own day,—men like Simeon, Bickersteth, Havelock,—have all walked in this way. They have had their battles to fight, and their enemies to contend with; they have had to carry the cross; they have found lions in their path; they have had to walk through the valley of the shadow of death; they have had to contend with Apollyon. They have had to cross at last the cold dark river; but they have walked safely through to the other side, and entered with joy into the celestial city. And now they are waiting for you and me to walk in their steps, to follow them, and to share in their glory.

Reader, this is the way I want you to walk in. I want you to come unto God by Jesus Christ. Let there be no mistake as to the object which true ministers of the Gospel have in view. We are not set apart merely to perform a certain round of ordinances; to read prayers, to Christen those that are Christened, to bury those that are buried, to marry those that are ruined. We are set apart for the grand purpose of proclaiming the one true living way, and inviting you to walk in it. We ought to labour day and night, until we can persuade you, by God's blessing, to walk in that way,—the tried way, the good way, the old way,—and to know the peace which passeth all under standing, which in that way alone is to be found.

II. I pass on now to the second point which I purpose to consider. The text which heads this tract speaks of the work which the Lord Jesus Christ is ever doing on behalf of true Christians. I ask your special attention to this point. It is one of deep importance to our peace, and to the establishment of our souls in the Christian faith.

There is one great work which the Lord Jesus Christ has done and finished completely. That work is the work of atonement, sacrifice, and substitution. It is the work which He did when He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God. He saw us ruined by the fall, a world of poor, lost, ship-wrecked sinners. He saw and He pitied us; and in compliance with the everlasting counsels of the Eternal Trinity, He came down to the world, to suffer in our stead, and to save us. He did not sit in heaven pitying us from a distance: He did not stand upon the shore and see the wreck, and behold poor drowning sinners struggling in vain to get to shore. He plunged into the waters Himself: He came off to the wreck and took part with us in our weakness and infirmity becoming a man to save our souls. As man, He bore our sins and carried our transgressions; as man, He endured all that men can endure, and went through everything in man's experience, sin only excepted; as man He lived; as man He went to the cross; as man He died. As man He shed His blood, in order that He might save us, poor shipwrecked sinners, and establish a communication between earth and heaven! As man He became a curse for us, in order that He might bridge the gulf, and make a way by which you and I might draw near to God with boldness, and have access to God without fear. In all this work of Christ, remember, there was infinite merit, because He who did it was not only man, but God. Let that never be forgotten. He who wrought out our redemption was perfect man; but He never ceased for a moment to be perfect God.

But there is another great work which the Lord Jesus Christ is yet doing. That work is the work of intercession.—The first work He did once for all: nothing can be added to it; nothing can be taken away from it. It was a finished, perfect work, when Christ offered up the sacrifice upon the cross: no other sacrifice need be offered beside the sacrifice once made by the Lamb of God, when He had His own blood at Calvary. But the second work He is ever carrying on at the right hand of God, where He makes intercession for His people.—The first work He did on earth when He died upon the cross: the second work He carries on in heaven, at the right hand of God the Father.—The first work He did for all mankind, and offer all benefit of it to all the world: the second work He carries on and accomplishes solely and entirely on behalf of His own elect, His people, His servants, and His children.

Reader, how does our Lord Jesus Christ carry on this work? How shall we comprehend and grasp what is the meaning of Christ's intercession? We must not pry rashly into things unseen. We must

not “rush in where angels fear to tread.” Yet some idea we can obtain of the nature of that continual intercession which Christ ever lives to make on behalf of His believing people.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is doing for His people the work which the Jewish high-priest of old did on behalf of the Israelites. He is acting as the manager, the representative, the mediator in all things between His people and God.—He is ever presenting on their bed of His own perfect sacrifice, and His all sufficient merit, before God the Father.—He is ever obtaining daily supplies of fresh mercy and of fresh grace for His poor, weak servants, who need daily mercy for daily sins, and daily grace for daily necessities.—He ever prays for them. As He prayed for Simon Peter upon earth, so I believe He prays for His people now.—He presents their names before God the Father. He carries their names upon His heart, the place of love; and upon His shoulder, the place of power,—as the high-priest carried the names of all the tribes of Israel, from the least to the greatest, when he wore his robes of office. He presents their prayers before God. They go up before God the Father mingled with Christ’s all-prevailing intercession, and so are so acceptable in God’s sight. He lives, in one word, to be the friend, the advocate, the priest, the all-prevailing agent, of all who are His members here upon earth. As their elder brother He acts for them; and all that their souls require He, in the court of heaven, is ever carrying on.

Does any reader of this tract need a friend? In such a world as this, how many hearts there are which ought to respond to that appeal! How many there are who feel “I stand alone.” How many have found one idol broken after another, one staff failing after another, one fountain dried after another, as they have travelled through the wilderness of this world. If there is one who wants a friend, let that one behold at the right hand of God an unfailing friend, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let that one repose his aching head and weary heart upon the bosom of that unfailing friend, Jesus Christ the Lord. There is one living at God’s right hand of matchless tenderness. There is one who never dies. There is one who never fails, never disappoints, never forsakes, never changes His mind, never breaks off friendship. That One, the Lord Jesus, I commend to all who need a friend. No one in a world like this, a fallen world, a world which we find more and more barren, it may be, every year we live,—no one ever need be friendless while the Lord Jesus Christ lives to intercede at the right hand of God.

Does any reader of this tract need a priest? There can be no true religion without a priest, and no saving Christianity without a confessional. But who is the true priest? Where is the true confessional? There is only one true priest,—and that is Christ Jesus the Lord. There is only one real confessional,—and that is the throne of grace where the Lord Jesus waits to receive those who come to Him to unburden their hearts in His presence. We can find no better priest than Christ. We need no other priest. Why need we turn to any priest upon earth, while Jesus is sealed, anointed, appointed, ordained, and commissioned by God the Father, and has an ear ever ready to hear, and a heart ever ready to feel for the poor sinful sons of men? The priesthood is His lawful prerogative. He has deputed that office to none. Woe be to anyone upon earth who dares to rob Christ of His prerogative! Woe be to the man who takes upon himself the office which Christ holds in His own hands, and has never transferred to any one born of Adam, upon the face of the globe!

Reader, I charge you solemnly, never to lose sight of this mighty truth of the Gospel,—the intercession and priestly office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I believe that a firm grasp of this truth is one great safeguard against the errors of the Church of Rome. I believe that losing

sight of this great truth is one principal reason why so many have fallen away from the faith in some quarters, have forsaken the creed of their Protestant forefathers, and have gone back to the darkness of Rome. Once firmly established upon this holy truth,—that we have a Priest, an altar, and a Confessor; that we have a unfailing, never-dying, ever-living intercession, who has deputed His office to none,—and we shall see that we need turn aside nowhere else. We need not hew for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water, when we have in the Lord Jesus Christ a fountain of living water, ever flowing and free to all. We need not seek any human priest upon earth, when we have a Divine Priest living for us in heaven.

Reader, beware of regarding the Lord Jesus Christ only as one that is dead. Here, I believe, many greatly err. They think much of His death, and it is right that they should do so. But we ought not to stop short there. We ought to remember that He not only died and went to the grave, but that He rose again, and ascended up on high, leading captivity captive. We ought to remember that He is now sitting on the right hand of God, to do a work as real, as true, as important to our souls, as the work which He did when He shed His blood. Christ lives, and is not dead. He lives as truly as any one of ourselves. Christ sees us, hears us, knows us, and is acting as a Priest in heaven on behalf of His believing people. The thought of His life ought to have as great and important a place in our souls as the thought of His death upon the cross.

III. I will now speak, in the third place, of the comfortable conclusions that the Apostle builds upon the everlasting intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. We need much comfort and consolation in a world like this. It is no easy matter for a man to carry the cross and reach heaven. There are many enemies to be encountered and overcome. We have often to stand alone. We have at the best times few with us and many against us. We need cordials and strong consolation to sustain and cheer us, and to preserve us from fainting on the way as we travel from Egypt into Canaan. The Apostle appears deeply conscious of all this in the words he uses. He says, “He is able to save to the uttermost,”—to save perfectly, to save completely, to save technically,—”all that come unto God by Him, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Reader, I might say much on the glorious expression

which is before you. But I forbear. I will only point out a few of the thoughts which ought to arise in our minds when we hear of Christ’s ability to save to the uttermost. I have not space to dwell on them at length. I rather throw them out as suggestions to supply matter for private meditation.

1. Think, for one thing, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding the old sins of any believer. Those old sins shall never rise again, not stand up to condemn the child of God. For what says the Scripture: “Christ has not entered into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself; to appear in the presence of God for us.” (Hebrews 9:24) Christ, to use a legal phrase, is ever making an appearance in the court of heaven on behalf of them that believe in Him. There is not a year, nor a month, nor a day, nor an hour, nor a minute, but there is One living in the presence of God, to make an appearance there on behalf of all the saints. Christ is ever appearing before God the Father on behalf of the men and women that believe in Him. His blood and His sacrifice are ever in God’s sight. His work, His death, His intercession are always sounding in God the Father’s ears.

I remember reading a story in ancient history which may help to illustrate the truth on which I am now dwelling. It is the story of one who was put upon trial for a capital charge, at Athens, shortly after the great battle of Marathon. In that famous battle the Athenians had preserved, by their valour, liberty for their little state, against the mighty hosts of the Persians; and among those who had distinguished themselves greatly, the brother of the prisoner was one; and had been sorely wounded in the fight. The man was put upon his trial. The evidence against him was strong and unanswerable; there seemed no chance of the prisoner escaping condemnation. Suddenly there came forward one who asked to be heard on his behalf. And who was this? It was his own brother. When he was asked what evidence he had to give, or what reason he had to show why the prisoner at the bar ought not to be found guilty, he simply lifted up his mutilated arms—nothing but stumps—the hands completely cut off; the wounded stumps alone remaining. He was recognised as a man who, at the battle of Marathon, had done prodigies of valour, and in the service of the State had lost his hands. By those wounds he had helped to win the victory which was then ringing in Athenian ears. Those wounds were the only evidence he brought forward. Those wounds were the only plea he advanced why his brother ought to be set free, and sentence ought not to be passed upon him. And the story states that for the sake of those wounds—for the sake of all his brother had suffered, the prisoner was acquitted. The case was dismissed at once, and the prisoner obtained his liberty. Reader, in like manner the wounds of the Lord Jesus Christ are ever before God the Father. The nail-prints in His hands and feet—the marks of the spear in His side—the thorn marks upon His forehead—the marks of all that he suffered as a lamb slain, are ever before God the Father in heaven. While Christ is in heaven, the believer's sins will never rise in judgment against him. Think not with fear upon those old sins of yours, my believing brother or sister. Christ lives, and those old sins will not condemn you. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

2. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the present weakness of His believing people. How great that weakness is, time would fail me to show. There are many of God's children who know their hearts' bitterness, who bewail with strong crying and tears their shortcomings, their unprofitableness, and the scanty fruit they bring forth. But oh, my beloved reader, take comfort in the words of St. John: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,— "ever present with the Father,"— "Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 2:1) Those weaknesses may well humble thee. Those infirmities may well make thee walk softly before thy God. But while the Lord Jesus Christ lives, those infirmities need not make thee entirely despair. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

3. Think again, that Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the trials that believers have to go through. Hear what the Apostle Paul says to Timothy: "I suffer: nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 Timothy 1:12) So long as Jesus Christ lives, the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ may be assured that no affliction shall be allowed to break off the union between him and his risen Head. He may suffer greatly and be sorely tried. But while Christ lives he shall never be forsaken. Neither poverty, nor sickness, nor bereavements, nor separations, shall ever separate Jesus and His believing people. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

4. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the persecutions that believers have to go through. See what is said of St. Paul, when he met with much opposition at Corinth. We are told that the Lord stood by him in the night, and said, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city.” (Acts 18:10) Remember what He said to St. Paul at a former time, when He met him on the way to Damascus: “Saul, Saul, why persecute thou Me?” (Acts 9:4) Every injury done to the believer is an injury done to the living Head in heaven. And every persecution showered down upon the head of the poor child of God here is known, felt, and, I may add with all reverence, resented, by our Great Elder Brother, who is ever living to make intercession for us. Christ lives, and therefore believers, though persecuted, shall not be destroyed. “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” (Romans 8:37) We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

5. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding all the temptations of the devil. Remember that famous passage in the Gospel of St. Luke, where our Lord, speaking to St. Peter, says, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” (Luke 22:32) Prayer like that is still carried on. Those words were spoken as an emblem of what the Lord is ever doing on behalf of His believing people. Satan, the prince of this world, is ever going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But Christ lives; and, blessed be God, while Christ lives Satan shall not be able to overcome the soul that believes on Him. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

6. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding the sting of death, and all that death brings with it. When David remembered that, he said, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” (Psalms 23:4) You and I may die, but Christ still lives. The hour may come when friends can do us no more good, when faithful servants can no longer minister to our wants, when all that love, and kindness, and affliction can do to alleviate pain and make the last journey pleasant, can no longer render any service to us. But then the thought that Christ lives—Christ interceding, Christ caring for us, Christ at the right hand of God for us,—ought to cheer us. The sting of death will be taken away from the man that leans upon a dying and also a living Saviour. Christ never dies. Through faith in that living Saviour we shall have a complete victory. We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

7. Think again, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, notwithstanding the terrors of the judgment day. Mark how St. Paul rests upon that in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans,—in that wonderful conclusion to that wonderful chapter,—a chapter unrivalled in the Word of God for privilege, beginning with “no condemnation,” and concluding with “no separation!” Observe how he dwells upon Christ’s intercession in connection with the judgment of the last day. After saying, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth,” he goes on: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” The thought of Christ’s intercession, no less than His dying and rising again, was one ground of the Apostle Paul’s confidence in looking forward to the great day. His strong consolation was the recollection of a living Christ. That consolation is for us as well as for St. Paul. We have an ever-living,

ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

8. Think, lastly, and above all, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost throughout all eternity. “I am He,” He says, “that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” (Revelation 1:18) The root of the believer never dies, and the branches, therefore, shall never die. Christ being “raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.” (Romans 6:9) He lives, that all who trust in Him may receive honour and glory to all eternity; and because He lives, His believing people shall never die. “Because I live,” to use His own words, “ye shall live also.” (John 14:19) We have an ever-living, ever-interceding Priest. Christ is not dead, but alive.

Reader, would you know the security for the perseverance of God’s own people? Would you know why it is that Christ’s sheep shall never perish, and none shall ever pluck them out of His hand? It is a miraculous thing. When you look at the believer’s heart, listen to the believer’s prayers, mark the believer’s confessions,—when you see how a just man may fall, sometimes seven times,—when you see, with all this, the believer’s perseverance, it is a marvel indeed. To carry a candle upon a stormy night, when winds and gusty blasts are blowing from every quarter,—to carry it still burning, steadily burning, along the street,—this is a wonderful achievement. To go over a stormy sea in a little boat,—to mount billow after billow, and not see the waves breaking over the boat, and overturning it,—this is well-nigh a miracle. To see a little child tottering along the crowded street, a child some three or four years old —to see it tottering on and making its way in safety, from one end of a long street to the other,—this is a mighty marvel. But, after all, what is this, but the life, and history, and experience of every true Christian? Though he falls, he rises again; though he is cast down, he is not destroyed. He goes on from one position to another, like the moon upon a stormy night, plunging from one cloud into another, yet by- and-by shining out again and walking in brightness. What is the secret of it all? It is the continual intercession of a mighty Friend at the right hand of God: a Friend that never slumbers and never sleeps: a Friend who cares for the believer morning, noon, and night. The intercession of Christ is the secret of the perseverance of the Christian.

Reader, you would do well to study the words of the Apostle in the 5th chapter of Romans: “Much more then,” he says, “being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Mark the connection: “Being already justified by His death, we shall be saved,”—and saved by what? “By his life:” by His ever living to make intercession for us. Wise and beautiful is the comparison made by that master of allegory, John Bunyan, in the “Pilgrim’s Progress.” He tells us how Christian was taken into the Interpreter’s house, and how the Interpreter showed him many things wonderful and instructive. In one place he took him into a room where there was a fire burning, and showed him one ever pouring water upon that fire, and yet the water did not quench the fire. However much water he poured on, still the fire went on burning steadily. Then said the Interpreter, “Knowest thou what this means?” When Christian did not know, he took him behind the fire, and showed him one pouring on oil out of a vessel. This oil fed the fire, and made it burn more fiercely, notwithstanding all the water that was poured upon it. Then the Interpreter told him that this was a picture of Jesus Christ’s intercession. That fire was the fire of grace in the believer’s heart. He that poured on the water was the enemy of souls, the devil. But He that poured on the oil, standing behind the fire, was the Lord Jesus Christ, who by continual intercession and the supply of His Spirit, secretly and unseen by man,

kept alive His own work in the believer's heart, and did not allow Satan and all his agents to get a victory over Him.

Would you know the secret of the believer's boldness in prayer? It is a marvel how a man that feels his sins so deeply as the believer does, can speak with the confidence the believer frequently does. How one that acknowledges he is wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked, ruined, undone; who often does what he ought not to do, and leaves undone what he ought to do, and finds no health in him; how such a one as this can go before God with confidence, pour out his heart before Him freely, ask from Him what he requires day after day and not feel afraid,—this is wonderful indeed. What is the secret of it? It is the intercession of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whereby the true Christian knows his prayers are made acceptable, and received in the court of heaven. What is the believer's prayer in itself? A poor, weak thing, unfit to rise above the ground. I know nothing it is more like than a banknote without the signature in the corner. What is the value of that banknote without the signature? Nothing at all. Once get a few words, a very few letters, traced in ink upon the corner of that banknote, and that which was a piece of waste paper a few moments before becomes worth, it maybe, many hundred pounds, through the signature being attached to it. So it is with the intercession of Christ. He signs, endorses, and presents the believer's petitions, and through His all-prevailing intercession they are heard on high, and bring down blessings upon the Christian soul.

Would you know the secret of daily comfort in all the toil, and business, and distractions we have to go through? We all know that they who have to do work in any secular calling, find the work oftentimes a sore burden to their souls. Oftentimes in the morning they feel, "How can I get through this day without a defiled conscience, without being sorely troubled and tempted to forget my God?" How shall a man get through the day with comfort, fill his office in the world, do his duty in the position to which God has called him? Let him lay hold upon the intercession of Jesus Christ. Let him grasp the great thought, that Christ not merely died for him, but rose again, and still lives for him.

There is a story recorded of one who lived 200 hundred years ago; a man well known in his day and generation—a man who left behind a character as pure and unsullied as anyone who fell in the unhappy Commonwealth wars: I allude to the great Lord Falkland. It is recorded of Lord Falkland during the Commonwealth wars, when he was often engaged in duties from morning to night time that a common prayer of his before leaving his tent was something of this kind,— "Lord, I am going this day to do the duty whereunto I am called. I may sometimes forget Thee. I cannot have my thoughts at all times as fully fixed upon Thee as I wish. But, Lord, if I this day I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me." This is the thought that every believer should lay hold upon who has much to do in the business of this world. Rising from his bed in the morning, going from his room every morning, leaving his house every morning, let him bear in mind, "There is One living in heaven who intercedes for me, while I am following my lawful calling. Although I may be absorbed in business, and obliged to give up all the powers of my poor weak mind to it, still there lives One who never forgets me." He may say, as Lord Falkland said, "Lord, if I this day forget Thee, do not Thou forget me."

Last of all, would you know the secret of comfort in looking forward to that heaven whereunto every believer desires to go? I believe there are few children of God who do not sometimes feel

anxious, troubled, and cast down, when they think quietly about the eternal habitation towards which they are travelling. The nature of it, the manner of it, the employments of it, their own apparent unfitness and uniqueness for it, will sometimes perplex their minds. These thoughts will sometimes come across the believer's mind, especially in times of sickness, filling him with heaviness, and making his heart sink. Now I know no remedy against these thoughts to be compared to the recollection of the continual intercession of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Christ is gone into heaven to be the forerunner of a people who are to follow after Him. He is gone to prepare a place for them, and the place whereto He goes is the place whereto His people are to go by and by. When they go there they will find all things made ready,—a place for every one, and a fitting and proper place too, through the intercession of their Lord and Saviour. There never will be a time when their company will not be liked in heaven There never will be a time when their old sins,—the sins of their youth and their backslidings, their wickedness before conversion, their profligacy, it may be, before the grace of God came into their hearts,—there never will be a day when all these sins shall come up against them, and make them feel abashed and ashamed in heaven. Christ will be in the midst. Christ will ever stand interceding. Where Christ is, there His people will be. Where He lives, His perfect merit, His spotless righteousness, His

intercession, will make them perfect in the sight of God the Father. They will stand in heaven, seen in Christ, clothed in Christ, members of Christ, part of Christ; and so will possess a firm and solid and eternal title to the eternal joys which shall be hereafter.

I will now conclude this tract by a few words of application to all into whose hands it may fall. My hearts desire and prayer to God is that the words I have been writing may yet bear fruit in your soul. In order that they may do so, I offer a few words of faithful and affectionate counsel.

1. I would offer counsel, first, to all who are anxious and troubled respecting their soul's salvation, and yet know not what to do. Reader, if you are such a person, I charge you and entreat you, I beseech you and invite you, to come into the way of which I have been speaking in this tract. I beseech you to come to God by the old and tried way,—the way of faith in Jesus Christ. Draw near to God, pleading the name of Jesus. Begin this very day to cry mightily unto God, in the name of Jesus, on behalf of your soul. Say not you have anything to plead for yourself. You have nothing to plead. Your life, your thoughts, your ways, all alike condemn you. Say nothing about yourself but this,—that you are a sinner, a great sinner, a guilty sinner, a condemned sinner; but because you are a sinner, you turn to God. Come unto Him in the name of Jesus, saying, you have heard that through Jesus a sinner may come near Him. Tell Him that you are a sinner, a great sinner, and an unworthy one. But tell Him that you come in the faith of His promises, in the confidence of His own Bible invitation; and in the name of Jesus, and for the sake of Jesus, and on account of Jesus, you ask to be received, heard, pardoned, forgiven, and accepted. Tell Him that you wish to have your name—even that name of yours, connected hitherto with worldliness, thoughtlessness, carelessness, and sin added to the list of God's dear children.

Will you say that you are afraid to come to God? Your fear is needless. You shall not be cast out, if you will but come in the way of faith in Christ. Our God is not "austere man." Our Father in heaven is full of mercy, love, and grace. I yield to none in desire to exalt the love, mercy, and tenderness of God the Father. I will not concede, for one moment, that what is called an Evangelical ministry will not magnify the mercy, love, and compassion of God the Father as much as any ministry on

earth. We know that God is holy. We know He is just. We believe that He can be angry with them that go on still in sin. But we also believe that to those who draw near to Him in Christ Jesus, He is most merciful, most loving, and most tender, most compassionate. We tell you that the cross of Jesus Christ was the result and consequence of that love. The cross was not the cause and reason of God's mercy, but the result and consequence of the everlasting love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, towards a poor, lost, and bankrupt world. Draw near in faith, dear reader, by that living way, Christ Jesus, to the Father. Think not for a moment—the unworthy thought shall never prove true—that so drawing near to God the Father by Christ, God the Father will not receive you. He will receive you gladly. As the father did to the prodigal son when he ran to meet him,—fell on his neck and kissed him,—so will God the Father do to that soul that draws near to Him in the name of Christ.

2. In the next place, I would cheer those readers who have walked in the way of God, and yet are afraid of falling. Why should you be afraid? What should make you fear? What should make you suppose that you shall ever be allowed to fall away, while Jesus Christ lives at the right hand of God to make intercession for you? All the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is pledged upon your behalf. He has undertaken to care for all the flock that God the Father has committed into His hand. He will care for it. He has cared for it. He went to the cross for it. He died for it. He is ever at the right hand of God, and has not ceased to care for it. Every member of that flock—the weakest, the feeblest member of that flock—is equally dear to the Lord and Saviour, and none shall pluck the least of Christ's sheep out of God's hand. Can you stop the tides of the sea, and make them not rise at your command? Can you make the waters stay when the tide begins to fall? Can you prevent the sun in heaven going down in the west, or prevent the same sun from rising tomorrow morning in the east? You cannot do it: the thing is impossible And all the power of devils, all the power of the world, and all the enemies of the Christian, shall not be able to pluck out of the hand of Jesus Christ one single soul who has been brought by the Spirit's teaching to true union with Christ, and for whom Jesus Christ intercedes. The days of Christ's weakness have passed away. He was "crucified through weakness," and was weak on our account when He went to the cross. The days of His weakness are over: the days of His power have begun. Pilate shall no more condemn Him: He shall come to condemn Pilate. All power is His in heaven and earth, and all that power is engaged on behalf of His believing people.

3. Finally, let me gladden all believers who read this tract, by reminding them that Christ is yet to come again. The Great High Priest is yet to come forth from the holy of holies, to bless all the people who have believed on Him. One part of His work He did when He died upon the cross; another part of His work He is still doing,—interceding for us at God's right hand. But the third part of the High Priest's office remains yet to be done. He has yet to come forth from the holy of holies, as the high priest did upon the day of atonement,— to come forth from within the veil to bless the people. That part of Christ's work is yet to come. He is now gone into Heaven itself,—He is within the holy of holies: He is gone behind the veil. But our Great High Priest—a greater one than Aaron's—shall yet come forth one day. He shall come in power and great glory. He shall come as He left the world, when He went up in the clouds of heaven. He shall come to gather from the north and from the south, from the east and from the west, all who have loved His name and confessed Him before men,—all who have heard His voice and followed Him. He shall gather them together into one happy company. There shall be no more weakness, and no more sorrow,—no more

parting, and no more separation,—no more sickness, and no more death,—no more disputing, and no more controversy,—no more fighting with the world, the flesh, and devil,—and, best of all, no more sin. That day shall be a happy day indeed, when the High Priest comes forth to do the third, last part of His work—to bless His believing people.

“He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20) _____

Chapter 11

Are you Looking?

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. ARE YOU LOOKING?

"Looking unto Jesus."— Hebrews 12:2.

READER,

The question which heads this page may seem an odd one at first sight. To whom or to what does it apply? The words of St. Paul, below it, supply the key to its meaning. It is an inquiry concerning your soul and the Lord Jesus Christ. It means neither more nor less than this,—"Are you looking unto Jesus?"

"Looking unto Jesus" is a very simple expression: it is soon spoken and soon written; it contains no words hard to be understood. But it is an expression rich in contents, and filled to the brim with food for thought. Here is a brief account of the Christian's character: he is one who "looks to Jesus." Here is the secret of running successfully the race that leads toward heaven: we must he ever "looking to Jesus." This is the way to begin well; this is the way to go on prosperously; this is the way to end in peace. Here is the photograph of patriarchs and prophets, of apostles and martyrs, of holy fathers and holy reformers, of holy saints, in every land and age: they were all men who "looked to Jesus." Here is the marrow of all creeds, and articles, and confessions of guilt: to "look to Jesus." Reader, if you and I wish to be saved, let us begin by asking ourselves the simple question, Am I looking to Jesus?

But how can you look to Jesus? He is not here. He has ascended up into heaven in the body, and is there sitting at the right hand of God. As God, no doubt, He is everywhere present, and fills heaven and earth: as Man, He can only be in one place at once,—and that place is the place of honour at the Father's right hand. The notion that He is present in the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper is a weak invention of man, and one that has led to many superstitions: it is a notion flatly opposed to Scripture, and flatly contradicted in the Prayer-book of the Church of England. You may look at the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and as you look and eat and drink, your memory may be quickened, your soul refreshed, and your faith increased. But you cannot literally and corporally look at Jesus. His body and blood are in heaven, and not there. How then are you to look at Him?

Reader, there is but one answer to this question. You must look to Jesus by faith. True believing with the heart is the "looking" of which St. Paul makes mention to the Hebrew Christians. Faith is the eye of the Christian's soul. As Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and the

suffering Israelite who looked at it was immediately healed, so must you look at Jesus Christ with trust, confidence, reliance, and expectation. This is what St. Paul meant when he talked of "looking unto Jesus."

In what point of view ought you to look to Jesus, in order to get full benefit from Him? This is a very important inquiry, and one which I propose to answer in this tract. Vague, general, and indistinct notions in religion are dangerous things, and do great harm. Thousands are continually saying "they trust in Christ and no one else," and yet can hardly tell you what they mean: no wonder they feel little comfort in their Christianity. Weak, indistinct perceptions of Christ will always produce weak consolations. Reader, let me try to put you in a right position of soul: let me show you how to look to Jesus, so as to get the greatest amount of good from Him. It is an old saying, that there is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything; in nothing is that saying so true as in spiritual things, and specially in the relations between Christ and the soul.

There are three points of view in which your soul should look at Jesus Christ. Let me set them before you in order, and tell you what they are.

I. You should look backward, to Jesus on the cross.

II. You should look upward, to Jesus at the right hand of God.

III. You should look forward, to Jesus coming again at the last day.

Happy is he who takes these three looks every day that he lives! This is the man who will be found a peaceful, a strong, and a cheerful Christian. Let me now explain fully what I mean.

I. In the first place, you should look backward, to Jesus on the cross. Let your faith's eye daily look on Christ crucified, and rest in the sight.

What will you see, as you look at Jesus on the cross? You will see the eternal Son of God suffering, bleeding, agonizing, dying, in order to pay your soul's debt, and make satisfaction for your sins. You will see the most wonderful transaction taking place that ever took place since the foundation of the world. You will see a Divine Substitute suffering in your stead, the Just for the unjust; bearing your sins, carrying your transgressions, allowing Himself to be reckoned a curse and sin for you, in order that you, sinner as you are, might be set free from all guilt, and counted innocent before God.

What will you get from the sight? Clear views of the way of pardon and peace with God,—clear knowledge of the true medicine for an aching conscience,—clear perception of the only plan of forgiveness,—justification, reconciliation, and acceptance with God. Nothing but Christ's atonement on the cross can ever clear up these things. Christ's substitution, Christ's satisfaction, Christ's atoning death, Christ's sacrifice for sin,—this is the grand secret of peace with God. To know that when we were guilty, One bore our guilt,—that when we were lost, One died that we might he saved,—that when we were ruined, One died that we might be redeemed and set free,—to know this is to know the foundation of all saving Christianity.

Reader, look steadily at Jesus on the cross, if you want to feel inward peace. Look to anything of your own, and you will never feel comfortable. Your own life and doings, your own repentance and amendment, your own morality and regularity, your own church-going and Sacrament-receiving,

your own Bible-reading and your prayers, your own almsgiving and your charities,—what, what are they all but a huge mass of imperfection? Rest not upon them for a moment, in the matter of your justification. As evidences of your wishes, feelings, bias, tastes, habits, inclinations, they may be useful helps occasionally. As grounds of acceptance with God they are worthless rubbish. They cannot give you comfort; they cannot bear the weight of your sins; they cannot stand the searching eye of God. Rest on nothing but Christ crucified, and the atonement He made for you on Calvary. This, this alone is the way of peace.

Look steadily to Jesus on the cross, and listen not to those who would persuade you to look elsewhere. Thousands of people in the present day are constantly looking to something else instead of Christ crucified, and secretly wondering that they do not find rest and comfort. They look to the Church, or the Sacraments, or the service,—or the ministry, and insensibly use them as ends, instead of using them as means. They must change their plan, if they wish to find peace. It is the blood of Christ which alone can purge the conscience, and take the burden off the soul.

This is the point to which I see many come at last, after holding very different doctrine for many years. Nothing strikes me so much as the fact that we often hear of some divine, high in office, who has spent all his life in condemning what is called "Evangelical religion," clinging simply to Christ crucified in his last moments! The favourite doctrines of "High Churchmanship" seem to fail and break down in the valley of the shadow of death. Nothing seems to cheer and support but the "precious blood of Christ," and simple faith in the atonement. Reader, you will never have cause to be ashamed of the doctrine of the cross. Let the first look of your soul to Jesus, be a look backward. Look at Him dying for your sins on the cross, and as you look, say to yourself, "This was done for me."

II. In the second place you ought to look upward, to Jesus at the right hand of God. Let your faith's eye see Jesus as your Priest in heaven, and rejoice in the sight.

What will you see there? You will see the same Saviour who died for you exalted to the place of highest honour, and doing the work of an intercessor and advocate for your soul. All was not done when He suffered for your sins on Calvary. He rose again and ascended up to heaven, to carry on there the work which He began on earth. There, as our Priest and Representative, He ever lives to make intercession for us. He presents our names before the Father; He continually pleads our cause. He obtains for us a never-ending supply of mercy and grace; He watches over our interests with an eye that never sleeps. He is ready, morning, noon, and night, to hear our confessions, to grant us absolution, to strengthen us for duty, to comfort us in trial, to guide us in perplexity, to hold us up in temptation, and to preserve us safe on our journey heavenward until we reach home.

What will you get by looking upward to Jesus? Comfort and strength in all the daily battle of life. What thought more cheering than the thought that Jesus is ever looking at you and watching over you! What idea more strengthening than the idea that you are never alone, never forgotten, never neglected, never without a Friend who is "able to save to the uttermost all them who come unto God by Him!" (Hebrews 7:25)

This daily upward look at Jesus is a most important point. The life of Christ for His people in heaven is only second in importance to His death for them on the cross. The blood, the sacrifice, the atonement, the satisfaction for sin can never be too much prized or thought of. But the session

in heaven, the priestly intercession, the daily advocacy of Jesus ought not to be forgotten. I sadly fear they are not so much considered in this day as they ought to be.

It is a striking and painful fact that many English people just now are hankering after that most dangerous invention of Popery, the Confessional. Clergymen who ought to know better are constantly urging on people the usefulness of private confession and private absolution. Men and women in all directions are greedily drinking in the doctrine, and flattering themselves that it is the way of peace. To kneel before God's ordained minister, to confess our sins to him, to receive at his hand complete absolution,—all this is becoming most attractive to many consciences. Hundreds are persuading themselves that it is a valuable medicine for labouring and heavy laden souls.

To what may we trace the spread of this delusion? To nothing, I believe, so much as to ignorance of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. Men have lost sight of the fact that we have a Priest and confessional provided for us in the Gospel, and that we need none beside. They have been content with looking backward to the cross, and dwelling on Christ's death, and have forgotten the resurrection, and Christ's life as an Advocate at the right hand of God. They have confined their thoughts of Christ to the atonement He made for sin when He died. They have not remembered that He rose again, ascended up into heaven, and there acts as our Priest and Advocate when we come unto God by Him. In a word, they have looked backward to Christ's crucifixion, but they have not looked upward to Christ's priesthood and intercession.

Reader, beware of falling into this mistake. Beware of leaving out any part of the truth concerning Jesus. That great divine, John Owen, declared, two hundred years ago, that there was no office of Christ which Satan hated so much as the priestly one, and none which he laboured so incessantly to obscure and bring into contempt. Understand that office thoroughly, and cling to it firmly. No earthly priest can be so wise, so sympathizing, so trustworthy, so able to help, as Jesus, the Son of God. From no confessional will you go away so light-hearted, so cheerful, so satisfied, as from the throne of grace, and from communion with Christ. Look up to Him daily, if you would be a happy Christian; pour out your heart before Him, if you would enjoy the consolations of the Gospel. This daily look to a living interceding Jesus is one great secret of strength and comfort in religion.

III. In the last place, you ought to look forward to Jesus coming again. Let the eye of your faith look onward to the day when Christ shall come again the second time.

What will you see when that great event takes place? You will see the eternal Son of God return in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will come to raise the dead saints and to change the living ones, to punish the wicked and to reward the godly, to summon every one before His bar,and to give to every one according to His works. He will come to bind Satan, and deprive him of his usurped dominion, to deliver the earth from the curse, and to purify it as the eternal dwelling-place of a holy nation; to cast out sin, and all its accursed consequences,—disease, death, sorrow, wars, poverty, injustice, and oppression. You see the world defiled now by the presence of evil. You will see it at length restored to its former state, and the days of paradise before the fall brought back again.

What will you get by looking forward to Jesus coming again? You will get that which is the best remedy against disquiet and depression,—hope shed abroad in your heart about things to come. When the minds of others are cast down with perplexity, you will feel able to lift up your head and

rejoice; when all around seems dark and gloomy, you will see light, and be able to wait patiently for better days.

Few things are so remarkable in the present time as the universal anxiety and suspense about the future. On all sides, and among all classes, you hear of want of confidence and gloomy forebodings of coming evil; Church and State alike seem shaken to their foundations: no one seems to know what to expect next. On one thing alone men seem agreed: they look forward with more fear than hope to the future. Governments seem afraid of their subjects, and subjects seem to have no confidence in their Governments; the rich seem unable to satisfy the poor, and the poor seem unable to trust the rich.

On all sides you hear of restlessness, anarchy, lawlessness, disquiet, envy, jealousy, distrust, suspicion, and discontent. The cement seems to have fallen out of the walls of society: the bands which kept nations together seem to be decaying, snapping, and giving way. One might think that the devil was putting forth special efforts, and allowed to have special power. Never, to my mind, was there such a striking fulfilment of the words of our Lord in St. Luke: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:25-26) Which ever way I turn my eyes, I see something very like an accomplishment of these words. Whether I look to Europe or to America,—whether I look to the Continent or my own country,—whether I look to England or to Ireland,—whether I look to political matters or to ecclesiastical,—from every quarter I get the same report. Every where I see men looking forward with alarm.

In a day like this there is no comfort like that of looking forward to Christ coming again. The Christian who reads his Bible, and believes what it contains, can behold the shaking of all things round him unmoved. He, at any rate, is not uncertain about the future: he, at least, can explain to any one the nature of his expectations. He expects nothing from the rulers of this world: he knows that their boasted laws and reforms will never satisfy mankind, or give peace and freedom to the earth. He expects nothing from the Churches and ecclesiastical systems of Christendom: he knows that they are all breaking down, going to pieces, and melting away. He expects but little from missions, either at home or abroad: he knows that they will call out an elect people for the glory of God: but he looks for little more. His expectation is wholly fixed on Christ's second coming and reign. This is the great event to which he is continually looking forward; this is "the blessed hope" that sustains him, and makes him calm amidst confusion. His eye is steadily fixed on his Saviour's return. In the darkest hour he does not despair: "Yet a little time," he says, "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Hebrews 10:37)

From the bottom of my soul I pity those who look for the perfecting of the Church or the world by any existing agencies. I pity politicians who dream that any reforms will ever pacify and content mankind; I pity Christians who dream that missionary societies will gradually regenerate the nations, and fill the earth with true religion, till it silently and gently blooms into a state of perfection. Both parties are sowing for themselves bitter disappointment: they might as well expect grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. The only comfortable stand-point in looking into the future, is that which is occupied by the Christian who fixes his hope on the second advent of Jesus Christ.

Does false doctrine rise and spread among professing Christians? Are many falling away on the right hand and left, some going towards Rome, and others leaning towards infidelity? Are myriads bowing down before such idols as the Church, the priesthood, the sacraments, intellect, reason, liberality, charity, earnestness, and the like? The courage of the believer in a personal advent and reign of Christ will not fail. He falls back on the thought that all is ordered for good: all is permitted for wise ends, for the purification of Christians and the exercise of their graces. There is a good time coming: the Lord of the harvest shall soon appear, and send forth His angels to separate the wheat and the tares; then shall the righteous shine forth like the sun. The time is short, the Lord is at hand.

Do kings and rulers throw the nations of the earth into confusion, changing, pulling down, mismanaging disestablishing, rearranging, in their feverish anxiety to make everything work smoothly? Does everything in society gradually become more disorderly, more out of joint, and more full of confusion? Does a grand crash seem impending, when the whole machine of government shall break down and come to a standstill? The believer in Christ's second advent and reign, can view it all without dismay. He knows who has said, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until He comes, whose right it is." (Ezekiel 21:27) He expects no perfect peace or rest until the Prince of Peace comes, and the King's Son has His own kingdom again, and the prince of this world is cast out. He believes that all shall end well: "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ." (Revelation 11:15)

Do the best believers seem to die off and leave the Church below? Are the gaps in families and congregations apparently increasing, which nothing seems to fill up? Do the friends ahead in the voyage of life, who have crossed over and got home before us, begin to seem far more numerous than the friends astern? Does heaven seem to become every year more full, and earth more empty, the Church above more rich, and the Church below more poor? The man who believes in the speedy coming and kingdom of Christ can bear it all without despair. He sorrows not, as those who have no hope; he believes that the parting is only for a small moment, and the meeting shall be for ever; he believes that the time is short, the fashion of this world passing away, the first resurrection drawing near, the Conqueror of death about to return. He knows that he shall soon see all the saints again; the whole family shall be reassembled: them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him. Happy is he who believes Christ's second personal advent. Happy is that man who can look forward.

Reader, remember these three looks at Jesus, backward, upward, forward; and make use of them every day. The first is the secret of peace of conscience: no peace unless we look backward at the cross of Christ!—the second is the secret of real daily strength and comfort in our walk with God: little solid comfort unless we look upward to Christ's intercession!—The third is the secret of bright and cheerful hope in a dark world: no bright prospect unless we look forward to Christ coming again! Backward, upward, forward,—these are the three ways in which we should look at Jesus. He that looks at the cross is a wise man; he that looks at the cross and the intercession also, is wiser still; but he that looks at all three,—the cross, the intercession, and the coming of Jesus,—he is the wisest of all.

(1) Come, now, my reader, and let me wind up all this tract by asking you a friendly question. Let me ask you what you are looking to for your soul's salvation?

You have a soul, you know full well: there is something within that bears witness to that. That there is a world to come, and a judgment too,—that there is a life to come for which this life is only a preparatory school,—that you were not sent into the world to live the life of a beast, to eat and drink and sleep and care for nothing but your body,—all this your conscience testifies. You may not live, perhaps, as if you believed all this,—a man might often think you did not believe it; but for all this, you do believe it. In your heart of hearts, you know that what I say is true.

Once more, then, I ask, what are you looking to for your soul's salvation? Anything or nothing? Something solid and substantial, or something weak and infirm? Reader, for your soul's sake, and as one that must die one day, I charge you to give an answer.

Will you tell me, "You don't know: you hope it will be all right: at any rate you don't pretend to make any profession." You cannot surely think that excuses like these are reasonable, or satisfactory, or sensible, or wise. To leave that uncertain on which your eternal happiness depends,—to make no insurance against the future necessities of the only part of you that never dies,—to float down the current towards the fall, and yet make no provision for your safety,—to muddle away life in meaning, and hoping, and intending, and resolving, and yet never really prepare to meet God,—to know that death and judgment are every day drawing nearer, and yet never to make up your mind how you are going to meet them,—this, this is not the conduct of a wise man. This is the conduct of a simpleton, an idiot, a madman, or a child.

Oh, "awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."—"Repent and be converted, that thy sins may be blotted out."—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate," before the Master arise and bar that gate for ever.—"Labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man is ready to give thee."—"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near."—"Come to the waters," while the fountain is yet open, "and buy wine and milk without money and without price."—"Come to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy and find grace."—"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come."—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—"What meanest thou, oh sleeper? arise and call upon thy God."—"Come unto Christ, and He will give thee rest."—"Ask, and thou shalt receive. Seek, and thou shalt find."—"Him that cometh unto Christ, He will in nowise cast out."—"The blood of Christ can cleanse thee from all sin." (Ephesians 5:14; Acts 3:19; Luke 13:24; John 6:27; Hebrews 4:16; Revelation 22:17; Isaiah 1:18. Jonah 1:6; Matthew 11:28; Matthew 7:7; John 6:37; 1 John 1:7) Oh, rest not, rest not, rest not, till thou knowest what thou art looking to for thy soul! Make use of the beautiful passages of Scripture here just put before thee. Look to Christ, and thou shalt live.

(2) Reader, if you know anything of looking unto Jesus, I have only one piece of advice to give you. That advice is, to keep on looking unto Jesus to the end.

That old way, in which saints have now walked for eighteen hundred years, is the only way of safety and the only path of peace. All the wit and wisdom of man will never discern a better way to heaven, and a surer way to keep our souls in comfort. All the Councils that have ever met together,—from that true one which met at Jerusalem under James, down to that sham one which met in Rome under Pope Pius IX.,—all, all together can never frame a better answer than St. Paul gives to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" They cannot add one jot or tittle or grain to the Apostle's prescription: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts

16:31) In other words, that prescription means, "Look to Jesus Christ." Reader, stick to that prescription till you die. Add nothing to it, and take nothing away. You cannot mend or improve it. The least addition or subtraction spoils it altogether.

We hear much in these latter days of the vast progress of intellect, and the enormous results of deep learning. Men tell us complacently that a free handling of Scripture, and a closer critical study of its contents, will give quite a new colour to Christianity. I do not believe it for one moment. I believe that all the intellectual power of England, Scotland, Germany, and America will never add one word to "the short faith of the saints," or one article to the substance of the Eunuch's confession,—"I believe on Jesus Christ as the Son of God." (Acts 8:37)

Reader, beware of novelties. Never leave the old paths. They are marked with the footsteps of myriads of old pilgrims. Not one ever found the old paths lead him wrong. The footsteps are all in one direction.—Beware of short-cut paths, however speciously they may be recommended. Priestly absolution, confessionals, human absolutions, may be pressed on your attention as useful helps towards heaven. Beware of them all: they have not profited those that have been occupied therein. They have proved opiates to drug and deaden conscience, but not healing medicine to cure its wounds; they have healed the diseases of the soul slightly, and made them in the end nothing better, but rather worse. Nothing will ever prove better than the old Gospel plan of looking by faith to Jesus Christ. Visible sacrifices will never fill the place of the one true Sacrifice. Visible priests will never prove substitutes for the great High Priest in heaven.

Keep on simply looking to Jesus. Other plans of religion look well in the days of health and prosperity, but break down entirely in the hour of death, and on the bed of sickness. Faith in Jesus will be found better, more useful, more cheering, more comforting, the more it is used.

Keep on looking unto Jesus. Faith shall soon be changed to sight, and hope to certainty. Looking to Jesus on earth by faith, you shall end with seeing Jesus eye to eye in heaven. Those eyes of yours shall look on the head that was crowned with thorns, the hands and feet that were pierced with nails, and the side that was pierced with a spear. You shall find that seeing is the blessed consequence of believing, and that looking at Jesus by faith, ends with seeing Jesus in glory, and living with Jesus for evermore. When you awake up after His likeness, you shall be satisfied.

I remain,

Your faithful Friend,

J.C. RYLE.

HYMN.

Oh, eyes that are weary,

And hearts that are sore,

Look off unto Jesus,

And sorrow no more!

The light of His countenance

Shineth so bright,

That on earth, as in heaven,

There need be no night.

Looking off unto Jesus

My eyes cannot see

The troubles and dangers

That throng around me.

They cannot be blinded

With sorrowful tears.

They cannot be shadowed

With unbelief-fears.

Looking off unto Jesus.

My spirit is blest,—

In the world I have turmoil,

In Him I have rest.

The sea of my life

All about me may roar—

When I look unto Jesus

I hear it no more.

Looking off unto Jesus,

I go not astray;

My eyes are on Him.

And He shows me the way.

'The path may seem dark

As He leads me along,

But following Jesus

I cannot go wrong.

Looking off unto Jesus,

My heart cannot fear:

its trembling is still

When I see Jesus near:

I know that His power

My safeguard will be.

For, "Why are ye troubled?"

He saith unto me.

Looking off unto Jesus,

Oh, may I be found,

When the waters of Jordan

Encompass me round!

Let them bear me away

In His presence to he:

'Tis but seeing him nearer

Whom always I see.

Then, then shall I know

The full beauty and grace

Of Jesus, my Lord,

When I stand face to face:

I shall know how His love

Went before me each day,

And wonder that ever

My eyes turned away.

Chapter 12

Are you Ready?

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short "Helmingham Series" tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you these three exactly word for word as they were first published about the middle of the last century, while J. C. Ryle was a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk. ARE YOU READY?

READER,

I ASK you a plain question at the beginning of a new year: Are you ready?

It is a solemn thing to part company with the old year. It is a still more solemn thing to begin a new one. It is like entering a dark passage: we know not what we may meet before the end. All before us is uncertain: we know not what a day may bring forth, much less what may happen in a year. Reader, are you ready?

Are you ready for sickness? You cannot expect to be always well. You have a body fearfully and wonderfully made: it is awful to think how many diseases may assail it.

"Strange that a harp of thousand strings

Should keep in tune so long!"

Pain and weakness are a hard trial. They can bow down the strong man and make him like a child. They can weary the temper and exhaust the patience, and make men cry in the morning, "Would God it were evening," and in the evening, "Would God it were morning." All this may come to pass this very year. Your reason may be shattered,—your senses may be weakened, your nerves may be unstrung: the very grasshopper may become a burden. Reader, if sickness comes upon you, are you ready?

Are you ready for affliction? "Man," says the Scripture, "is born to sorrow." This witness is true. Your property may be taken from you, your riches may make themselves wings and flee away, your friends may fail you, your children may disappoint you, your servants may deceive you; your character may be assailed, your conduct may be misrepresented: troubles, annoyances, vexations, anxieties, may surround you on every side, like a host of armed men; wave upon wave may burst over your head; you may feel worn and worried, and crushed to the dust. Reader, if affliction comes upon you, are you ready?

Are you ready for bereavements? No doubt there are those in the world that you love. There are those whose names are graven on your heart, and round whom your affections are entwined: there are those who are the light of your eyes, and the very sunshine of your existence. But they are all mortal: any one of them may die this year. Before the daisies blossom again, any one of them may be lying in the tomb. Your Rachel may be buried,—your Joseph may be taken from you,—your dearest idol may be broken: bitter tears and deep mourning may be your portion.

Before December you may feel terribly alone. Reader, if bereavement comes upon you, are you ready?

Are you ready for death? It must come some day: it may come this year. You cannot live always. This very year may be your last. You have no freehold in this world,—you have not so much as a lease: you are nothing better than a tenant at God's will. Your last sickness may come upon you, and give you notice to quit,—the doctor may visit you, and exhaust his skill over your case,—your friends may sit by your bedside, and look graver and graver every day: you may feel your own strength gradually wasting, and find something saying within, "I shall not come down from this bed, but die." You may see the world slipping from beneath your feet, and all your schemes and plans suddenly stopped short. You may feel yourself drawing near to the coffin, and the grave, and the worm, and an unseen world, and eternity, and God. Reader, if death should come upon you, are you ready?

Are you ready for the Second Coming of Christ? He will come again to this world one day. As surely as He came the first time, 1800 years ago, so surely will He come the second time. He will come to reward all His saints, who have believed in Him and confessed Him upon earth. He will come to punish all His enemies,—the careless, the ungodly, the impenitent, and the unbelieving. He will come very suddenly, at an hour when no man thinketh: as a thief in the night. He will come in terrible majesty, in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels. A flaming fire shall go before Him. The dead shall be raised,—the judgment shall be set,—the books shall be opened! Some shall be exalted into heaven: many, very many, shall be cast down to hell. The time for repentance shall be past. Many shall cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" but find the door of mercy closed forever. After this there will be no change. Reader, if Christ should come the second time this year, are you ready?

O reader, these are solemn questions! They ought to make you examine yourself. They ought to make you think. It would be a terrible thing to be taken by surprise. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But shall I leave you here? I will not do so. Shall I raise searchings of heart, and not set before you the way of life? I will not do so. Hear me for a few moments, while I try to show you the man that is ready.

He that is ready has a ready Saviour. He has Jesus ever ready to help him. He lives the life of faith in the Son of God. He has found out his own sinfulness, and fled to Christ for peace. He has committed his soul and all its concerns to Christ's keeping. If he has bitter cups of affliction to drink, he knows they are mixed by the hand that was nailed to the cross for his sins. If he is called to die, he knows that the grave is the place where the Lord lay. If those whom he loves are taken away, he remembers that Jesus is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and a husband who never dies. If the Lord should come again, he knows that he has nothing to fear. The Judge of all will be that very Jesus who has washed his sins away. Happy is that man who can say, with Hezekiah, "The Lord was ready to save me" (Isaiah 38:20).

He that is ready has a ready heart. He has been born again, and renewed in the spirit of his mind. The Holy Ghost has shown him the true value of all here below, and taught him to set his affections on things above. The Holy Ghost has shown him his own deserts, and made him feel

that he ought to be thankful for everything; and satisfied with any condition. If affliction comes upon him, his heart whispers, "There must be a needs be. I deserve correction. It is meant to teach me some useful lesson." If bereavement comes upon him, his heart reminds him that the Lord gave and the Lord must take away, whenever He sees fit. If death draws near, his heart says, "My times are in Thy hand: as Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, and where Thou wilt." If the Lord should come, his heart would cry, "This is the day I have long prayed for: the kingdom of God is come at last." Blessed is he who has a ready heart.

He that is ready has a home ready for him in heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ has told him that He is gone "to prepare a place" for him. A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, awaits him. He is not yet come to his full inheritance: his best things are yet to come. He can bear sickness, for yet a little time he shall have a glorious body. He can bear losses and crosses, for his choicest treasures are far beyond the reach of harm. He can bear disappointments, for the springs of his greatest happiness can never be made dry. He can think calmly of death: it will open a door for him from the lower house to the upper chamber,—even the presence of the King. He is immortal till his work is done. He can look forward to the coming of the Lord without alarm. He knows that they who are ready will enter in with Him to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Happy is that man whose lodging is prepared for him in the kingdom of Christ.

Reader, do you know anything of the things I have just spoken of? Do you know anything of a ready Saviour, a ready heart, and a ready home in heaven? Examine yourself honestly. How does the matter stand?

Oh, be merciful to your own soul! Have compassion on that immortal part of you. Do not neglect its interest, for the sake of mere worldly objects. Business, pleasure, money, politics, will soon be done with forever. Do not refuse to consider the question I ask you,—ARE YOU READY? ARE YOU READY?

Reader, if you are not ready, I beseech you to make ready without delay. I tell you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all things are ready on God's part for your salvation. The Father is ready to receive you,—the Lord Jesus is ready to wash your sins away,—the Spirit is ready to renew and sanctify you,—angels are ready to rejoice over you,—saints are ready to hold out the right hand to you. Oh, why not make ready this very year?

Reader, if you have reason to hope you are ready, I advise you to make sure. Walk more closely with God,—get nearer to Christ,—seek to exchange hope for assurance. Seek to feel the witness of the Spirit more closely and distinctly every year. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets you. Press towards the mark more earnestly. Fight a better fight, and war a better warfare every year you live. Pray more,—read more,—mortify self more,—love the brethren more. Oh that you may endeavour so to grow in grace every year, that your last things may be far more than your first, and the end of your Christian course far better than the beginning!

Chapter 13

Assurance

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

“ASSURANCE.” Being Thoughts on 2 Timothy 4:6-8. BY THE RIGHT REV.

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“ASSURANCE.”

“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

READER,

In the words of Scripture, which head this page, you see the Apostle Paul looking three ways: downward, backward, forward. Downward to the grave,—backward to his own ministry,—forward to that great day, the day of judgment.

I invite you this day to stand by the Apostle’s side a few minutes, and mark the words he uses. Happy is that soul who can look where Paul looked, and then speak as Paul spoke!

He looks downward to the grave, and he does it without fear. Hear what he says.

“I am ready to be offered.” I am like an animal brought to the place of sacrifice, and bound with cords to the very horns of the altar. The wine and oil have been poured on my head, according to the custom. The last ceremonies have been gone through. Every preparation has been made. It only remains to receive the death-blow, and then all is over.

“The time of my departure is at hand.” I am like a ship about to unmoor and put to sea. All on board is ready. I only wait to have the moorings cast off that fasten me to the shore, and I shall then set sail and begin my voyage.

Reader, these are glorious words to come from the lips of a child of Adam like ourselves. Death is a solemn thing, and never so much so as when we see it close at hand. The grave is a chilling, heart-sickening place, and it is vain to pretend it has no terrors. Yet here is a mortal man who can look calmly into the narrow house appointed for all living, and say, while he stands upon the brink, “I see it all, and am not afraid.”

Let us listen to him again. He looks backward to his ministerial life, and he does it without shame. Hear what he says.

“I have fought a good fight.” There he speaks as a soldier. I have fought that good battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, from which so many shrink and draw back.

“I have finished my course.” There he speaks as one who has run for a prize. I have run the race marked out for me: I have gone over the ground appointed for me, however rough and steep. I have not turned aside because of difficulties, nor been discouraged by the length of the way. I am at last in eight of the goal.

“I have kept the faith.” There he speaks as a steward. I have held fast that glorious Gospel which was committed to my trust. I have not mingled it with man’s traditions, nor spoiled its simplicity by adding my own inventions, nor allowed others to adulterate it without withstanding them to the face. “As a soldier,—a runner,—a steward,” he seems to say, “I am not ashamed.”

Reader, that Christian is happy who, as he quits this world, can leave such testimony behind him. A good conscience will save no man,—wash away no sin,—not lift us one hair’s breadth toward heaven. Yet, a good conscience will be found a pleasant visitor at our bed-side in a dying hour. Do you remember that place in “Pilgrim’s Progress” which describes Old Honest’s passages across the river of death? “The river,” says Bunyan, “at that time overflowed its banks in some places; but Mr. Honest, in his life-time, had spoken to one, Good Conscience, to meet him there: the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over.” Believe me, there is a mine of truth in that passage.

Let us hear the Apostle once more. He looks forward to the great day of reckoning, and he does it without doubt. Mark his words.

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” A glorious reward, he seems to say, is ready and laid up in store for me: even that crown which is only given to the righteous. In the great day of judgment the Lord shall give this crown to me, and to all beside me who have loved Him as an unseen Saviour, and longed to see Him face to face. My work on earth is over. This one thing now remains for me to look forward to, and nothing more.

Reader, observe that the Apostle speaks without any hesitation or distrust. He regards the crown as a sure thing: as his own already. He declares with unfaltering confidence his firm persuasion that the righteous Judge will give it to him. Paul was no stranger to all the circumstances and accompaniments of that solemn day to which he referred. The great white throne,—the assembled

world,—the open books,—the revealing of all secrets,—the listening angels,—the awful sentence,—the eternal separation of the lost and saved,—all these were things with which he was well acquainted. But none of these things moved him. His strong faith overleaped them all, and only saw Jesus, his all-prevailing Advocate, and the blood of sprinkling, and sin washed away. “A crown,” he says, “is laid up for me.” “The Lord Himself shall give it to me.” He speaks as if he saw it all with his own eyes.

Such are the main things which these verses contain. Of most of them I cannot pretend to speak, for space would not allow me. I shall only try to set before you one point in the passage, and that is “the assured hope” with which the Apostle looks forward to his own prospects in the day of judgment.

I shall do this the more readily, because of the great importance which I feel attaches to the subject of assurance, and the great neglect with which, I humbly conceive, it is often treated in this day.

But I shall do it at the same time with fear and trembling. I feel that I am treading on very difficult ground, and that it is easy to speak rashly and unscripturally in this matter. The road between truth and error is here especially a narrow pass, and if I shall be enabled to do good to some without doing harm to others, I shall be very thankful.

Reader, there are four things I wish to bring before you in speaking of the subject of assurance, and it may clear our way if I name them to you at once.

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope, such as Paul here expresses, is a true and Scriptural thing.

II. Secondly, I will make this broad concession,—that a man may never arrive at this assured hope, and yet be saved.

III. Thirdly, I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

IV. Lastly, I will try to point out some causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained.

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope is a true and Scriptural thing.

Assurance, such as Paul expresses in the verses which head this tract, is not a mere fancy or feeling. It is not the result of high animal spirits, or a sanguine temperament of body. It is a positive gift of the Holy Ghost, bestowed without reference to men’s bodily frames or constitutions, and a gift which every believer in Christ ought to aim at and seek after.

The Word of God appears to me to teach that a believer may arrive at an assured confidence with regard to his own salvation.

I would lay it down fully and broadly, that a true Christian, a converted man, may reach that comfortable degree of faith in Christ, that in general he shall feel entirely confident as to the pardon and safety of his soul,—shall seldom be troubled with doubts,—seldom be distracted with hesitation,—seldom be distressed by anxious questionings,—and, in short, though vexed by many an inward conflict with sin, shall look forward to death without trembling, and to judgment without dismay.1

Such is my account of assurance. I will ask you to mark it well. I say neither less nor more than I have here laid down.

Now, such a statement as this is often disputed and denied. Many cannot see the truth of it at all.

The Church of Rome denounces assurance in the most unmeasured terms. The Council of Trent declares roundly, that a “believer’s assurance of the pardon of his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence;” and Cardinal Bellarmine, the well-known champion of Romanism, calls it “a prime error of heretics.”

The vast majority of the worldly among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them to hear of it. They do not like others to feel comfortable and sure, because they never feel so themselves. That they cannot receive it is certainly no marvel.

But there are also some true believers who reject assurance, or shrink from it as a doctrine fraught with danger. They consider it borders on presumption. They seem to think it a proper humility never to be confident, and to live in a certain degree of doubt. This is to be regretted, and does much harm.

I frankly allow there are some presumptuous persons who profess to feel a confidence for which they have no Scriptural warrant. There always are some people who think well of themselves when God thinks ill, just as there are some who think ill of themselves when God thinks well. There always will be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuses and counterfeits. God’s election,—man’s impotence,—salvation by grace,—all are alike abused. There will be fanatics and enthusiasts as long as the world stands. But, for all this, assurance is a real, sober, and true thing; and God’s children must not let themselves be driven from the use of a truth, merely because it is abused.2

My answer to all who deny the existence of real, well-grounded assurance is simply this,—What saith the Scripture? If assurance be not there, I have not another word to say.

But does not Job say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God”? (Job 19:25-26)

Does not David say, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me”? (Psalms 23:4)

Does not Isaiah say, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee”? (Isaiah 26:3)

And again, “The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” (Isaiah 32:17)

Does not Paul say to the Romans, “I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, not height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”? (Romans 8:38-39)

Does he not say to the Corinthians, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”? (2 Corinthians 5:1)

And again, “We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:6)

Does he not say to Timothy, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him”? (2 Timothy 1:12)

And does he not speak to the Colossians of “the full assurance of understanding” (Colossians 2:2), and to the Hebrews of the “full assurance of faith,” and the “full assurance of hope”? (Hebrews 6:11; Hebrews 10:22)

Does not Peter say expressly, “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure”? (2 Peter 1:10)

Does not John say, “We know that we have passed from death unto life”? (1 John 3:14)

And again, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13)

And again, “We know that we are of God.” (1 John 5:19)

Reader, what shall we say to these things? I desire to speak with all humility on any controverted point. I feel that I am only a poor fallible child of Adam myself. But I must say, that in the passages I have just quoted I see something far higher than the mere “hopes” and “trusts” with which so many believers appear content in this day. I see the language of persuasion, confidence, knowledge,—nay, I may almost say, of certainty. And I feel, for my own part, if I may take these Scriptures in their plain, obvious meaning, the doctrine of assurance is true.

But my answer, furthermore, to all who dislike the doctrine of assurance, as bordering on presumption, is this: it can hardly be presumption to tread in the steps of Peter and Paul, of Job and of John. They were all eminently humble and lowly-minded men, if ever any were; and yet they all speak of their own state with an assured hope. Surely this should teach us that deep humility and strong assurance are perfectly compatible, and that there is not any necessary connection between spiritual confidence and pride.3

My answer, furthermore, is, that many have attained to such an assured hope as our text expresses, even in modern times. I will not concede for a moment that it was a peculiar privilege confined to the Apostolic day. There have been, in our own land, many believers who have appeared to walk in almost uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son,—who have seemed to enjoy an almost unceasing sense of the light of God’s reconciled countenance shining down upon them, and have left their experience on record. I could mention well-known names, if space permitted. The thing has been, and is,—and that is enough.

My answer, lastly, is, it cannot be wrong to feel confidently in a matter where God speaks unconditionally,—to believe decidedly when God promises decidedly,—to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when we rest on the word and oath of Him that never changes. It is an utter

mistake to suppose that the believer who feels assurance is resting on anything he sees in himself. He simply leans on the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the Scripture of truth. He believes the Lord Jesus means what He says, and takes Him at His Word. Assurance, after all, is no more than a fall-grown faith; a masculine faith that grasps Christ's promise with both hands,—a faith that argues like the good centurion, if the Lord "speak the word only," I am healed. Wherefore, then, should I doubt? (Matthew 8:8)4

Reader, you may be sure that Paul was the last man in the world to build his assurance on anything of his own. He who could write himself down "chief of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15) had a deep sense of his own guilt and corruption. But then he had a still deeper sense of the length and breadth of Christ's righteousness imputed to him.—He, who would cry, "O wretched man that I am" (Romans 7:24), had a clear view of the fountain of evil within his heart. But then he had a still clearer view of that other Fountain which can remove "all sin and uncleanness." —He, who thought himself "less than the least of all saints" (Ephesians 3:8), had a lively and abiding feeling of his own weakness. But he had a still livelier feeling that Christ's promise, "My sheep shall never perish" (John 10:28), could not be broken—Paul knew, if ever man did, that he was a poor, frail bark, floating on a stormy ocean. He saw, if any did, the rolling waves and roaring tempest by which he was surrounded. But then he looked away from self to Jesus, and was not afraid. He remembered that anchor within the veil, which is both "sure and steadfast." He remembered the word, and work, and constant intercession of Him that loved him and gave Himself for him. And this it was, and nothing else, that enabled him to say so boldly, "A crown is laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it to me"; and to conclude so surely, "The Lord will preserve me: I shall never be confounded."5

I may not dwell longer on this part of the subject. I think you will allow I have shown ground for the assertion I made,—that assurance is a true thing.

II. I pass on to the second thing I spoke of. I said, a believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved.

I grant this most freely. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad, or to discourage one fainting child of God, or to leave the impression that men have no part or lot in Christ, except they feel assurance.

A person may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope, like the Apostle Paul. To believe and have a glimmering hope of acceptance is one thing; to have joy and peace in our believing, and abound in hope, is quite another. All God's children have faith; not all have assurance. I think this ought never to be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different opinion. I believe that many excellent ministers of the Gospel, at whose feet I would gladly sit, do not allow the distinction I have stated. But I desire to call no man master. I dread as much as any one the idea of healing the wounds of conscience slightly; but I should think any other view than that I have given a most uncomfortable Gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep souls back a long time from the gate of life.6

I do not shrink from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ; sufficient faith really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him,—really to be a child of God, really to be saved; and yet to his last day be never free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

“A letter,” says an old writer, “may be written, which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it.”

A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches; live childish,—die childish, and never know the greatness of his possessions.

And so also a man may be a babe in Christ’s family; think as a babe, speak as a babe; and though saved, never enjoy a lively hope, or know the real privileges of his inheritance.

Reader, do not mistake my meaning, while you hear me dwell strongly on assurance. Do not do me the injustice to say, I told you none were saved except such as could say with Paul, “I know and am persuaded,—there is a crown laid up for me.” I do not say so. I tell you nothing of the kind.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ a man must have, beyond all question, if he is to be saved. I know no other way of access to the Father. I see no intimation of mercy, excepting through Christ. A man must feel his sins and lost estate,—must come to Jesus for pardon and salvation,—must rest his hope on Him, and on Him alone. But if he only has faith to do this, however weak and feeble that faith may be, I will engage, from Scripture warrants, he shall not miss heaven.

Never, never let us curtail the freeness of the glorious Gospel, or clip its fair proportions. Never let us make the gate more strait and the way more narrow than pride and love of sin have made it already. The Lord Jesus is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. He does not regard the quantity of faith, but the quality. He does not measure its degree, but its truth. He will not break any bruised reed, nor quench any smoking flax. He will never let it be said that any perished at the foot of the cross. “Him that cometh unto Me,” He says, “I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37)7

Yes, reader: though a man’s faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, if it only brings him to Christ, and enables him to touch the hem of His garment, he shall be saved,—saved as surely as the oldest saint in paradise; saved as completely and eternally as Peter, or John, or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification. In our justification there are none. What is written, is written, and shall never fail: “Whosoever believeth on Him,”—not whosoever has a strong and mighty faith,—“Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.” (Romans 10:11)

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no full assurance of his pardon and acceptance with God. He may be troubled with fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt. He may have many a question, and many an anxiety,—many a struggle, and many a misgiving,—clouds and darkness,—storm and tempest to the very end.

I will engage, I repeat, that bare simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he may never attain to assurance; but I will not engage it shall bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will engage it shall land him safe in harbour; but I will not engage he shall enter that harbour in full sail, confident and rejoicing. I shall not be surprised if he reaches his desired haven weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely realizing his own safety, till he opens his eyes in glory.

Reader, I believe it is of great importance to keep in view this distinction between faith and assurance. It explains things which an inquirer in religion sometimes finds it hard to understand.

Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root; but it is no less certain you may have the root and not the flower.

Faith is that poor trembling woman who came behind Jesus in the press and touched the hem of His garment. (Mark 5:27) Assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:56)

Faith is the penitent thief, crying, “Lord, remember me.” (Luke 23:42) Assurance is Job, sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” (Job 19:25) “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” (Job 13:15)

Faith is Peter’s drowning cry, as he began to sink “Lord, save me.” (Matthew 14:30) Assurance is that same Peter declaring before the Council in after-times, “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11-12)

Faith is the anxious, trembling voice, “Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief.” (Mark 9:24) Assurance is the confident challenge, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Who is he that condemneth?” (Romans 8:33-34) Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone. (Acts 9:11) Assurance is Paul, the aged prisoner, looking calmly into the grave, and saying, “I know whom I have believed. There is a crown laid up for me.” (2 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:8)

Faith is life. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death? And yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, smileless to the very end. Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigour, activity, energy, manliness, beauty.

Reader, it is not a question of saved or not saved that lies before us, but of privilege or no privilege.—It is not a question of peace or no peace, but of great peace or little peace.—It is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ: it is one that belongs only to the school;—it is between the first form and the last.

He that has faith does well. Happy should I be, if I thought all readers of this tract had it. Blessed, thrice blessed are they that believe. They are safe. They are washed. They are justified. They are beyond the power of hell. Satan, with all his malice, shall never pluck them out of Christ’s hand.

But be that has assurance does far better,—sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy: even “the days of heaven upon the earth.” (Deuteronomy 11:21)8

III. I pass on to the third thing of which I spoke. I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

I ask your attention to this point especially. I heartily wish that assurance was more sought after than it is. Too many among those who believe begin doubting and go on doubting, live doubting and die doubting, and go to heaven in a kind of mist.

It will ill become me to speak in a slighting way of “hopes” and “trusts.” But I fear many of us sit down content with them, and go no farther. I should like to see fewer “peradventurers” in the Lord’s family, and more who could say, “I know and am persuaded.” Oh, that all believers would covet the best gifts, and not be content with less! Many miss the full tide of blessedness the Gospel was meant to convey. Many keep themselves in a low and starved condition of soul, while their Lord is saying, “Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved. Ask and receive, that your joy may be full.” (Son_5:1. John 16:24)

1. Let us remember, then, for one thing, that assurance is to be desired, because of the present comfort and peace it affords.

Doubts and fears have power to spoil much of the happiness of a true believer in Christ. Uncertainty and suspense are bad enough in any condition,—in the matter of our health, our property, our families, our affections, our earthly callings,—but never so bad as in the affairs of our souls. And so long as a believer cannot get beyond “I hope” and “I trust,” he manifestly feels a degree of uncertainty about his spiritual state. The very words imply as much. He says, “I hope,” because he dares not say, “I know.”

Now assurance goes far to set a child of God free from this painful kind of bondage, and thus ministers mightily to his comfort. It enables him to feel that the great business of life is a settled business, the great debt a paid debt, the great disease a healed disease, and the great work a finished work; and all other business, diseases, debts, and works, are then by comparison small. In this way assurance makes him patient in tribulation, calm under bereavements, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings; in every condition content, for it gives him a FIXEDNESS of heart. It sweetens his bitter cups, it lessens the burden of his crosses, it smooths the rough places over which he travels, and it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him always feel that he has something solid beneath his feet, and something firm under his hands,—a sure friend by the way, and a sure home at the end.9

Assurance will help a man to bear poverty and loss. It will teach him to say, “I know that I have in heaven a better and more enduring substance. Silver and gold have I none, but grace and glory are mine, and these can never make themselves wings and flee away. Though the fig tree shall not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord.” (Habakkuk 3:17-18)

Assurance will support a child of God under the heaviest bereavements, and assist him to feel “It is well.” An assured soul will say, “Though beloved ones are taken from me, yet Jesus is the same, and is alive for evermore. Though my house be not as flesh and blood could wish, yet I have an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” (2 Kings 4:26; Hebrews 13:8; 2 Samuel 23:5)

Assurance will enable a man to praise God, and be thankful, even in a prison, like Paul and Silas at Philippi. It can give a believer songs even in the darkest night, and joy when all things seem going against him. (Job 2:10; Psalms 42:8)

Assurance will enable a man to sleep with the full prospect of death on the morrow, like Peter in Herod’s dungeon. It will teach him to say, “I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.” (Psalms 4:8)

Assurance can make a man rejoice to suffer shame for Christ's sake, as the Apostles did. It will remind him that he may "rejoice and be exceeding glad " (Matthew 5:12), and that there is in heaven an exceeding weight of glory that shall make amends for all. (2 Corinthians 4:17)

Assurance will enable a believer to meet a violent and painful death without fear, as Stephen did in the beginning of Christ's Church, and as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and Taylor did in our own land. It will bring to his heart the texts, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." (Luke 12:4) "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59)10

Assurance will support a man in pain and sickness, make all his bed, smooth down his dying pillow. It will enable him to say, "If my earthly house fail, I have a building of God." (2 Corinthians 5:1) "I desire to depart and be with Christ." (Php_1:23) "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."11 (Psalms 73:26)

Reader, the comfort assurance can give in the hour of death is a point of great importance. Believe me, you will never think assurance so precious as when your turn comes to die.

In that awful hour, there are few believers who do not find out the value and privilege of an "assured hope," whatever they may have thought about it during their lives. General "hopes" and "trusts" are all very well to live upon, while the sun shines, and the body is strong: but when you come to die, you will want to be able to say, "I know" and "I feel."

Believe me, Jordan is a cold stream, and we have to cross it alone. No earthly friend can help us. The last enemy, even death, is a strong foe. When our souls are departing there is no cordial like the strong wine of assurance.

There is a beautiful expression in the Prayer-book service for the Visitation of the Sick: "The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in Him, be now and evermore thy defence, and make thee know and feel that there is none other name under heaven, through whom thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The compilers of that service showed great wisdom there. They saw that when the eyes grow dim, and the heart grows faint, and the spirit is on the eve of departing, there must then be knowing and feeling what Christ has done for us, or else there cannot be perfect peace.12

2. Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian an active working Christian.

None, generally speaking, do so much for Christ on earth as those who enjoy the fullest confidence of a free entrance into heaven. That sounds wonderful, I dare say, but it is true.

A believer who lacks an assured hope will spend much of his time in inward searchings of heart about his own state. Like a nervous, hypochondriacal person, he will be full of his own ailments, his own doubtings and questionings, his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you will often find he is so taken up with this internal warfare that he has little leisure for other things, little time to work for God.

Now a believer, who has, like Paul, an assured hope, is free from these harassing distractions. He does not vex his soul with doubts about his own pardon and acceptance. He looks at the everlasting covenant sealed with blood, at the finished work and never-broken word of his Lord and Saviour, and therefore counts his salvation a settled thing. And thus he is able to give an undivided attention to the work of the Lord, and so in the long run to do more.14

Take, for an illustration of this, two English emigrants, and suppose them set down side by side in New Zealand or Australia. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and cultivate. Let the portions allotted to them be the same both in quantity and quality. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument; let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs for ever; let the conveyance be publicly registered, and the property made sure to them by every deed and security that man's ingenuity can devise.

Suppose, then, that one of them shall set to work to bring his land into cultivation, and labour at it day after day without intermission or cessation.

Suppose, in the meanwhile, that the other shall be continually leaving his work, and going repeatedly to the public registry to ask whether the land really is his own,—whether there is not some mistake,—whether, after all, there is not some flaw in the legal instruments which conveyed it to him.

The one shall never doubt his title, but just work diligently on.

The other shall hardly ever feel sure of his title, and spend half his time in going to Sydney, or Melbourne, or Auckland with needless inquiries about it.

Which, now, of these two men will have made most progress in a year's time? Who will have done the most for his land, got the greatest breadth of soil under tillage, have the best crops to show, be altogether the most prosperous?

Reader, you know as well as I do. I need not supply an answer. There can only be one reply. Undivided attention will always attain the greatest success.

It is much the same in the matter of our title to "mansions in the skies." None will do so much for the Lord who bought him as the believer who sees his title clear, and is not distracted by unbelieving hesitations. The joy of the Lord will be that man's strength. "Restore unto me," says David, "the joy of Thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways." (Psalms 51:12)

Never were there such working Christians as the Apostles. They seemed to live to labour. Christ's work was truly their meat and drink. They counted not their lives dear to themselves. They spent and were spent. They laid down ease, health, and worldly comfort, at the foot of the cross. And one grand cause of this, I believe, was their assured hope. They were men who could say, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 John 5:19)

3. Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian a decided Christian.

Indecision and doubt about our own state in God's sight is a grievous one, and the mother of many evils. It often produces a wavering and unstable walk in following the Lord. Assurance helps to cut

many a knot, and to make the path of Christian duty clear and plain.

Many, of whom we feel hopes that they are God's children, and have true grace, however weak, are continually perplexed with doubts on points of practice. "Should we do such and such a thing? Shall we give up this family custom? Ought we to go into that company? How shall we draw the line about visiting? What is to be the measure of our dressing and our entertainments? Are we never, under any circumstances, to dance, never to touch a card, never to attend parties of pleasure?" These are a kind of questions which seem to give them constant trouble. And often, very often, the simple root of their perplexity is, that they do not feel assured they are themselves children of God. They have not yet settled the point, which side of the gate they are on. They do not know whether they are inside the ark or not.

That a child of God ought to act in a certain decided way they quite feel, but the grand question is, "Are they children of God themselves?" If they only felt they were so, they would go straightforward, and take a decided line. But not feeling sure about it, their conscience is forever hesitating and coming to a dead lock. The devil whispers, "Perhaps, after all, you are only a hypocrite: what right have you to take a decided course? Wait till you are really a Christian." And this whisper too often turns the scale, and leads on to some miserable compromise, or wretched conformity to the world.

Reader, I believe you have here one chief reason why so many in this day are inconsistent, trimming, unsatisfactory, and half-hearted in their conduct about the world. Their faith fails. They feel no assurance that they are Christ's, and so feel a hesitancy about breaking with the world. They shrink from laying aside all the ways of the old man, because they are not quite confident they have put on the new. Depend on it, one secret cause of halting between two opinions is want of assurance. When people can say decidedly, "The Lord He is the God," their course becomes very clear. (1 Kings 18:39)

4. Let us remember, finally, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make the holiest Christians.

This, too, sounds wonderful and strange, and yet it is true. It is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel, contrary, at first sight, to reason and common sense, and yet it to a fact. Cardinal Bellarmine was seldom more wide of the truth than when he said, "Assurance tends to carelessness and sloth." He that is freely forgiven by Christ will always do much for Christ's glory, and he that enjoys the fullest assurance of this forgiveness will ordinarily keep up the closest walk with God. It is a faithful saying in 1 John 3:3 : "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." A hope that does not purify is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.15

None are so likely to maintain a watchful guard over hearts and lives as those who know the comfort of living in near communion with God. They feel their privilege, and will fear losing it. They will dread falling from their high estate, and marring their own comforts, by bringing clouds between themselves and Christ. He that goes on a journey with little money about him takes little thought of danger, and cares little how late he travels. He, on the contrary, that carries gold and jewels will be a cautious traveller. He will look well to his roads, his house, and his company, and run no risks. The fixed stars are those that tremble most. The man that most fully enjoys the light of God's reconciled countenance, will be a man tremblingly afraid of losing its blessed

consolations, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Ghost.

Reader, I commend these four points to your serious consideration. Would you like to feel the everlasting arms around you, and to hear the voice of Jesus daily drawing nigh to your soul, and saying, “I am thy salvation”?—Would you like to be a useful labourer in the vineyard in your day and generation?—Would you be known of all men as a bold, firm, decided, single-eyed, uncompromising follower of Christ?—Would you be eminently spiritually-minded and holy?—I doubt not some readers will say, “These are the very things our hearts desire. We long for them. We pant after them: but they seem far from us.”

Now, has it never struck you that your neglect of assurance may possibly be the main secret of all you failures,—that the low measure of faith which satisfies you may be the cause of your low degree of peace? Can you think it a strange thing that your graces are faint and languishing, when faith, the root and mother of them all, is allowed to remain feeble and weak?

Take my advice this day. Seek an increase of faith. Seek an assured hope of salvation like the Apostle Paul’s. Seek to obtain a simple, childlike confidence in God’s promises. Seek to be able to say with Paul, “I know whom I have believed: I am persuaded that He is mine, and I am His.”

You have very likely tried other ways and methods and completely failed. Change your plan. Go upon another tack. Lay aside your doubts. Lean more entirely on the Lord’s arm. Begin with implicit trusting. Cast aside your faithless backwardness to take the Lord at His word. Come and roll yourself, your soul, and your sins upon your gracious Saviour. Begin with simple believing, and all other things shall soon be added to you.16

IV. I come now to the last thing of which I spoke. I promised to point out to you some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained. I will do it very shortly.

This is a very serious question, and ought to raise in all great searchings of heart. Few, certainly, of Christ’s people seem to reach up to this blessed spirit of assurance. Many comparatively believe, but few are persuaded. Many comparatively have saving faith, but few that glorious confidence which shines forth in the language of St. Paul. That such is the case, I think we must all allow.

Now, why is this so?—Why is a thing which two Apostles have strongly enjoined us to seek after, a thing of which few believers have any experimental knowledge? Why is an assured hope so rare?

I desire to offer a few suggestions on this point, with all humility. I know that many have never attained assurance, at whose feet I would gladly sit both in earth and heaven. Perhaps the Lord sees something in the natural temperament of some of His children, which makes assurance not good for them. Perhaps, in order to be kept in spiritual health, they need to be kept very low. God only knows. Still, after every allowance, I fear there are many believers without an assured hope, whose case may too often be explained by causes such as these.

1. One most common cause, I suspect, is a defective view of the doctrine of justification.

I am inclined to think that justification and sanctification are insensibly confused together in the minds of many believers. They receive the Gospel truth,—that there must be something done IN US, as well as something done FOR US, if we are true members of Christ; and so far they are

right. But, then, without being aware of it, perhaps, they seem to imbibe the idea that their justification is, in some degree, affected by something within themselves. They do not clearly see that Christ's work, not their own work,—either in whole or in part, either directly or indirectly,—is the alone ground of our acceptance with God; that justification is a thing entirely without us, for which nothing whatever is needful on our part but simple faith,—and that the weakest believer is as fully and completely justified as the strongest.17

Many appear to forget that we are saved and justified as sinners, and only sinners; and that we never can attain to anything higher, if we live to the age of Methuselah. Redeemed sinners, justified sinners, and renewed sinners doubtless we must be,—but sinners, sinners, sinners, always to the very last. They do not seem to comprehend that there is a wide difference between our justification and our sanctification. Our justification is a perfect finished work, and admits of no degrees. Our sanctification is imperfect and incomplete, and will be to the last hour of our life. They appear to expect that a believer may at some period of his life be in a measure free from corruption, and attain to a kind of inward perfection. And not finding this angelic state of things in their own hearts, they at once conclude there must be something very wrong in their state. And so they go mourning all their days,—oppressed with fears that they have no part or lot in Christ, and refusing to be comforted.

Reader, consider this point well. If any believing soul desires assurance, and has not got it, let him ask himself, first of all, if he is quite sure he is sound in the faith, if his loins are thoroughly "girt about with truth," and his eyes thoroughly clear in the matter of justification. He must know what it is simply to believe before he can expect to feel assured.

Believe me, the old Galatian heresy is the most fertile source of error, both in doctrine and in practice. Seek clearer views of Christ, and what Christ has done for you. Happy is the man who really understands justification by faith without the deeds of the law.

2. Another common cause of the absence of assurance is, slothfulness about growth in grace.

I suspect many true believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views on this point: I do not of course mean intentionally, but they do hold them. Many appear to me to think that once converted, they have little more to attend to, and that a state of salvation is a kind of easy chair, in which they may just sit still, lie back, and be happy. They seem to fancy that grace is given them that they may enjoy it, and they forget that it is given, like a talent, to be used, employed, and improved. Such persons lose sight of the many direct injunctions "to increase,—to grow,—to abound more and more,—to add to our faith," and the like; and in this little-doing condition, this sitting-still state of mind, I never marvel that they miss assurance.

I believe it ought to be our continual aim and desire to go forward; and our watchword at the beginning of every year should be, "More and more" (1 Thessalonians 4:1): more knowledge,—more faith,—more obedience,—more love. If we have brought forth thirty-fold, we should seek to bring forth sixty, and if we have brought forth sixty, we should strive to bring forth a hundred. The will of the Lord is our sanctification, and it ought to be our will too. (Matthew 13:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:3)

One thing, at all events, we may depend upon,—there is an inseparable connection between diligence and assurance. "Give diligence," says Peter, "to make your calling and election sure." (2

Peter 1:10) “We desire,” says Paul, “that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” (Hebrews 6:11) “The soul of the diligent,” says Solomon, “shall be made fat.” (Proverbs 13:4) There is much truth in the old maxim of the Puritans: “Faith of adherence comes by hearing, but faith of assurance comes not without doing.”

Reader, mark my words. Are you one of those who desires assurance, but have not got it? You will never get it without diligence, however much you may desire it. There are no gains without pains in spiritual things, any more than in temporal. “The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing.” (Proverbs 13:4)18

3. Another common cause of a want of assurance is, an inconsistent walk in life.

With grief and sorrow I feel constrained to say, I fear nothing in this day more frequently prevents men attaining an assured hope than this. The stream of professing Christianity is far wider than it formerly was, and I am afraid we must admit, at the same time, it is much less deep.

Inconsistency of life is utterly destructive of peace of conscience. The two things are incompatible. They cannot and they will not go together. If you will have your besetting sins, and cannot make up your minds to give them up; if you will shrink from cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye, when occasion requires it, I will engage you will have no assurance.

A vacillating walk,—a backwardness to take a bold and decided line,—a readiness to conform to the world, a hesitating witness for Christ,—a lingering tone of religion,—all these make up a sure receipt for bringing a blight upon the garden of your soul.

It is vain to suppose you will feel assured and persuaded of your own pardon and acceptance with God, unless you count all God’s commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every sin, whether great or small. (Psalms 119:128) One Achan allowed in the camp of your heart will weaken your hands, and lay your consolations low in the dust. You must be daily sowing to the Spirit, if you are to reap the witness of the Spirit. You will not find and feel that all the Lord’s ways are ways of pleasantness, unless you labour in all your ways to please the Lord.19

I bless God our salvation in no wise depends on our own works. By grace we are saved,—not by works of righteousness,—through faith,—without the deeds of the law. But I never would have any believer for a moment forget that our SENSE of salvation depends much on the manner of our living. Inconsistency will dim your eyes, and bring clouds between you and the sun. The sun is the same behind the clouds, but you will not be able to see its brightness or enjoy its warmth, and your soul will be gloomy and cold. It is in the path of well doing that the day-spring of assurance will visit you, and shine down upon your heart.

“The secret of the Lord,” says David, “is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.” (Psalms 25:14)

“To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.” (Psalms 50:23)

“Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them.” (Psalms 119:165)

“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” (1 John 1:7)

“Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.” (1 John 3:18-19)

“Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” (1 John 2:3)

Paul was a man who exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. (Acts 24:16) He could say with boldness, “I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith.” I do not wonder that the Lord enabled him to add with confidence, “Henceforth there is a crown laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it me at that day.”

Reader, if any believer in the Lord Jesus desires assurance, and has not got it, let him think over this point also. Let him look at his own heart, look at his own conscience, look at his own life, look at his own ways, look at his own home. And perhaps when he has done that, he will be able to say, “There is a cause why I have no assured hope.”

I leave the three matters I have just mentioned to your own private consideration. I am sure they are worth examining. May you examine them honestly. And may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

1. And now, in closing this important inquiry, let me speak first to those readers who have not given themselves to the Lord, who have not yet come out from the world, chosen the good part, and followed Christ.

I ask you, then, to learn from this subject the privileges and comforts of a true Christian.

I would not have you judge of the Lord Jesus Christ by His people. The best of servants can give you but a faint idea of that glorious Master. Neither would I have you judge of the privileges of His kingdom by the measure of comfort to which many of His people attain. Alas, we are most of us poor creatures! We come short, very short, of the blessedness we might enjoy. But, depend upon it, there are glorious things in the city of our God, which they who have an assured hope taste, even in their life-time. There are lengths and breadths of peace and consolation there, which it has not entered into your heart to conceive. There is bread enough and to spare in our Father’s house, though many of us certainly eat but little of it, and continue weak. But the fault must not be laid to our Master’s charge: it is all our own.

And, after all, the weakest child of God has a mine of comforts within him, of which you know nothing. You see the conflicts and tossings of the surface of his heart, but you see not the pearls of great price which are hidden in the depths below. The feeblest member of Christ would not change conditions with you. The believer who possesses the least assurance is far better off than you are. He has a hope, however faint, but you have none at all. He has a portion that will never be taken from him, a Saviour that will never forsake him, a treasure that fadeth not away, however little he may realize it all at present. But, as for you, if you die as you are, your expectations will all perish. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you understood these things! Oh, that you would consider your latter end!

I feel deeply for you in these latter days of the world, if I ever did. I feel deeply for those whose treasure is all on earth, and whose hopes are all on this side the grave. Yes: when I see old kingdoms and dynasties shaking to the very foundation,—when I see, as we all saw a few years ago, kings, and princes, and rich men, and great men fleeing for their lives, and scarce knowing

where to hide their heads,—when I see property dependent on public confidence melting like snow in spring, and public stocks and funds losing their value,—when I see these things I feel deeply for those who have no better portion than this world can give them, and no place in that kingdom that cannot be removed.20

Take advice of a minister of Christ this very day. Seek durable riches,—a treasure that cannot be taken from you,—a city which hath lasting foundations. Do as the Apostle Paul did. Give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek that incorruptible crown He is ready to bestow. Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him. Come away from a world which will never really satisfy you, and from sin which will bite like a serpent if you cling to it, at last. Come to the Lord Jesus as lowly sinners, and He will receive you, pardon you, give you His renewing Spirit, fill you with peace. This shall give you more real comfort than the world has ever done. There is a gulf in your heart which nothing but the peace of Christ can fill. Enter in and share our privileges. Come with us, and sit down by our side.

2. Lastly, let me turn to all believers who read these pages, and speak to them a few words of brotherly counsel.

The main thing that I urge upon you is this,—if you have not got an assured hope of your own acceptance in Christ, resolve this day to seek it. Labour for it. Strive after it. Pray for it. Give the Lord no rest till you “know whom you have believed.”

I feel, indeed, that the small amount of assurance in this day, among those who are reckoned God’s children, is a shame and a reproach. “It is a thing to be heavily bewailed,” says old Traill, “that many Christians have lived twenty or forty years since Christ called them by His grace, yet doubting in their life.” Let us call to mind the earnest “desire” Paul expresses, that “every one” of the Hebrews should seek after full assurance and let us endeavour, by God’s blessing, to roll this reproach away. (Hebrews 6:11)

Believing reader, do you really mean to say that you have no desire to exchange hope for confidence, trust for persuasion, uncertainty for knowledge? Because weak faith will save you, will you therefore rest content with it? Because assurance is not essential to your entrance into heaven, will you therefore be satisfied without it upon earth? Alas, this is not a healthy state of soul to be in; this is not the mind of the Apostolic day! Arise at once, and go forward. Stick not at the foundations of religion: go on to perfection. Be not content with a day of small things. Never despise it in others, but never be content with it yourselves.

Believe me, believe me, assurance is worth the seeking. You forsake your own mercies when you rest content without it. The things I speak are for your peace. If it is good to be sure in earthly things, how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things. Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. Why should not you seek to know it too? There is nothing unscriptural in this. Paul never saw the book of life, and yet Paul says, “I know, and am persuaded.”

Make it, then, your daily prayer that you may have an increase of faith. According to your faith will be your peace. Cultivate that blessed root more, and sooner or later, by God’s blessing, you may hope to have the flower, You may not, perhaps, attain to full assurance all at once. It is good sometimes to be kept waiting. We do not value things which we get without trouble. But though it tarry, wait for it. Seek on, and expect to find.

There is one thing, however, of which I would not have you ignorant:—You must not be surprised if you have occasional doubts after you have got assurance. You must not forget you are on earth, and not yet in heaven. You are still in the body, and have indwelling sin: the flesh will lust against the spirit to the very end. The leprosy will never be out of the walls of the old house till death takes it down. And there is a devil, too, and a strong devil: a devil who tempted the Lord Jesus, and gave Peter a fall; and he will take care you know it. Some doubts there always will be. He that never doubts has nothing to lose. He that never fears possesses nothing truly valuable. He that is never jealous knows little of deep love. But be not discouraged: you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you.21

Finally, do not forget that assurance is a thing that may be lost for a season, even by the brightest Christians, unless they take care.

Assurance is a most delicate plant. It needs daily, hourly watching, watering, tending, cherishing. So watch and pray the more when you have got it. As Rutherford says, “Make much of assurance.” Be always upon your guard. When Christian slept, in Pilgrim’s Progress, he lost his certificate. Keep that in mind.

David lost assurance for many months by falling into transgression. Peter lost it when he denied his Lord. Each found it again, undoubtedly, but not till after bitter tears. Spiritual darkness comes on horseback, and goes away on foot. It is upon us before we know that it is coming. It leaves us slowly, gradually, and not till after many days. It is easy to run down hill. It is hard work to climb up. So remember my caution,—when you have the joy of the Lord, watch and pray.

Above all, grieve not the Spirit. Quench not the Spirit. Vex not the Spirit. Drive Him not to a distance, by tampering with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings between husbands and wives make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies, known and allowed, will bring in a strangeness between you and the Spirit.

Hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

The man who walks with God in Christ most closely will generally be kept in the greatest peace.

The believer who follows the Lord most fully will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope, and have the clearest persuasion of his own salvation.

Footnotes

1 “Full assurance that Christ hath delivered Paul from condemnation, yea, so full and real as produceth thanksgiving and triumphing in Christ, may and doth consist with complaints and outcries of a wretched condition for the indwelling of the body of sin”—Rutherford’s Triumph of Faith. 1645.

2 “We do not vindicate every vain pretender to ‘the Witness of the Spirit;’ we are aware that there are those in whose professions of religion we can see nothing but their forwardness and confidence to recommend them. But let us not reject any doctrine of revelation through an over-anxious fear of consequences."—Robinson's Christian System.

“True assurance is built upon a Scripture basis: presumption hath no Scripture to show for its warrant; it is like a will without seal and witnesses, which is null and void in law. Presumption wants both the witness of the Word and the seal of the Spirit. Assurance always keeps the heart in a lowly posture; but presumption is bred of pride. Feathers fly up, but gold descends; he who hath this golden assurance, his heart descends in humility.”—Watson’s Body of Divinity. 1650.

“Presumption is joined with looseness of life; persuasion with a tender conscience: this dares sin because it is sure, this dares not for fear of losing assurance. Persuasion will not sin, because it cost her Saviour so dear; presumption will sin, because grace cloth abound. Humility is the way to heaven. They that are proudly secure of their going to heaven, do not so often come thither as they that are afraid of going to hell.”—Adams on Second Epistle of Peter. 1633.

3“They are quite mistaken that think faith and humility are inconsistent; they not only agree well together, but they cannot be parted.”—Traill.

4 “To be assured of our salvation,” Augustine saith, “is no arrogant stoutness; it is our faith. It is no pride; it is devotion. It is no presumption; it is God’s promise.”—Bishop Jewell’s Defence of the Apology. 1570.

“If the ground of our assurance rested in and on ourselves, it might justly be called presumption; but the Lord and the power of His might being the ground thereof, they either know not what is the might of His power, or else too lightly esteem it, who account assured confidence thereon presumption.”—Gouge’s Whole Armour of God. 1647.

“Upon what ground is this certainty built? Surely not upon anything that is in us. Our assurance of perseverance is grounded wholly upon God. If we look upon ourselves, we see cause of fear and doubting; but if we look up to God, we shall find cause enough for assurance.”—Hildersam on John 4:16-32.

“Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as, “I imagine so,” or “It is likely;” but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity. Our salvation is fastened with God’s own hand, and Christ’s own strength, to the strong stake of God’s unchangeable nature.”—Rutherford’s Letters. 1637.

5 “Never did a believer in Jesus Christ die or drown in his voyage to heaven. They will all be found safe and sound with the Lamb on mount Zion. Christ loseth none of them; yea, nothing of them. (John 6:39) Not a bone of a believer is to be seen in the field of battle. They are all more than conquerors through Him that loved them.” (Romans 8:37)—Traill.

6 Extracts from English divines, showing that there is a difference between faith and assurance,—that a believer may be justified and accepted with God, and yet not enjoy a comfortable knowledge and persuasion of his own safety,—and that the weakest faith in Christ, if it be true, will save a man as surely as the strongest.

1. “Is it not necessary to justification to be assured that my sins are pardoned, and that I am justified? No: that is no act of faith as it justifieth, but an effect and fruit that followeth after justification.

“It is one thing for a man to have his salvation certain, another thing to be certain that it is certain.

“Even as a man fallen into a river, and like to be drowned, as he is carried down with the flood, espies the bough of a tree hanging over the river, which he catcheth at, and clings unto with all his might to save him, and seeing no other way of succour but that, ventures his life upon it. This man, so soon as he has fastened on this bough, is in a safe condition, though all troubles, fears, and terrors are not presently out of his mind, until he comes to himself, and sees himself quite out of danger. Then he is sure he is safe, but he was safe before he was sure. Even so it is with a believer. Faith is but the espying of Christ as the only means to save, and the reaching out of the heart to lay hold upon Him. God hath spoke the word, and made the promise to His Son: I believe Him to be the only Saviour, and remit my soul to Him to be saved by His mediation. So soon as the soul can do this, God imputeth the righteousness of His Son unto it, and it is actually justified in the court of heaven, though it is not presently quieted and pacified in the court of conscience. That is done afterwards: in some sooner, in some later, and by the fruits and effects of justification.”—Archbishop Usher’s “Body of Divinity.” 1670.

2. “There are those who doubt, because they doubt and multiply distrust upon itself, concluding that they have no faith, because they find so much and so frequent doubting within them. But this is a great mistake. Some doubtings there may be, where there is even much faith; and a little faith there may be, where there is much doubting.

“Our Saviour requires, and delights in a strong, firm believing on Him, though the least and weakest He rejects not.”—Archbishop Leighton’s Lectures on the first nine chapters of St. Matthew’s Gospel. 1670.

3. “The mercy of God is greater than all the sins in the world. But we sometimes are in such a case, that we think we have no faith at all; or if we have any, it is very feeble and weak. And, therefore, these are two things; to have faith, and to have the feeling of faith. For some men would fain have the feeling of faith, but they cannot attain unto it; and yet they must not despair, but go forward in calling upon God, and it will come at the length: God will open their hearts, and let them feel His goodness.”—Bishop Latimer’s Sermons. 1552.

4. “I know, thou sayest, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: and that ‘Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.’ (John 3:15) Neither can I know but that, in a sense of my own ‘sinful condition, I do cast myself in some measure upon my Saviour, and lay some hold upon His all-sufficient redemption: but, alas, my apprehensions of Him are so feeble, as that they can afford no sound comfort to my soul!

“Courage, my son. Were it that thou lookest to be justified, and saved by the power of the very act of thy faith, thou hadst reason to be disheartened with the conscience of the weakness thereof; but now that the virtue and efficacy of this happy work is in the object apprehended by thee, which is the infinite merits and mercy of thy God and Saviour, which cannot be abated by thine infirmities, thou hast cause to take heart to thyself, and cheerfully to expect His salvation.

“Understand thy case aright. Here is a double hand, that helps us up toward heaven. Our hand of faith lays hold upon our Saviour; our Saviour’s hand of mercy and plenteous redemption lays hold on us. Our hold of Him is feeble and easily loosed; His hold of us is strong and irresistible.

“If work were stood upon, a strength of hand were necessary; but now that only taking and receiving of a precious gift is required, why may not a weak hand do that as well as a strong? As

well, though not as forcibly."—Bishop Hall's "Balm of Gilead." 1650.

5. "Many formerly, and those of the highest remark and eminency, have placed true faith in no lower degree than assurance, or the secure persuasion of the pardon of their sins, the acceptation of their persons, and their future salvation.

"But this, as it is very sad and uncomfortable for thousands of doubting and deserted souls, concluding all those to fall short of grace who fall short of certainty, so hath it given the Papists too great advantage.

"Faith is not assurance. But this doth sometimes crown and reward a strong, vigorous, and heroic faith; the Spirit of God breaking in upon the soul with an evidencing light, and scattering all that darkness, and those fears and doubts which before beclouded it."—Bishop Hopkins on the Covenants. 1680.

6. "If any persons abroad have thought that a special and full persuasion of the pardon of their sin was of the essence of faith, let them answer for it. Our divines at home generally are of another judgment. Bishop Davenant and Bishop Prideaux, and others, have shown the great difference between recumbence and assurance, and they all do account and call assurance a daughter, fruit, and consequent of faith. And the late learned Arrowsmith tells us, that God seldom bestows assurance upon believers till they are grown in grace: for, says he, there is the same difference between faith of recumbence and faith of assurance, as is between reason and learning. Reason is the foundation of learning; so, as there can be no learning if reason be wanting (as in beasts), in like manner there can be no assurance where there is no faith of adherence. Again: as reason well exercised in the study of arts and sciences arises to learning, so faith, being well exercised on its proper object and by its proper fruits, arises to assurance. Further, as by negligence, non-attendance, or some violent disease, learning may be lost, while reason doth abide; so, by temptation, or by spiritual sloth, assurance may be lost, while saving faith may abide. Lastly, as all men have reason, but all men are not learned; so all regenerate persons have faith to comply savingly with the gospel method of salvation, but all true believers have not assurance."—Sermon by B. Fairclough, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in the Morning Exercises, preached at Southwark. 1660.

7. "Weak faith may fail in the applying, or in the apprehension and appropriating of Christ's benefits to a man's own self. This is to be seen in ordinary experience. For many a man there is of humble and contrite heart, that serveth God in spirit and truth, yet is not able to say, without great doubtings and waverings, I know and am fully assured that my sins are pardoned. Now shall we say that all such are without faith? God forbid.

"This weak faith will as truly apprehend God's merciful promises for the pardon of sin as strong faith, though not so soundly. Even as a man with a palsied hand can stretch it out as well to receive a gift at the hand of a king as he that is more sound, though it may be not so firmly and steadfastly."—Exposition of the Creed, by William Perkins, Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge. 1612.

8. "A want of assurance is not unbelief. Drooping spirits may be believers. There is a manifest distinction made between faith in Christ and the comfort of that faith,—between believing to eternal life and knowing we have eternal life. There is a difference between a child's having a right to an

estate and his full knowledge of the title.

“The character of faith may be written in the heart, as letters engraven upon a seal, yet filled with so much dust as not to be distinguished. The dust hinders the reading of the letters, yet doth not raze them out.”—Discourses by Stephen Charnock, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. 1680.

9. “This certainty of our salvation, spoken of by Paul, rehearsed by Peter, and mentioned by David (Psalms 4:7), is that special fruit of faith which breedeth spiritual joy, and inward peace which passeth all understanding. True it is, all God’s children have it not. One thing is the tree, and another thing is the fruit of the tree: one thing is faith, and another thing is the fruit of faith. And that remnant of God’s elect which feel the want of this faith have, notwithstanding, faith.”—Sermons by Richard Greenham, Minister and Preacher of the Word of God. 1612.

10. “You that can clear this to your own hearts that you have faith, though it be weak, be not discouraged, be not troubled. Consider that the smallest degree of faith is true, is saving faith as well as the greatest. A spark of fire is as true fire as any is in the element of fire. A drop of water is as true water as any is in the ocean. So the least grain of faith is as true faith, and as saving as the greatest faith in the world.

“The least bud draws sap from the root as well as the greatest bough. So the weakest measure of faith doth as truly ingraft thee into Christ, and by that draw life from Christ, as well as the strongest. The weakest faith hath communion with the merits and blood of Christ as well as the strongest.

“The least faith marries the soul to Christ. The weakest faith hath as equal a share in God’s love as the strongest. We are beloved in Christ, and the least measure of faith makes us members of Christ. The least faith hath equal right to the promises as the strongest. And, therefore, let not our souls be discouraged for weakness.”—Nature and Royalties of Faith, by Samuel Bolton, D.D., of Christ’s College, Cambridge. 1657

11. “A man may be in the favour of God, in the state of grace, a justified man before God, and yet want the sensible assurance of his salvation, and of the favour of God in Christ.

“A man may have saving grace in him, and not perceive it himself; a man may have true justifying faith in him, and not have the use and operation of it, so far as to work in him a comfortable assurance of his reconciliation with God. Nay, I will say more: a man may be in the state of grace, and have true justifying faith in him, and yet be so far from sensible assurance of it in himself, as in his own sense and feeling he may seem to be assured of the contrary. Job was certainly in this case when he cried unto God, ‘Wherefore bidest Thou Thy face, and boldest me for Thine enemy?’ (Job 13:24)

“The weakest faith will justify. If thou canst receive Christ and rest upon Rim, even with the weakest faith, it will serve thy turn.—Take heed thou think not it is the strength of thy faith that justifieth thee. No, no: it is Christ and His perfect righteousness which thy faith receiveth and resteth upon that doth it. He that hath the feeblest and weakest hand may receive an alms, and apply a sovereign plaster to his wound, as well as he that hath the strongest, and receive as much good by it too.”—Lectures upon the fifty-first Psalm, preached at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, by Arthur Hildersam, Minister of Jesus Christ. 1642.

12. “There are some who are true believers and yet weak in faith. They do indeed receive Christ and free grace, but it is with a shaking hand. They have, as divines say, the faith of adherence: they will stick to Christ, as theirs; but they want the faith of evidence,—they cannot see themselves as His. They are believers, but of little faith. They hope that Christ will not cast them off, but are not sure that He will take them up.”—Sips of Sweetness, or Consolation for Weak Believers, by John Durant, Preacher in Canterbury Cathedral. 1649.

13. “The act of faith is to apply Christ to the soul; and this the weakest faith can do as well as the strongest, if it be true. A child can hold a staff as well, though not so strongly, as a man. The prisoner through a hole sees the sun, though not so perfectly as they in the open air. They that saw the brazen serpent, though a great way off, yet were healed.

“The least faith is as precious to the believer’s soul as Peter’s or Paul’s faith was to themselves, for it lays hold upon Christ and brings eternal salvation.”—An Exposition of the Second Epistle General of Peter, by the Rev Thomas Adams, Rector of St. Gregory’s, London. 1633.

14. “Many of God’s dear children for a long time may remain very doubtful as to their present and eternal condition, and know not what to conclude, whether they shall be damned, or whether they shall be saved. There are believers of several growths in the Church of God,—fathers, young men, children, and babes; and as in most families there are more babes and children than grown men, so in the Church of God there are more weak, doubting Christians than strong ones, grown up to a full assurance. A babe may be born, and yet not know it; so a man may be born again, and yet not be sure of it.

“We make a difference betwixt saving faith, as such, and a full persuasion of the heart. Some of those that shall be saved may not be certain that they shall be saved; for the promise is made to the grace of faith, and not to the evidence of it, to faith as true, and not to faith as strong. They may be sure of heaven, and yet in their own sense not assured of heaven.”—Sermons by Rev. Thomas Doolittle, of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and sometime Rector of St. Alphage, London, in the Morning Exercises, at Cripplegate. 1661.

15. “I find not salvation put upon the strength of faith, but the truth of faith; not upon the brightest degree, but upon any degree of faith. It is not said, If you have such a degree of faith you shall be justified and saved; but simply believing is required. The lowest degree of true faith wilt do it; as Romans 10:9 : ‘If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.’ The thief upon the cross had not attained to such high degrees of faith: he by one act, and that of a weak faith, was justified and saved. (Luke 23:42)”—Exposition of the Prophet Ezekiel, by William Greenhill, Rector of Stepney, London, and Chaplain to the Dukes of York and Gloucester. 1650.

16. “Weak faith is true faith,—as precious, though not so great, as strong faith,—the same Holy Ghost the Author, the same Gospel the instrument.

“If it never proves great, yet weak faith shall save, for it interests us in Christ, and makes Him and all His benefits ours. For it is not the strength of our faith that saves, but truth of our faith; nor weakness of our faith that condemns, but the want of faith,—for the least faith layeth ‘hold on Christ, and so will save us. Neither are we saved by the worth or quantity of our faith, but by Christ, who is laid hold on by a weak faith as well as a strong. Just as a weak hand that can put meat into

the mouth, shall feed and nourish the body as well as if it were a strong hand; seeing the body is not nourished by the strength of the hand, but by the goodness of the meat."—The Doctrine of Faith, by John Rogers, Preacher of God's Word at Dedham, in Essex. 1634.

17. "Though your grace be never so weak, yet if ye have truth of grace, you have as great a share in the righteousness of Christ for your justification as the strong Christian hath. You have as much of Christ imputed to you as any other."—Sermons by William Bridge, formerly Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Pastor of the Church of Christ, in Great Yarmouth. 1648.

18. "It is confessed weak faith hath as much peace with God, through Christ, as another hath by strong faith, but not so much bosom peace.

"Weak faith will as surely land the Christian in heaven as strong faith, for it is impossible the least dram of true grace should perish, being all incorruptible seed; but the weak, doubting Christian is not like to have so pleasant a voyage thither as another with strong faith. Though all in the ship come safe to shore, yet he that is all the way sea-sick hath not so comfortable a voyage as he that is strong and healthful."—The Christian in complete Armour, by William Gurnall, sometime Minister at Lavenham, Suffolk. 1680.

19. "A man may have true grace that hath not the assurance of the love and favour of God, or the remission of his sins, and salvation of his soul. A man may be God's, and yet he not know it; his estate may be good, and yet he not see it; he may be in a safe condition, when he is not in a comfortable position. All may be well with him in the court of glory, when he would give a thousand worlds that all were but well in the court of conscience.

"Assurance is requisite to the well-being of a Christian, but not to the being; it is requisite to the consolation of a Christian, but not to the salvation of a Christian; it is requisite to the well-being of grace, but not to the mere being of grace. Though a man cannot be saved without faith, yet he may be saved without assurance. God hath in sunny places of the Scripture declared that without faith there is no salvation; but God hath not in any one place of Scripture declared that without assurance there is no salvation."—Heaven on Earth, by Thomas Brooks, Preacher of the Gospel at St. Margaret's, Fish Street Hill, London. 1654

20. "We must distinguish between weakness of faith and nullity. A weak faith is true. The bruised reed is but weak, yet it is such as Christ will not break. Though thy faith be but weak, yet be not discouraged. A weak faith may receive a strong Christ: a weak hand can tie the knot in marriage as well as a strong; a weak eye might have seen the brazen serpent. The promise is not made to strong faith, but to true. The promise doth not say, Whosoever hath a giant faith that can remove mountains, that can stop the mouth of lions, shall be saved; but whosoever believes, be his faith never so small.

"You may have the water of the Spirit poured on you in sanctification, though not the oil of gladness in assurance; there may be faith of adherence, and not of evidence; there may be life in the root where there is no fruit in the branches, and faith in the heart where no fruit of assurance."—A Body of Divinity, by Thomas Watson, formerly Minister of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, London. 1660.

21. “There is a weak faith, which yet is true; and although it be weak, yet, because it is true, it shall not be rejected of Christ.

“Faith is not created perfect at the first, as Adam was, but is like a man in the ordinary course of nature, who is first an infant, then a child, then a youth, then a man.

“Some utterly reject all weak ones, and tax all weakness in faith with hypocrisy. Certainly these are either proud or cruel men.

“Some comfort and establish those who are weak, saying, ‘Be quiet: thou hast faith and grace enough and art good enough; thou needest no more, neither must thou be too righteous.’ (Ecclesiastes 7:16) These are soft, but not safe, cushions; these are fawning flatterers, and not faithful friends.

“Some comfort and exhort, saying, ‘Be of good cheer: He who hath begun a good work will also finish it in you; therefore pray that His grace may abound in you; yea, do not sit still, but go forward, and march on in the way of the Lord.’ (Hebrews 6:1) Now this is the safest and best course.”—Questions, Observations, etc., upon the Gospel according to St. Matthew, by Richard Ward, sometime Student at Cambridge, and Preacher of the Gospel in London. 1640.

22. “Be not discouraged if it doth not yet appear to you that you were given by the Father to the Son. It may be, though you do not see it. Many of the given do not for a long time know it; yea, I see no great danger in saying that not a few of the given to the Son may be in darkness, and doubts and fears about it, till the last and brightest day declares it, and till the last sentence proclaims it.

“If therefore any of you be in the dark about your own election, be not discouraged; it may be, though you do not know it.”—Sermon on the Lord’s Prayer, by Robert Traill, Minister of the Gospel in London, and sometime at Cranbrook Kent. 1690.

23. “Some rob themselves of their own comfort by placing saving faith in full assurance. Faith, and sense of faith, are two distinct and separable mercies; you may have truly received Christ, and not receive the knowledge or assurance of it. Some there be that say, ‘Thou art our God,’ of whom God never said, You are my people; these have no authority to be called the sons of God: others there are, of whom God saith, ‘These are my people,’ yet they dare not call God ‘their God;’ these have authority to be called the Sons of God, yet know it not. They have received Christ, that is their safety; but they have not yet received the knowledge and assurance of it, that is their trouble.…The father owns his child in the cradle, who yet knows him not to he his father.”—Method of grace, by John Flavel, Minister of the Gospel at Dartmouth, Devon. 1680.

24. “The faith necessary and sufficient for our salvation is not assurance. Its tendency, doubtless, is to produce that lively expectation of the Divine favour which will issue in a full confidence. But the confidence is not itself the faith of which we speak, nor is it necessarily included in it: nay, it is a totally distinct thing.

“Assurance will generally accompany a high degree of faith. But there are sincere persons who are endued with only small measures of grace, or in whom the exercise of that grace may be greatly obstructed. When such defects or hindrances prevail, many fears and distresses may be expected to arise.”—The Christian System, by the Rev. Thomas Robinson, Vicar of St. Mary’s, Leicester.

1795.

25. “Assurance is not essential to the being of faith. It is a strong faith; but we read likewise of a weak faith, little faith, faith like a grain of mustard seed. True saving faith in Jesus Christ is only distinguishable by its different degrees; but in every degree, and in every subject, it is universally of the same kind.”—Sermons, by the Rev. John Newton, sometime Vicar of Olney, and Rector of St. Mary’s. Woolnoth, London. 1767.

26. “There is no reason why weak believers should conclude against themselves. Weak faith unites as really with Christ as strong faith,—as the least bud in the vine is drawing sap and life from the root, no less than the strongest branch. Weak believers therefore have abundant cause to be thankful; and while they reach after growth in grace, ought not to overlook what they have already received.”—Letter of Rev. Henry Venn. 1784.

27. “Salvation, and the joy of salvation, are not always contemporaneous; the latter does not always accompany the former in present experience.

“A sick man may be under a process of recovery and yet be in doubt concerning the restoration of his health. Pain and weakness may cause him to hesitate. A child may be heir to his estate or kingdom, and yet derive no joy from the prospect of his future inheritance. He may be unable to trace his genealogy, or to read his title deeds, and the testament of his father; or with a capacity of reading them he may be unable to understand their import, and his guardian may for a time deem it right to suffer him to remain in ignorance. But his ignorance does not affect the validity of his title.

“Personal assurance of salvation is not necessarily connected with faith. They are not essentially the same. Every believer might indeed infer, from the effect produced in his own heart, his own safety and privileges; but many who truly believe are unskilful in the word of righteousness, and fail of drawing the conclusion from Scriptural premises which they would be justified in drawing”—Lectures on the Fifty-first Psalm, by the Rev. Thomas Biddulph, Minister of St. James’s, Bristol. 1830,

7 “He that believeth on Jesus shall never be confounded. Never was any; neither shall you, if you believe. It was a great word of faith spoken by a dying man, who had been converted in a singular way, betwixt his condemnation and execution: his last words were these, spoken with a mighty shout,—‘Never man perished with his face towards Christ Jesus.’—Traill.

8 “The greatest thing that we can desire, next to the glory of God, is our own salvation; and, the sweetest thing we can desire is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher than to be assured of that which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth.”—Joseph Caryl.

9 “It was a saying of Bishop Latimer to Ridley, “When I live in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, methinks then I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh at all trouble: no affliction daunts me. But when I am eclipsed in my comforts, I am of so fearful a spirit, that I could run into a very mouse-hole.”—Quoted by Christopher Love. 1653.

‘‘Assurance will assist us in all duties; it will arm us against all temptations; it will answer all objections; it will sustain us in all conditions into which the saddest of times can bring us. ‘If God be

for us, who can be against us?'—Bishop Reynolds on Hosea xiv. 1642.

"We cannot come amiss to him that hath assurance: God is his. Hath he lost a friend?—His Father lives. Hath he lost an only child? God hath given him His only Son. Hath he scarcity of bread?—God hath given him the finest of the wheat, the bread of life.—Are his comforts gone?—he hath a Comforter. Doth he meet with storms?—he knows where to put in for harbour.—God is his portion, and heaven is his haven."—Thomas Watson. 1662

10 These were John Bradford's words in prison, shortly before his execution. "I have no request to make. If Queen Mary gives me my life, I will thank her; if she will banish me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her; if she will condemn me to perpetual imprisonment, I will thank her."

This was Rutherford's experience, when banished to Aberdeen. 'How blind are my adversaries, who sent me to a banqueting house, and not to a prison or a place of exile." "My prison is a palace to me, and Christ's banqueting house."—Letters.

11 These were the last words of Hugh Mackail on the scaffold at Edinburgh, 1666. "Now I begin my intercourse with God, which shall never be broken off. Farewell, father and mother, friends and relations; farewell, the world and all its delights; farewell, meat and drinks; farewell, sun, moon, and stars. Welcome, God and Father; welcome, sweet Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; welcome, blessed Spirit of grace and God of all consolation; welcome, glory; welcome, eternal life; welcome, death. O Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed my soul, O Lord God of truth."

12 These were Rutherford's words on his death bed. "O that all my brethren did know what a Master I have served, and what I have this day! I shall sleep in Christ, and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with his likeness." 1661.

These were Baxter's words on his death bed. "I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within." Towards the close he was asked how he did? The answer was, "Almost well." 1691.

13 The least degree of faith takes away the sting of death, because it takes away guilt; but the full assurance of faith breaks the very teeth and jaws of death, by taking away the fear and dread of it."—Fairclough's Sermon in the Morning Exercises.

14 "Assurance would make us active and lively in God's service; it would excite prayer, quicken obedience. Faith would make us walk, but assurance would make us run; we should think we could never do enough for God. Assurance would be as wings to the bird, as weights to the clock, to set all the wheels of obedience a-running."—Thomas Watson.

"Assurance will make a man fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord. When the assured Christian hath done one work, he is calling out for another. What is next, Lord, says the assured soul: what is next? An assured Christian will put his hand to any work, he will put his neck in any yoke for Christ; he never thinks he hath done enough, he always thinks he hath done too little, and when he hath done all he can, he sits down, saying, I am an unprofitable servant." —Thomas Brooks.

15 “The true assurance of salvation, which the Spirit of God hath wrought in any heart, hath that force to restrain a man from looseness of life, and to knit his heart in love and obedience to God, as nothing else hath in all the world. It is certainly either the want of faith and assurance of God’s love, or a false and carnal assurance of it, that is the true cause of all the licentiousness that reigns in the world.”—Hildersam on 51st Psalm.

“None walk so evenly with God as they who are assured of the love of God. Faith is the mother of obedience, and sureness of trust makes way for strictness of life. When men are loose from Christ, they are loose in point of duty, and their floating belief is soon discovered in their inconstancy and unevenness of walking. We do not with alacrity engage in that of the success of which we are doubtful: and therefore when we know not whether God will accept us or not, when we are off and on in point of trust, we are just so in the course of our lives, and serve God by fits and starts. It is the slander of the world to think assurance an idle doctrine.”—Manton’s Exposition of James. 1660.

“Who is more obliged, or who feels the obligation to observance more cogently,—the son who knows his near relation, and knows his father loves him, or the servant that hath great reason to doubt it? Fear is a weak and impotent principle in comparison of love. Terrors may awaken; love enlivens. Terrors may ‘almost persuade;’ love over-persuades. Sure am I that a believer’s knowledge that his Beloved is his, and he is his Beloved’s (Son_6:3), is found by experience to lay the most strong and cogent obligations upon him to loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. For as to him that believes Christ is precious (1 Peter 2:7), so to him that knows he believes Christ is so much the more precious, even the ‘chiefest of ten thousand.’” (Son_5:10)—Fairclough’s Sermon in Morning Exercises. 1660.

“Is it necessary that men should be kept in continual dread of damnation, in order to render them circumspect and ensure their attention to duty? Will not the well-grounded expectation of heaven prove far more efficacious? Love is the noblest and strongest principle of obedience: nor can it be but that a sense of God's love to us will increase our desire to please Him.”—Robinson’s Christian System.

16 “That which breeds so much perplexity is, that we would invert God’s order. ‘If I knew,’ say some, ‘that the promise belonged to me, and Christ was a Saviour to me, I could believe:’ that is to say, I would first see, and then believe. But the true method is just the contrary: ‘I had fainted,’ says David, ‘unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord.’ He believed it first, and saw it afterwards.”—Archbishop Leighton.

“It is a weak and ignorant, but common, thought of Christians, that they ought not to look for heaven, nor trust Christ for eternal glory, till they be well advanced in holiness and meetness for it. But as the first sanctification of our natures flows from our faith and trust in Christ for acceptance, so our further sanctification and meetness for glory flows from the renewed and repeated exercise of faith on Him.”—Traill.

17 The Westminster Confession of Faith gives an admirable account of justification. “Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of

believing, or any other Evangelical obedience, to them, as their righteousness: but by imputing the obedience and righteousness of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith."

18"Whose fault is it that thy interest in Christ is not put out of question? Were Christians more in self-examination, more close in walking with God; and if they had more near communion with God, and were more in acting of faith, this shameful darkness and doubting would quickly vanish."—Traill

"A lazy Christian shall always want four things: viz., comfort, content, confidence, and assurance. God hath made a separation between joy and idleness, between assurance and laziness, and therefore it is impossible for thee to bring these together, that God hath put so far asunder."—Thomas Brooks.

"Are you in depths and doubts, staggering and uncertain, not knowing what is your condition, nor whether you have any interest in the forgiveness that is of God? Are you tossed up and down between hopes and fears, and want peace consolation, and establishment? Why lie you upon your faces? Get up: watch, pray, fast, meditate, offer violence to your lusts and corruptions; fear not, startle not at their crying to be spared; press unto the throne of grace by prayer, supplications, importunities, restless requests: this is the way to take the kingdom of God. These things are not peace, are not assurance; but they are part of the means God hath appointed for the attainment of them."—Owen on the 130th Psalm.

19 "Wouldest thou have thy hope strong?—Then keep thy conscience pure. Thou canst not defile one without weakening the other. The godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking will soon find his hope languishing. All sin disposeth the soul that tampers with it to trembling fears and shakings of heart."—Gurnall

"One great and too common cause of distress is the secret maintaining some known sin. It puts out the eye of the soul, or dimmeth it and stupifies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provoketh God to withdraw Himself, His comforts, and the assistance of His Spirit."—Baxter's Saints' Rest.

"The stars which have least circuit are nearest the pole; and men whose hearts are least entangled with the world are always nearest to God, and to the assurance of His favour. Worldly Christians, remember this. You and the world must part, or else assurance and your souls will never meet."—Thomas Brooks.

20 "They are doubly miserable that have neither Heaven nor earth, temporals nor eternals, made sure to them in changing times."—Thomas Brooks.

21 "None have assurance at all times. As in a walk that is shaded with trees and checkered with light and shadow, some tracks and paths in it are dark, and others are sunshine: such is usually the life of the most assured Christian."—Bishop Hopkins.

"It is very suspicious that that person is a hypocrite that is always in the same frame, let him pretend it to be never so good."—Traill.

Chapter 14

Baptism

(chapter taken from)

KNOTS UNTIED.

BEING

PLAIN STATEMENTS ON DISPUTED POINTS IN RELIGION,

FROM THE

STANDPOINT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCHMAN.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.

Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels," etc.,

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CHAPTER V.

BAPTISM.

THERE is perhaps no subject in Christianity about which such difference of opinion exists as the sacrament of baptism. The very name recalls to one's mind an endless list of strifes, disputes, heart-burnings, controversies, and divisions.

It is a subject, moreover, on which even eminent Christians have long been greatly divided. Praying, Bible-reading, holy men, who can agree on all other points, find themselves hopelessly divided about baptism. The fall of man has affected the understanding as well as the will. Fallen indeed must human nature be, when millions who agree about sin, and Christ, and grace, are as the poles asunder about baptism.

I propose in the following pages to offer a few remarks on this disputed subject. I am not vain enough to suppose that I can throw any light on a controversy which so many great and good men

have handled in vain. But I know that every additional witness is useful in a disputed case. I wish to strengthen the hands of those I agree with, and to show them that we have no reason to be ashamed of our opinions. I wish to suggest a few things for the consideration of those I do not agree with, and to show them that the Scriptural argument in this matter is not, as some suppose, all on one side.

There are four points which I propose to examine in considering the subject:

I. What baptism is,-its nature.

II. In what manner baptism should be administered,-its mode.

III. Who ought to be baptized,-its subjects.

IV. What place baptism ought to occupy in religion,-its true position.

If I can supply a satisfactory answer to these four questions, I feel that I shall have contributed something to the clearing of many minds.

Let us consider first the nature of baptism,-what is it?

(1) Baptism is an ordinance appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the continual admission of fresh members into His visible Church. In the army every new soldier is formally added to the muster-roll of his regiment. In a school every new scholar is formally entered on the books of the school. And every Christian begins his Church-membership by being baptized.1

(2) Baptism is an ordinance of great simplicity. The outward part or sign is water, administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, or in the name of Christ. The inward part, or thing signified, is that washing in the blood of Christ, and inward cleansing of the heart by the Holy Ghost, without which no one can be saved. The Twenty-seventh Article of the Church of England says rightly,-“Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth.”

(3) Baptism is an ordinance on which we may confidently expect the highest blessings, when it is rightly used. It is unreasonable to suppose that the Lord Jesus, the Great Head of the Church, would solemnly appoint an ordinance which was to be as useless to the soul as a mere human enrolment or an act of civil registration. The sacrament we are considering is not a mere man-made appointment, but an institution appointed by the King of kings. When faith and prayer accompany baptism, and a diligent use of Scriptural means follows it, we are justified in looking for much spiritual blessing. Without faith and prayer baptism becomes a mere form.

(4) Baptism is an ordinance which is expressly named in the New Testament about eighty times. Almost the last words of our Lord Jesus Christ were a command to baptize: “Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matthew 28:19) We find Peter saying on the day of Pentecost,-“Repent, and be baptized every one of you;”-and asking in the house of Cornelius,-“Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?” (Acts 2:38; Acts 10:47) We find St. Paul was not only baptized himself, but baptized disciples wherever he went. To say, as some do, in the face of these texts, that baptism

is an institution of no importance, is to pour contempt on the Bible. To say, as others do, that baptism is only a thing of the heart,2 and not an outward ordinance at all, is to say that which seems flatly contradictory to the Bible.

(5) Baptism is an ordinance which, according to Scripture, a man may receive, and yet get no good from it. Can any one doubt that Judas Iscariot, Simon Magus, Ananias and Sapphira, Demas, Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Nicolas, were all baptized people? Yet what benefit did they receive from baptism? Clearly, for anything that we can see, none at all! Their hearts were “not right in the sight of God.” (Acts 8:21) They remained “dead in trespasses and sins,” and were “dead while they lived.” (Ephesians 2:1; 1 Timothy 5:6)

(6) Baptism is an ordinance which in Apostolic times went together with the first beginnings of a man's religion. In the very day that many of the early Christians repented and believed, in that very day they were baptized. Baptism was the expression of their new-born faith, and the starting-point in their Christianity. No wonder that in such cases it was regarded as the vehicle of all spiritual blessings. The Scriptural expressions, “buried with Christ in baptism”- “putting on Christ in baptism”-“baptism doth also save us”-would be full of deep meaning to such persons. (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21) They would exactly tally with their experience. But to apply such expressions indiscriminately to the baptism of infants in our own day is, in my judgment, unreasonable and unfair. It is an application of Scripture which, I believe, was never intended.

(7) Baptism is an ordinance which a man may never receive, and yet be a true Christian and be saved. The case of the penitent thief is sufficient to prove this. Here was a man who repented, believed, was converted, and gave evidence of true grace, if any one ever did. We read of no one else to whom such marvellous words were addressed as the famous sentence, “Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” (Luke 23:42) And yet there is not the slightest proof that this man was ever baptized at all! Without baptism and the Lord's Supper he received the highest spiritual blessings while he lived, and was with Christ in paradise when he died! To assert, in the face of such a case, that baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation is something monstrous. To say that baptism is the only means of regeneration, and that all who die unbaptized are lost for ever, is to say that which cannot be proved by Scripture, and is revolting to common sense.

I leave this part of my subject here. I commend the seven propositions which I have laid down to the serious attention of all who wish to obtain clear views about baptism. In considering the two sacraments of the Christian religion, I hold it to be of primary importance to put away from us the vagueness and mysteriousness with which too many surround them. Above all, let us be careful that we believe neither more nor less about them than we can prove by plain texts of Scripture.

There is a baptism which is absolutely necessary to salvation, beyond all question. There is a baptism without which no one, whether old or young, has over gone to heaven. But what baptism is this? It is not the baptism of water, but the inward baptism which the Holy Ghost gives to the heart. It is not a baptism which any man can offer, whether ordained or unordained. It is the baptism which it is the special privilege of the Lord Jesus Christ to give to all His mystical members. It is not a baptism which man's eye can see, but an invisible operation on the inward nature. “Baptism,” says St. Peter, “saves us.” But what baptism does he tell us he means? Not the washing of water, “not the putting away the filth of the flesh.” (1 Peter 3:21) “By one spirit are we all

baptized into one body." (1 Corinthians 12:13) It is the peculiar prerogative of the Lord Jesus to give this inward and spiritual baptism. "He it is," said John the Baptist, "which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." (John 1:33)

Let us take heed that we know something of this saving baptism, the inward baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without this it signifies little what we think about the baptism of water. No man, whether High Churchman or Low Churchman, Baptist or Episcopalian, no man was ever yet saved without the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It is a weighty and true saying of the Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, in the reign of Edward VI.,-"By the baptism of water we are received into the outward Church of God: by the baptism of the Spirit into the inward." (Bucer, on John 1:33)

II. Let us now consider the mode of Baptism. In what way ought it to be administered?

This is a point on which a wide difference of opinion prevails. Some Christians maintain strongly that complete immersion in water is absolutely necessary and essential to make a valid baptism. They hold that no person is really baptized unless he is entirely "dipped," and covered over with water. Others, on the contrary, maintain with equal decision that immersion is not necessary at all, and that sprinkling, or pouring a small quantity of water on the person baptized, fulfils all the requirements of Christ.

My own opinion is distinct and decided, that Scripture leaves the point an open question. I can find nothing in the Bible to warrant the assertion that either dipping, or pouring, or sprinkling, is essential to baptism. I believe it would be impossible to prove that either way of baptizing is exclusively right, or that either is downright wrong. So long as water is used in the name of the Trinity, the precise mode of administering the ordinance is left an open question.

This is the view adopted by the Church of England. The Baptismal Service expressly sanctions "dipping" in the most plain terms.3 To say, as many Baptists do, that the Church of England is opposed to baptism by immersion, is a melancholy proof of the ignorance in which many Dissenters live. Thousands, I am afraid, find fault with the Prayer-book without having ever examined its contents! If any one wishes to be baptized by "dipping" in the Church of England, let him understand that the parish clergyman is just as ready to dip him as the Baptist minister, and that he may be baptized by "immersion" in church as well as in chapel.

There is a large body of Christians, however, who are not satisfied with this moderate view of the question. They will have it that baptism by dipping or immersion is the only Scriptural baptism. They say that all the persons whose baptism we read of in the Bible were "dipped." They hold, in short, that where there is no immersion there is no baptism.

I fear it is almost waste of time to attempt to say anything on this much-disputed question. So much has been written on both sides without effect, during the last two hundred years, that I cannot hope to throw any new light on the subject. The utmost that I shall try to do is to suggest a few considerations to any whose minds are in doubt. I only ask them to remember that I do not say that baptism by "dipping" is positively wrong. All I say is, that it is not absolutely necessary, and is not absolutely commanded in Scripture.

I ask, then, any doubting mind to consider whether it is in the least probable that all the cases of baptism described in Scripture were cases of complete immersion? The three thousand baptized

in one day at the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:41),-the jailor at Philippi suddenly baptized at midnight in prison (Acts 16:33)-is it at all likely or probable that they were all “dipped”? To my own mind, trying to take an impartial view, it seems in the highest degree improbable. Let those believe it who can.

I ask any one to consider, furthermore, whether it is at all probable that a mode of baptism would have been enjoined as necessary, which in some climates is impracticable? At the North and South Poles, for example, the temperature, for many months, is many degrees below freezing point. In tropical countries, on the other hand, water is often so extremely scarce that it is almost impossible to find enough for common drinking purposes. Now will any maintain that in such climates there can be no baptism without “immersion”? Will any one tell us that in such climates it is really necessary that every candidate for baptism should be completely dipped”? Let those believe it who can.

I ask any one to consider, further, whether it is at all probable that a mode of baptism would have been enjoined which, in some conditions of health, is simply impossible. There are thousands of persons whose lungs and general constitution are in so delicate a state that total immersion in water, and especially in cold water, would be certain death to them. Now will any maintain that such persons ought to be debarred from baptism unless they are “dipped”? Let those believe it who can.

I ask any one to consider, further, whether it is probable that a mode of baptizing would be enjoined, which in many countries would practically exclude women from baptism. The sensitiveness and strictness of Eastern nations about the treatment of their wives and daughters are notorious facts. There are many parts of the world in which women are so completely separated and secluded from the other sex, that there is the greatest difficulty in even speaking to them about religion. To talk of such an ordinance as baptizing them by “immersion” would, in hundreds of cases, be perfectly absurd. The feelings of fathers, husbands, and brothers, however personally disposed to Christian teaching, would be revolted by the mention of it. And will any one maintain that such women are to be left unbaptized altogether because they cannot be “dipped”? Let those believe it who can.

I believe I might well leave the subject of the mode of baptism at this point. But there are two favourite arguments which the advocates of immersion are constantly bringing forward, about which I think it right to say something.

(a) One of these favourite arguments is based on the meaning of the Greek word in the New Testament, which we translate “to baptize.” It is constantly asserted that this word can mean nothing else but dipping, or complete “immersion.” The reply to this argument is short and simple. The assertion is utterly destitute of foundation. Those who are best acquainted with New Testament Greek are decidedly of opinion that to baptize means “to wash or cleanse with water,” but whether by immersion or not must be entirely decided by the context We read in St. Luke (Luke 11:38) that when our Lord dined with a certain Pharisee, “the Pharisee marvelled that He had not first washed before dinner.” It may surprise some readers, perhaps, to hear that these words would have been rendered more literally, “that He had not first been baptized before dinner.”-Yet it is evident to common sense that the Pharisee could not have expected our Lord to immerse or dip Himself over head in water before dining! It simply means that he expected Him to

perform some ablution, or to pour water over His hands, before the meal. But if this is so, what becomes of the argument that to baptize always means complete “immersion”? It is cut from under the feet of the advocate of “dipping,” and to reason further about it is mere waste of time.

(b) Another favourite argument in favour of baptism by immersion is drawn from the expression “buried with Christ in baptism,” which St. Paul uses on two occasions. (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12) It is asserted that going down into the water of baptism, and being completely “dipped” under it, is an exact figure of Christ's burial and coming up out of the grave, and represents our union with Christ and participation in all the benefits of His death and resurrection. But unfortunately for this argument there is no proof whatever that Christ's burial was a going down into a hole dug in the ground. On the contrary, it is far more probable that His grave was a cave cut out of the side of a rock, like that of Lazarus, and on a level with the surrounding ground. Such, at least, was the common mode of burying round Jerusalem. At this rate there is no resemblance whatever between going down into a bath, or baptistry, and the burial of our Lord. The actions are not like one another. That by profession of a lively faith in Christ at baptism a believer declares his union with Christ, both in His death and resurrection, is undoubtedly true. But to say that in “going down into the water” he is burying his body just as His Master's body was buried in the grave, is to say what cannot be proved.

In saying all this I should be very sorry to be mistaken. God forbid that I should wound the feelings of any brother who has conscientious scruples on this subject, and prefers baptism by dipping to baptism by sprinkling. I condemn him not. To his own Master he stands or falls. He that conscientiously prefers dipping may be dipped in the Church of England, and have all his children dipped if he pleases. What I contend for is liberty. I find no certain law laid down as to the mode in which baptism is to be administered, so long as water is used in the name of the Trinity. Let every man be persuaded in his own mind. He that sprinkles or simply pours water in baptism has no right to excommunicate him that dips;-and he that dips has no right to excommunicate him that sprinkles or pours water. Neither of them can possibly prove that the other is entirely wrong.

I leave this part of my subject here. Whatever some may think, I am content to regard the precise mode of baptizing as a thing indifferent, as a thing on which every one may use his liberty. I firmly believe that this liberty was intended of God. It is in keeping with many other things in the Christian dispensation. I find nothing precise laid down in the New Testament about ceremonies, or vestments, or liturgies, or church music, or the shape of churches, or the hours of service, or the quantity of bread and wine to be used at the Lord's Supper, or the position and attitude of communicants. On all these points I see a liberal discretion allowed to the Church of Christ. So long as things are “done to edifying,” the principle of the New Testament is to allow a wide liberty.

I hold firmly, myself, that the validity and benefit of baptism do not depend on the quantity of water employed, but on the state of heart in which the sacrament is used. Those who insist on every grown-up person being plunged over head in a baptistry, and those who insist on splashing an immense handful of water in the face of every tender infant they receive into the Church at the font, are both alike, in my judgment, greatly mistaken. Both are attaching far more importance to the quantity of water used than I can find warranted in Scripture. It has been well said by a great divine,-“A little drop of water may serve to seal the fulness of divine grace in baptizing as well as a small piece of bread and the least tasting of wine in the Holy Supper.” (Witsius, Econ. Fed. l. 4, ch.

xvi. 30.) To that opinion I entirely subscribe.

III. Let us next consider the subjects of baptism. To whom ought baptism to be administered?

It is impossible to handle this branch of the question without coming into direct collision with the opinions of others. But I hope it is possible to handle it in a kindly and temperate spirit. At any rate it is no use to avoid discussion for fear of offending Baptists. Disputed points in theology are never likely to be settled unless men on both sides will say out plainly what they think, and give their reasons for their opinions. To avoid the subject, because it is a controversial one, is neither honest nor wise. A clergyman has no right to complain that his parishioners become Baptists, if he never instructs them about infant baptism.

I begin by laying it down as a point almost undisputed, that all grown-up converts at missionary stations among the heathen ought to be baptized. As soon as they embrace the Gospel and make a credible profession of repentance and faith in Christ, they ought at once to receive baptism. This is the doctrine and practice of Episcopal, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, and Independent missionaries, just as much as it is the doctrine of Baptists. Let there be no mistake on this point. To talk, as some Baptists do, of “believer's baptism,” as if it was a kind of baptism peculiar to their own body, is simply nonsense! Believer's baptism is known and practised in every successful Protestant mission throughout the world.

But I now go a step further. I lay it down as a Christian truth that the children of all professing Christians have a right to baptism, if their parents require it, as well as their parents. Of course the children of professed unbelievers and heathen have no title to baptism, so long as they are under the charge of their parents. But the children of professing Christians are in an entirely different position. If their fathers and mothers offer them to be baptized, the Church ought to receive them in baptism, and has no right to refuse them.

It is precisely at this point that the grave division of opinion exists between the body of Christians called Baptists and the greater part of Christians throughout the world. The Baptist asserts that no one ought to be baptized who does not make a personal profession of repentance and faith, and that as children cannot do this they ought not to be baptized. I think that this assertion is not borne out by Scripture, and I shall proceed to give the reasons why I think so. I believe it can be shown that the children of professing Christians have a right to baptism, and that it is a complete mistake not to baptize them.

Let me remind the reader at the outset, that the question under consideration is not the Baptismal Service of the Church of England. Whether that service is right or wrong,-whether it is useful to have godfathers and godmothers,-are not the points in dispute. It is mere waste of time to say anything about them.4 The question before us is simply whether infant baptism is right in principle. That it is right is held by Presbyterians, Independents, and Methodists, who use no Prayer-book, just as stoutly as it is by Churchmen. To the consideration of this one question I shall strictly confine myself. There is not the slightest necessary connection between the Liturgy and infant baptism. I heartily wish that some people would remember this. To insist on dragging in the Liturgy, and mixing it up with the abstract question of infant baptism, is not a sign of good logic, fairness, or common sense.

Let me clear the way, furthermore, by observing that I will not be drawn away from the real point at issue by the ludicrous descriptions which Baptists often give of the abuse of infant baptism. No doubt it is easy for popular writers and preachers among the Baptists, to draw a vivid picture of an ignorant, prayerless couple of peasants, bringing an unconscious infant to be sprinkled at the font by a careless sporting parson! It is easy to finish off the picture by saying, “What good can infant baptism do?” Such pictures are very amusing, perhaps, but they are no argument against the principle of infant baptism. The abuse of a thing is no proof that it ought to be disused and is wrong. Moreover, those who live in glass-houses had better not throw stones. Strange pictures might be drawn of what happens sometimes in chapels at adult baptisms! But I forbear. I want the reader to look not at pictures but at Scriptural principles.

Let me now supply a few simple reasons why I hold, in common with all Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Independents throughout the world, that infant baptism is a right thing, and that in denying baptism to children the Baptists are mistaken. The reasons are as follows.

(a) Children were admitted into the Old Testament Church by a formal ordinance, from the time of Abraham downwards. That ordinance was circumcision. It was an ordinance which God Himself appointed, and the neglect of which was denounced as a great sin. It was an ordinance about which the highest language is used in the New Testament. St. Paul calls it “a seal of the righteousness of faith.” (Romans 2:4) Now, if children were considered to be capable of admission into the Church by an ordinance in the Old Testament, it is difficult to see why they cannot be admitted in the New. The general tendency of the Gospel is to increase men's spiritual privileges and not to diminish them. Nothing, I believe, would astonish a Jewish convert so much as to tell him his children could not be baptized! “If they are fit to receive circumcision,” he would reply, “why are they not fit to receive baptism?” And my own firm conviction has long been that no Baptist could give him an answer. In fact I never heard of a converted Jew becoming a Baptist, and I never saw an argument against infant baptism that might not have been equally directed against infant circumcision. No man, I suppose, in his sober senses, would presume to say that infant circumcision was wrong.

(b) The baptism of children is nowhere forbidden in the New Testament. There is not a single text, from Matthew to Revelation, which either directly or indirectly hints that infants should not be baptized. Some, perhaps, may see little in this silence. To my mind it is a silence full of meaning and instruction.

The first Christians, be it remembered, were many of them by birth Jews. They had been accustomed in the Jewish Church, before their conversion, to have their children admitted into church-membership by a solemn ordinance, as a matter of course. Without a distinct prohibition from our Lord Jesus Christ, they would naturally go on with the same system of proceeding, and bring their children to be baptized. But we find no such prohibition! That absence of a prohibition, to my mind, speaks volumes. It satisfies me that no change was intended by Christ about children. If He had intended a change He would have said something to teach it. But He says not a word! That very silence is, to my mind, a most powerful and convincing argument. As God commanded Old Testament children to be circumcised, so God intends New Testament children to be baptized.

(c) The baptism of households is specially mentioned in the New Testament. We read in the Acts that Lydia was baptized “and her household,” and that the jailer of Philippi “was baptized: he and all his.” (Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33) We read in the Epistle to the Corinthians that St. Paul baptized “the household of Stephanas.” (1 Corinthians 1:16) Now what meaning would any one attach to these expressions, if he had no theory to maintain, and could view them dispassionately? Would he not explain the “household” to include young as well as old, children as well as grown-up people? Who doubts when he reads the words of Joseph in Genesis,-“take food for the famine of your households” (Genesis 42:33);-or, “take your father and your households and come unto me” (Genesis 45:18), that children are included? Who can possibly deny that when God said to Noah, “Come thou and all thy house into the ark,” He meant Noah's sons? (Genesis 7:1) For my own part I cannot see how these questions can be answered without establishing the principle of infant baptism. Admitting most fully that it is not directly said that St. Paul baptized little children, it seems to my mind the highest probability that the “households” he baptized comprised children as well as grown-up people.

(d) The behaviour of our Lord Jesus Christ to little children, as recorded in the Gospels, is very peculiar and full of meaning. The well-known passage in St. Mark is an instance of what I mean. “They brought young children5 to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.” (Mark 10:13-16)

Now I do not pretend for a moment to say that this passage is a direct proof of infant baptism. It is nothing of the kind. But I do say that it supplies a curious answer to some of the arguments in common use among those who object to infant baptism. That infants are capable of receiving some benefit from our Lord, that the conduct of those who would have kept them from Him was wrong in our Lord's eyes, that He was ready and willing to bless them, even when they were too young to understand what He said or did,-all these things stand out as clearly as if written with a sunbeam! A direct argument in favour of infant baptism the passage certainly is not. But a stronger indirect testimony it seems to me impossible to conceive.

I might easily add to these arguments. I might strengthen the position I have taken up by several considerations which seem to me to deserve very serious attention.

I might show, from the writings of old Dr. Lightfoot, that the baptism of little children was a practice with which the Jews were perfectly familiar. When proselytes were received into the Jewish Church by baptism, before our Lord Jesus Christ came, their infants were received, and baptized with them, as a matter of course.

I might show that infant baptism was uniformly practised by all the early Christians. Every Christian writer of any repute during the first 1500 years after Christ, with the single exception of perhaps Tertullian, speaks of infant baptism as a custom which the Church has always maintained.

I might show that the vast majority of eminent Christians from the period of the Protestant Reformation down to the present day, have maintained the rights of infants to be baptized. Luther,

Calvin, Melanchthon, and all the Continental Reformers,-Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and all the English Reformers,- the great body of all the English Puritans,-the whole of the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Independent, and Methodist Churches of the present day,-are all of one mind on this point. They all hold infant baptism!

But I will not weary the reader by going over this ground. I will proceed to notice two arguments which are commonly used against infant baptism, and are thought by some to be unanswerable. Whether they really are so I will leave the reader to judge.

(1) The first favourite argument against infant baptism is the entire absence of any direct text or precept in its favour in the New Testament. “Show me a plain text,” says many a Baptist, “commanding me to baptize little children. Without a plain text the thing ought not to be done.”

I reply, for one thing, that the absence of any text about infant baptism is, to my mind, one of the strongest evidences in its favour. That infants were formally admitted into the Church by an outward ordinance, for 1800 years before Christ came, is a fact that cannot be denied. Now, if he had meant to change the practice, and exclude infants from baptism, I should expect to find some plain text about it. But I find none, and therefore I conclude that there was to be no alteration and no change. The very absence of any direct command, on which the Baptists lay such stress, is, in reality, one of the strongest arguments against them! No change and therefore no text!

But I reply, for another thing, that the absence of some plain text or command is not a sufficient argument against infant baptism. There are not a few things which can be proved and inferred from Scripture, though they are not plainly and directly taught. Let the Baptist show us a single plain text which directly warrants the admission of women to the Lord's Supper.-Let him show us one which directly teaches the keeping of the Sabbath on the first day of the week instead of the seventh.-Let him show us one which directly forbids gambling. Any well-instructed Baptist knows that it cannot be done. But surely, if this is the case, there is an end of this famous argument against infant baptism! It falls to the ground.

(2) The second favourite argument against infant baptism is the inability of infants to repent and believe. “What can be more monstrous,” says many a Baptist, “than to administer an ordinance to an unconscious babe? It cannot possibly know anything of repentance and faith, and therefore it ought not to be baptized. The Scripture says, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;' and, 'Repent, and be baptized.'” (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)

In reply to this argument, I ask to be shown a single text which says that nobody ought to be baptized until he repents and believes. I shall ask in vain. The texts just quoted prove conclusively that grown-up people who repent and believe when missionaries preach the Gospel to them, ought at once to be baptized. But they do not prove that their children ought not to be baptized together with them, even though they are too young to believe. I find St. Paul baptized “the household of Stephanas “(1 Corinthians 1:16); but I do not find a word about their believing at the time of their baptism. The truth is that the often-quoted texts, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,”-and “Repent ye, and be baptized,” will never carry the weight that Baptists lay upon them. To assert that they forbid any one to be baptized unless he repents and believes, is to put a meaning on the words which they were never meant to bear. They leave the whole question of infants entirely out of sight. The text “nobody shall be baptized except he repents and believes,”

would no doubt have been a very conclusive one. But such a text cannot be found!

After all, will any one tell us that an intelligent profession of repentance and faith is absolutely necessary to salvation? Would even the most rigid Baptist say that because infants cannot believe, all infants must be damned? Yet our Lord said plainly, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16)-Will any man pretend to say that infants cannot receive grace and the Holy Ghost? John the Baptist, we know, was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:15)-Will any one dare to tell us that infants cannot be elect,-cannot be in the covenant,-cannot be members of Christ,-cannot be children of God,-cannot have new hearts,-cannot be born again,-cannot go to heaven when they die?-These are solemn and serious questions. I cannot believe that any well-informed Baptist would give them any but one answer. Yet surely those who may be members of the glorious Church above, may be admitted to the Church below! Those who are washed with the blood of Christ, may surely be washed with the water of baptism! Those who can be capable of being baptized with the Holy Ghost, may surely be baptized with water! Let these things be calmly weighed. I have seen many arguments against infant baptism, which, traced to their logical conclusion, are arguments against infant salvation, and condemn all infants to eternal ruin!

I leave this part of my subject here. I am almost ashamed of having said so much about it. But the times in which we live are my plea and justification. I do not write so much to convince Baptists, as to establish and confirm Churchmen. I have often been surprised to see how ignorant some Churchmen are of the grounds on which infant baptism may be defended. If I have done anything to show Churchmen the strength of their own position, I feel that I shall not have written in vain.

IV. Let us now consider, in the last place, what position baptism ought to hold in our religion.

This is a point of great importance. In matters of opinion man is ever liable to go into extremes. In nothing does this tendency appear so strongly as in the matter of religion. In no part of religion is man in so much danger of erring, either on the right hand or the left, as about the sacraments. In order to arrive at a settled judgment about baptism, we must beware both of the error of defect, and of the error of excess.

We must beware, for one thing, of despising baptism. This is the error of defect. Many in the present day seem to regard it with perfect indifference. They pass it by, and give it no place or position in their religion. Because, in many cases, it seems to confer no benefit, they appear to jump to the conclusion that it can confer none. They care nothing if baptism is never named in the sermon. They dislike to have it publicly administered in the congregation. In short, they seem to regard the whole subject of baptism as a troublesome question, which they are determined to let alone. They are neither satisfied with it, nor without it.

Now, I only ask such persons to consider gravely, whether their attitude of mind is justified by Scripture. Let them remember our Lord's distinct and precise command to “baptize,” when He left His disciples alone in the world. Let them remember the invariable practice of the Apostles, wherever they went preaching the Gospel. Let them mark the language used about baptism in several places in the Epistles. Now, is it likely,-is it probable,-is it agreeable to reason and common sense,-that baptism can be safely regarded as a dropped subject, and quietly laid on the shelf? Surely, I think these questions can only receive one answer.

It is simply unreasonable to suppose that the Great Head of the Church would burden His people in all ages with an empty, powerless, unprofitable institution. It is ridiculous to suppose His Apostles would speak as they do about baptism, if, in no case, and under no circumstances, could it be of any use or help to man's soul. Let these things be calmly weighed. Let us take heed, lest in fleeing from blind superstition, we are found equally blind in another way, and pour contempt on an appointment of Christ.

We must beware, for another thing, of making an idol of baptism. This is the error of excess. Many in the present day exalt baptism to a position which nothing in Scripture can possibly justify. If they hold infant baptism, they will tell you that the grace of the Holy Ghost invariably accompanies the administration of the ordinance,-that in every case, a seed of Divine life is implanted in the heart, to which all subsequent religious movement must be traced,-and that all baptized children are, as a matter of course, born again, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost!-If they do not hold infant baptism, they will tell you that to go down into the water with a profession of faith and repentance is the very turning-point in a man's religion,-that until we have gone down into the water we are nothing,-and that when we have gone down into the water, we have taken the first step toward heaven! It is notorious that many High Churchmen and Baptists hold these opinions, though not all. And I say that although they may not mean it, they are practically making an idol of baptism.

I ask all persons who hold these exceedingly high and lofty views of baptism, to consider seriously what warrant they have in the Bible for their opinions. To quote texts in which the greatest privileges and blessings are connected with baptism, is not enough. What we want are plain texts which show that these blessings and privileges are always and invariably conferred. The question to he settled is not whether a child may be born again and receive grace in baptism, but whether all children are born again, and receive grace when they are baptized.-The question is not whether an adult may “put on Christ” when he goes down into the water, but whether all do as a matter of course. Surely these things demand grave and calm consideration!-It is positively wearisome to read the sweeping and illogical assertions which are often made upon this subject. To tell us, for example, that our Lord's famous words to Nicodemus (John 3:5), teach anything more than the general necessity of being “born of water and the spirit,” is an insult to common sense. Whether all persons baptized are “born of water and the Spirit” is another question altogether, and one which the text never touches at all. To assert that it is taught in the text, is just as illogical as the common assertion of the Baptist, when he tells you that because Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,”-therefore nobody ought to be baptized until he believes!

The right position of baptism can only be decided by a careful observation of the language of Scripture about it. Let a man read the New Testament honestly and impartially for himself. Let him come to the reading of it with an unprejudiced, fair, and unbiased mind. Let him not bring with him pre-conceived ideas, and a blind reverence for the opinion of any uninspired writing, of any man, or of any set of men. Let him simply ask the question,-“What does Scripture teach about baptism, and its place in Christian theology?”-and I have little doubt as to the conclusion he will come to. He will neither trample baptism under his feet, nor exalt it over his head.

(a) He will find that baptism is frequently mentioned, and yet not so frequently as to lead us to think that it is the very first, chief, and foremost thing in Christianity. In fourteen out of twenty-one Epistles, baptism is not even named. In five out of the remaining seven, it is only mentioned once.

In one of the remaining two, it is only mentioned twice. In the two pastoral Epistles to Timothy it is not mentioned at all. There is, in short, only one Epistle, viz., the first to the Corinthians, in which baptism is even named on more than two occasions. And, singularly enough, this is the very Epistle in which St. Paul says, “I thank God that I baptized none of you,”-and “Christ sent me not be baptize, but to preach the Gospel.” (1 Corinthians 1:14, 1 Corinthians 1:17)

(b) He will find that baptism is spoken of with deep reverence, and in close connection with the highest privileges and blessings. Baptized people are said to be “buried with Christ,”-to have “put on Christ,”-to have “risen again,”-and even (by straining a doubtful text) to have the “washing of regeneration.” But he will also find that Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira, Simon Magus, and others, were baptized, and yet gave no evidence of having been born again. He will also see that in the first Epistle of John, people “born of God” are said to have certain marks and characteristics which myriads of baptized persons never possess at any period of their lives. (1 John 2:29; 1 John 3:9; 1 John 5:1, 1 John 5:4, 1 John 5:18) And not least, he will find St. Peter declaring that the baptism which saves is “not the putting away the filth of the flesh,” the mere washing of the body, but the '“answer of a good conscience.” (1 Peter 3:21)

(c) Finally, he will discover that while baptism is frequently spoken of in the New Testament, there are other subjects which are spoken of much more frequently. Faith, hope, charity, God's grace, Christ's offices, the work of the Holy Ghost, redemption, justification, the nature of Christian holiness,-all these are points about which he will find far more than about baptism. Above all, he will find, if he marks the language of Scripture about the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision, that the value of God's ordinances depends entirely on the spirit in which they are received, and the heart of the receiver. “In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor un-circumcision; but faith which worketh by love,-but a new creature.” (Galatians 5:6; Galatians 6:15) “He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is out-ward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:28-29)

It only remains for me now to say a few words by way of practical conclusion to the whole paper. The nature, manner, subjects, and position of baptism have been severally considered. Let me now show the reader the special lessons to which I think attention ought to be directed.

(1) For one thing, I wish to urge on all who study the much-disputed subject of baptism, the importance of aiming at simple views of this sacrament. The dim, hazy, swelling words, which are often used by writers about baptism, have been fruitful sources of strange and unscriptural views of the ordinance. Poets, and hymn-composers, and Romish theologians, have flooded the world with so much high-flown and rhapsodical language on the point, that the minds of many have been thoroughly swamped and confounded. Thousands have imbibed notions about baptism from poetry, without knowing it, for which they can show no warrant in God's Word. Milton's Paradise Lost is the sole parent of many a current view of Satan's agency; and uninspired poetry is the sole parent of many a man's views of baptism in the present day.

Once for all, let me entreat every reader of this paper to hold no doctrine about baptism which is not plainly taught in God's Word. Let him beware of maintaining any theory, however plausible, which cannot be supported by Scripture. In religion, it matters nothing who says a thing, or how beautifully he says it. The only question we ought to ask is this,-“Is it written in the Bible? what

saith the Lord?”

(2) For another thing, I wish to urge on many of my fellow Churchmen the dangerous tendency of extravagantly high views of the efficacy of baptism. I have no wish to conceal my meaning. I refer to those Churchmen who maintain that grace invariably accompanies baptism, and that all baptized infants are in baptism born again. I ask such persons, in all courtesy and brotherly kindness, to consider seriously the dangerous tendency of their views, and the consequences which logically result from them.

They seem to me, and to many others, to degrade a holy ordinance appointed by Christ into a mere charm, which is to act mechanically, like a medicine acting on the body, without any movement of a man's heart or soul. Surely this is dangerous!

They encourage the notion that it matters nothing in what manner of spirit people bring their children to be baptized. It signifies nothing whether they come with faith, and prayer, and solemn feelings, or whether they come careless, prayerless, godless, and ignorant as heathens! The effect, we are told, is always the same in all cases! In all cases, we are told, the infant is born again the moment it is baptized, although it has no right to baptism at all, except as the child of Christian parents. Surely this is dangerous!

They help forward the perilous and soul-ruining delusion that a man may have grace in his heart, while it cannot be seen in his life. Multitudes of our worshippers have not a spark of religious life or grace about them. And yet we are told that they must all be addressed as regenerate, or possessors of grace, because they have been baptized! Surely this is dangerous!

Now I firmly believe that hundreds of excellent Churchmen have never fully considered the points which I have just brought forward. I ask them to do so. For the honour of the Holy Ghost, for the honour of Christ's holy sacraments, I invite them to consider seriously the tendency of their views. Sure am I that there is only one safe ground to take up in stating the effects of baptism, and that is the old ground stated by our Load: “Every tree is known by his own fruit.” (Luke 6:44) When baptism is used profanely and carelessly, we have no right to expect a blessing to follow it, any more than we expect it for a careless recipient of the Lord's Supper. When no grace can be seen in a man's life, we have no right to say that he is regenerate and received grace in baptism.

(3) For another thing, I wish to urge on all Baptists who may happen to read this paper, the duty of moderation in stating their views of baptism, and of those who disagree with them. I say this with sorrow. I respect many members of the Baptist community, and I believe they are men and women whom I shall meet in heaven. But when I mark the extravagantly violent language which some Baptists use against infant baptism, I cannot help feeling that they may be justly requested to judge more moderately of those with whom they disagree.

Does the Baptist mean to say that his peculiar views of baptism are needful to salvation, and that nobody will be saved who holds that infants ought to be baptized? I cannot think that any intelligent Baptist in his senses would assert this. At this rate he would shut out of heaven the whole Church of England, all the Methodists, all the Presbyterians, and all the Independents! At this rate, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Baxter, Owen, Wesley, Whitfield, and Chalmers, are all lost! They all firmly maintained infant baptism, and therefore they are all in hell! I cannot believe that any Baptist would say anything so monstrous and absurd.

Does the Baptist mean to say that his peculiar views of baptism are necessary to a high degree of grace and holiness? Will he undertake to assert that Baptists have always been the most eminent Christians in the world, and are so at this day? If he does make this assertion, he may be fairly asked to give some proof of it. But he cannot do so. He may show us, no doubt, many Baptists who are excellent Christians. But he will find it hard to prove that they are one bit better than some of the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, and Methodists, who all hold that infants ought to be baptized.

Now, surely, if the peculiar opinions of the Baptists are neither necessary to salvation nor to eminent holiness, we may fairly ask Baptists to be moderate in their language about those who disagree with them. Let them, by all means, maintain their own peculiar views, if they think they have discovered a “more excellent way.” Let them use their liberty and be fully persuaded in their own minds. The narrow way to heaven is wide enough for believers of every name and denomination. But for the sake of peace and charity, let me entreat Baptists to exercise moderation in their judgment of others.

(4) In the last place, I wish to urge on all Christians the immense importance of giving to each part of Christianity its proper proportion and value, but nothing more. Let us beware of wresting things from their right places, and putting that which is second first, and that which is first second. Let us give all due honour to baptism and the Lord's Supper, as sacraments ordained by Christ Himself. But let us never forget that, like every outward ordinance, their benefit depends entirely on the manner in which they are received. Above all, let us never forget that while a man may be baptized, like Judas, and yet never be saved, so also a man may never be baptized, like the penitent thief, and yet may be saved.-The things needful to salvation are an interest in Christ's atoning blood, and the presence of the Holy Ghost in the heart and life. He that is wrong on these two points will get no benefit from his baptism, whether he is baptized as an infant or grown up. He will find at the last day that he is wrong for evermore.

FOOTNOTES

1 This is a point which ought to be carefully noticed. Here lies the one simple reason why the children of Baptists, or any other unbaptized persons, cannot have the Burial Service of the Prayer-book read over them, when they are buried. It is a service expressly intended for members of the professing Church. An unbaptized person is not such a member. There is, therefore, no Service that we can read. To suppose that we pronounce any opinion on a man's state of soul and consider him lost, because we read no Service over him, is simply absurd! We pronounce no opinion at all. He may be in paradise with the penitent thief for anything we know. His soul after death is not affected either by reading a Service or by not reading one. The plain reason is we have nothing to read!

2 I am quite aware that the whole body of Christians called Friends, or Quakers, reject water-baptism, and allow of no baptism except the inward baptism of the heart. To their own Master they must stand or fall. I am not their Judge. The grace, faith, and holiness of many Quakers are beyond all question. They are simple matters of fact. Christians like Mrs. Fry and J. J. Gurney most evidently had received the Holy Ghost, and would reflect honour on any Church. Would God that many baptized Christians were like them! But the best people are fallible at their best. How people, so sensible and well read as many Quakers have been and are, can possibly

refuse to see water-baptism to Scripture, as an ordinance obligatory on all professing Christians, is a problem which I cannot pretend to solve. It passes my understanding. I can only suppose that God allows the Quakers to be a perpetual testimony against Romish views of water-baptism, and a standing witness to the Churches that God can, in some cases, give grace without the use of any sacraments at all!

3 The rubric of the Prayer-book Service for the Public Baptism of Infants says,-“If the godfather and godmother shall certify to the priest that the child may well endure it, he shall dip it in the water discreetly and warily.”

4 Readers who wish to examine the true meaning of the Baptismal Service are requested to read the paper in this volume, called “Prayer-book Statements about Regeneration.”

5 In the parallel passage in St. Luke's Gospel the word “infants” is used, and the Greek word so rendered can only be used of infants too young to speak or be called intelligent.

Baxter

[chapter taken from]

LIGHT FROM OLD TIMES;

OR, Protestant Facts and Men WITH AN INTRODUCTION FOR OUR OWN DAYS.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

”EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS,” “KNOTS UNTIED,” ETC., ETC.

”If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to

the battle?"- 1 Corinthians 14:8.

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RICHARD BAXTER.

THERE are subjects about which it is well to look behind us. There are matters in which a knowledge of the past may teach us wisdom for the present and the future. The history of religion is pre-eminently such a subject and matter. Steam, electricity, railways, and gas, have made a wonderful difference in the temporal condition of mankind in the last two hundred years. But all this time the Bible and the hearts of men have remained unaltered. That which men did and thought in religious matters two hundred years ago, they are capable of doing and thinking again. What they thought and did in England in the seventeenth century it is well to know.

And just as there are subjects about which it is wise to look behind us, so also there are times long gone by which deserve our special attention. There are times when the character of a nation receives an indelible impression from events which take place in a single generation. There have been times when the dearest privileges of a people have been brought to the birth, and called into vigorous existence, through the desperate agony of civil war and religious strife. Such, I take leave to say, were the times of which I am about to speak in this biography.

To no times are Englishmen so deeply indebted for their civil and religious liberty as the times in which Baxter lived. To no body of men do they owe such an unpaid debt of gratitude as they do to that noble host of which Baxter was a standard bearer: I mean the Puritans. To no man among the Puritans are the lovers of religious freedom under such large obligations as they are to Richard Baxter.

I am fully sensible of the difficulties which surround the subject. It is a subject which few historians handle fairly, simply because they do not understand spiritual religion. To an unconverted man the religious differences of the day of the Puritans must necessarily appear foolishness. He is no more qualified to give an opinion about them than a blind man is to talk of pictures. It is a subject which no clergyman of the Church of England can approach without laying himself open to misrepresentation. He will be suspected of disaffection to his own Church if he speaks favourably of men who opposed Bishops. But it is a subject on which it is most important for Englishmen to have distinct opinions, and I must ask for it a patient hearing. If I can correct some false impressions, if I can supply a few great principles to guide men in these perilous times, I feel I shall have done my readers an essential service. And if I fail to interest them in “Baxter and his Times,” I am sure the fault is not in the subject, but in me.

The times in which Baxter lived comprehend such a vast amount of interesting matter, that I must of necessity leave many points in their history entirely untouched.

My meaning will be plain when I say that he was born in 1615, and died in 1691. Nearly all his life was passed under the dynasty of a house which reigned over England with no benefit to the country and no credit to itself: I mean the Stuarts. He lived through the reign of James I., Charles I., Charles II., and James II., and was buried in the reign of William III. He was in the prime of life and intellectual vigour all through the days of the Commonwealth and the civil wars. He witnessed the overthrow of the Monarchy and the Church of England, and their subsequent re-establishment. He was a contemporary of Cromwell, of Laud, of Strafford, of Hampden, of Pym, of Monk, of Clarendon, of Milton, of Hale, of Jeffreys, of Blake. In his days took place the public execution of an English Monarch, Charles I.; of an Archbishop of Canterbury, Laud; and of a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Strafford. Within the single period of his life are to be found the plague, the fire of London, the Westminster Assembly, the Long Parliament, the Savoy Conference, and the rejection of two thousand of the best ministers of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity. Such were the eventful times in which Baxter lived. I cannot, of course, pretend to enter fully into them. Their history forms a huge picture, like the moving panorama of the Mississippi, which it is utterly impossible to take in at a glance. I shall simply try to fix attention on a few of the leading features of the picture, and I shall choose those points which appear to me most likely to be useful in the present day.

(a) One remarkable feature in the history of Baxter's times is the move backward from the principles of the Protestant Reformation, which commenced in his youth. Doctrines and practices began to be maintained, both by preachers and writers in the Church of England, which Latimer and Jewell would never have sanctioned. Sound Evangelical teaching was decried and run down, under the specious name of “Calvinism.” Good bishops, like Davenant, were snubbed and reprimanded. Bad bishops, like Montague and Wren, were patted on the back and encouraged. Preaching and lecturing were depreciated, and forms and ceremonies were exalted. The benefits

of Episcopacy were extravagantly magnified. Candlesticks and crosses, and all manner of Popish ornaments, were introduced into some of the churches. The sanctity of the Lord's Day was invaded by the abominable “Book of Sports,” and common people were encouraged to spend Sunday in England as it is now spent in France. The communion tables, which up to this time had stood in the middle of the chancel, were removed to the east end of the churches, put behind rails, and profanely called “altars.” Against all these sapping and mining operations some, no doubt, protested loudly; but still the sappers and miners went on.

The prime agent in the whole movement was Archbishop Laud. Whether that unhappy man really intended to re-unite the Church of England with the Church of Rome is a question which will probably never be settled till the last day. One thing is very certain;-no one could have played the game of Rome more thoroughly than he did.

Like many a mischief-maker before and since, Laud pulled the house in which he lived upon his own head. He raised a storm at length, before which the Church, the Throne, and the bishops, all went down together, and in the midst of which he himself was put on trial and lost his life. But the Church of England received an injury in Laud's days from which it has never entirely recovered.

Since his time there never has been wanting a succession of men amongst its ministers who have held most of Laud's principles, and occasionally have boldly walked in his steps. So true are the words of Shakspeare, “The evil that men do lives after them.” The harm that Queen Mary did to the Church of England was nothing compared to the harm done by Laud.

We must never underrate the mischief that one bold, bad man can do, and especially in matters of religion. The seeds of error are like thistle-down. One head of a thistle scattered by the wind will sow a whole field. One Tom Paine can rear up infidels all over the world. One Laud can leaven generations with untold mischief. Never let us suppose that extreme Ritualism is a legitimate child of the Church of England. It is not so. It was scarcely heard of till the time of the Stuarts. Never let us suppose that Tractarianism, or Ritualism, so called, is a new invention of these latter days. It is not so. It is more than 200 years old. The father of extreme Ritualists is Archbishop Laud. Let us remember these things, and we shall have learned something from Baxter's times.

(b) Another remarkable feature in the history of Baxter's times is the famous civil war between Charles I. and his Parliament.

All war is an evil-a necessary evil sometimes-but still an evil; and of all wars, the most distressing is a civil war. It is a kind of huge family quarrel. It is a struggle in which victory brings no glory, because the strife has been the strife of brethren. Edge Hill, and Newbury, and Marston Moor, and Naseby, and Worcester, are names which call up none but painful reflections.

The victors in each battle had spilt the blood of their own countrymen, and lessened the general strength of the nation.

But there is a point of view in which the civil war between Charles I. and his Parliament was peculiarly distressing. I allude to the striking fact, that the general irreligion and immorality of the King's party did more to ruin his cause than all the armies which the Parliament raised. There were hundreds and thousands of steady, quiet men, who, at the beginning of the war, were desirous to be still, and help neither side. But when they found that a man could not read his Bible to his

dependents and have prayer in his family without being persecuted as a Roundhead, they felt obliged, in self-defence, to join the Parliamentary forces. In plain words, the wickedness and profligacy of many of the Cavaliers drove godly men into the ranks of their enemies. That there was plenty of hypocrisy, fanaticism, and enthusiasm on the Parliamentary side, I make no question. That there were some good men among the Cavaliers, such as Lord Falkland, I do not deny. But, after every allowance, I have no doubt there was far more true religion among those who fought for the Parliament than among those who fought for the King.

The result of the civil war, under these peculiar circumstances, never need surprise any one who knows human nature. The drinking, swearing, roistering troopers, who were led by Prince Rupert, and Wilmot, and Goring, proved no match for the praying, psalm-singing, Bible-reading men whom Cromwell, and Fairfax, and Ireton, and Harrison, and Fleetwood, and Desborough, brought into the field. The steadiest men will in the long run make the best soldiers. A side which has a strong religious principle among its supporters will seldom be a losing one. “Those who honour God, God will honour; and they that despise Him shall be lightly esteemed.”

I shall dismiss the subject of the civil war with one `general remark and one caution.

My general remark is, that, deeply as we must regret the civil war, we must in fairness remember that we probably owe to it the free and excellent Constitution which we possess in this country. God can bring good out of evil. The oscillations of England between despotism and anarchy, and anarchy and despotism, for many years after the breach between Charles I. and the House of Commons, were certainly tremendously violent. Still we must confess, that great political lessons were probably imprinted on the English mind at that period, of which we are reaping the benefit at this very day. Monarchs were taught that, like planets in heaven, they must be content to move in a certain orbit, and that an enlightened people would not be governed and taxed without the consent of an unfettered House of Commons. Nations were taught that it is a far easier thing to pull to pieces than to build, and to upset an ancient monarchy than to find a government which shall be a satisfactory substitute. Many of the foundations of our choicest national privileges, I make no doubt, were laid in the Commonwealth times. We shall do well to remember this. We may rest satisfied that this country owes an immense debt of gratitude to Brooke, and Hampden, and Eliot, and Whitelock, and Pym.

The caution I wish to give respects the execution of Charles I. We shall do well to remember that the great bulk of the Puritans were entirely guiltless of any participation in the trial and death of the King. It is a vulgar error to suppose, as many do, that the whole Parliamentary party are accountable for that wicked and impolitic act. The immense majority of the Presbyterians protested loudly against it. Baxter tells us expressly in his autobiography, that, together with many other ministers, he declared his abhorrence of it, and used every exertion to prevent it. The deed was the doing of Cromwell and his immediate adherents in the army, and it is at their door that the whole guilt must lie. That the great body of the Puritans espoused the Parliamentary side there is no doubt. But as to any abstract dislike to royalty, or assent to King Charles's death, the Puritans are entirely innocent. Let us remember this, and we shall have learned something from the history of Baxter's times.

(c) The next feature in the history of Baxter's times, to which I shall venture to call attention, is the rise and conduct of that remarkable man, Oliver Cromwell.

There are few men on whose character more obloquy has been heaped than Oliver Cromwell. He has been painted by some as a monster of wickedness and hypocrisy. Nothing has been too bad to say of him. Such an estimate of him is simply ridiculous. It defeats the end of those who form it. They forget that it is no compliment to England to suppose that it would so long tolerate the rule of such a monster. The man who could raise himself from being the son of a brewer at Huntingdon to be the most successful general of his age, and absolute dictator of this country for many years, must, on the very face of facts, have been a most extraordinary man.

For my own part I say frankly, that I think we ought to consider the estimate of Cromwell, which Carlyle and D'Aubigne have formed, to be a near approach to the truth. I own I cannot go the lengths of the latter writer. I dare not pronounce positively that Cromwell was a sincere Christian. I leave the question in suspense. I hazard no opinion about it, one way or the other, because I do not find sufficient materials for forming an opinion. If I were to look at his private letters only, I should not hesitate to call him a converted man. But when I look at some of his public acts, I see much that appears to me quite inexplicable. And when I observe how doubtfully Baxter and other good men, who were his contemporaries, speak of him, my hesitancy as to his spirituality is much increased. In short, I turn from the question in a state of doubt.

That Oliver Cromwell was one of the greatest English-men that ever lived I feel no doubt at all. No man, perhaps, ever won supreme power by the sword, and then used that power with such moderation as he did. England was probably more feared and respected throughout Europe, during the short time that he was Protector, than she ever was before, or ever has been since. His very name carried terror with it. He declared that he would make the name of an Englishman as great as ever that of a Roman had been. And he certainly succeeded. He made it publicly known that he would not allow the Protestant faith to be insulted in any part of the world. And he kept his word. When the Duke of Savoy began to persecute the Vaudois in his days, Cromwell interfered at once on their behalf, and never rested till the Duke's army was recalled from their villages, and the poor people's goods and houses restored. When certain Protestants at Nismes, in France, were threatened with oppressive usage by the French government, Cromwell instructed his ambassador at Paris to insist peremptorily, that proceedings against them should be dropped, and in the event of a refusal, to leave Paris immediately. In fact, it was said that Cardinal Mazarin, the French Minister, would change countenance when Cromwell's name was mentioned; and that it was almost proverbial in France, that the Cardinal was more afraid of Cromwell than of the devil. As for the Pope, he was so dreadfully frightened by a fleet which Cromwell sent into the Mediterranean, under Blake, to settle some matters with the Duke of Tuscany, that he commanded processions to be made in Rome, and the Host to be exposed for forty hours, in order to avert the judgments of God, and save the Church. In short, the influence of English Protestantism was never so powerfully felt throughout Europe as it was in the days of Oliver Cromwell.

I will only ask my readers to remember, in addition to these facts, that Cromwell's government was remarkable for its toleration, and this, too, in an age when toleration was very little understood,-that his private life was irreproachable,-and that he enforced a standard of morality throughout the kingdom which was, unhappily, unknown in the days of the Stuarts. Let us remember all these things, and then I think we shall not lightly give way to the common opinion that Cromwell was a wicked and hypocritical man. Let us rest assured that his character deserves far better treatment than it has generally received hitherto. Let us regard him as one who, with all

his faults, did great things for our country. Let not those faults blind our eyes to the real greatness of his character. Let us give him a high place in the list of great men before our mind's eye. Let us do this, and we shall have learned something from Baxter's times.

(d) There is one more feature in the history of Baxter's times which I feel it impossible to pass over. I allude to the suicidal blindness of the Church of England under the Stuarts.

I touch on this subject with some reluctance. I love the Church of which I am a minister, heartily and sincerely. But I have never found out that my Church lays claim to infallibility, and I am bound to confess that in the times of the Stuarts she committed some tremendous mistakes. Far be it from me to say that these mistakes were chargeable upon all her members. Abbot, and Carlton, and Davenant, and Hall, and Prideaux, and Usher, and Reynolds, and Wilkins, were bright exceptions among the bishops, both as to doctrine and practice. But, unhappily, these good men were always in a minority in the Church; and the manner in which the majority administered the affairs of the Church is the subject to which I wish to call attention. We ought to know something about the subject, because it serves to throw immense light on the history of our unhappy religious divisions in this country. We ought to know something of it, because it is one which is intimately bound up with Baxter's life.

One part of the suicidal blindness of the Church to which I have referred, was its long-continued attempt to compel conformity, and prohibit private religious exercises, by pains and penalties. A regular crusade was kept up against everybody who infringed its canons, or did anything contrary to its rubrics. Hundreds and thousands of men, for many years, were summoned before magistrates, fined, imprisoned, and often ruined; not because they had offended against the Gospel or the Ten Commandments, not because they had made an open attack on the Churches; but merely because they had transgressed some petty ecclesiastical by-law, more honoured in the breach than in the observance; or because they tried by quiet, private meetings to obtain some spiritual edification over and above that which the public services of the Church provided. At one time we read of good men having their ears cut off and their noses slit, for writing unfavourably of bishops! This was the fate of the father of Archbishop Leighton! At another time we read of an enactment by which any one present at a meeting of five or more persons, where there was any exercise of religion in other manner than that allowed by the Liturgy of the Church of England, was to be fined, or imprisoned for three months for the first offence, six months for the second offence, and for the third, transported for seven years! Many were afraid to have family prayer if more than four acquaintances were present! Some families had scruples about saying grace if five strangers were at table! Such was the state of England in the seventeenth century under the Stuarts.

The result of this miserable policy was just exactly what might have been expected. There arose a spirit of deep discontent on the part of the persecuted. There sprung up among them a feeling of disaffection to the Church in which they had been baptized, and a rooted conviction that a system must necessarily be bad in 'principle which could bear such fruits. Men became sick of the very name of the Liturgy, when it was bound up in their memories with a fine or a gaol. Men became weary of episcopacy, when they found that bishops were more frequently a terror to good works than to evil ones. The words of Baxter, in a striking passage on this subject in his autobiography, are very remarkable: “The more the bishops thought to cure schism by punishment, the more they increased the opinion that they were persecuting enemies of godliness, and the captains of the

profane.”

And who that knows human nature can wonder at such a state of feeling? The mass of men will generally judge an institution by its administration, more than by its abstract excellencies. When plain Englishmen saw that a man might do almost anything so long as he did not break an ecclesiastical canon;-when they saw that people might gamble, and swear, and get drunk, and no one made them afraid, but that people who met after service to sing psalms and join in prayer were heavily punished;-when they saw that godless, ignorant, reprobate, profligate spendthrifts, sat under their own vines and fig-trees in peace, so long as they conformed and went to their parish churches, but that humble, holy, conscientious, Bible-reading persons, who sometimes went out of their parishes to church, were severely fined;-when they found that Charles the Second and his boon companions were free to waste a nation's substance in riotous living, while the saints of the nation, like Baxter and Jenkyn, were rotting in gaols;-I say, when plain Englishmen saw these things, they found it hard to love the Church which did them. Yet all this might often have been seen in many counties of England under the Stuarts. If this was not suicidal blindness on the part of the Church of England, I know not what is. It was helping the devil, by driving good men out of her communion. It was literally bleeding herself to death.

The crowning piece of folly which the majority in the Church of England committed under the Stuarts, was procuring the Act of Uniformity to be enacted in the year 1662. This, you must remember, took place at the beginning of Charles the Second's reign, and shortly after the re-establishment of the Monarchy and the Church.

This famous act imposed terms and conditions of holding office on all ministers of the Church of England which had never been imposed before, from the time of the Reformation. It was notoriously so framed as to be offensive to the consciences of the Puritans, and to drive them out of the Church. For this purpose it was entirely successful. Within a year no less than 2,000 clergymen resigned their livings rather than accept its terms. Many of these 2,000 were the best, the ablest, and the holiest ministers of the day. Many a man, who had been regularly ordained by bishops, and spent twenty or thirty years in the service of the Church without molestation, was suddenly commanded to accept new conditions of holding preferment, and turned out to starve because he refused. Sixty of the leading parishes in London were at once deprived of their ministers, and their congregations left like sheep without a shepherd. Taking all things into consideration, a more impolitic and disgraceful deed never disfigured the annals of a Protestant Church.

It was a disgraceful deed, because it was a flat contradiction to Charles the Second's own promise at Breda, before he came back from exile. He was brought back on the distinct understanding that the Church of England should be re-established on such a broad and liberal basis as to satisfy the conscientious scruples of the Puritans. Had it not been for the assistance of the Puritans he would never have got back at all. And yet as soon as the reins of power were fairly in the King's hands his promise was deliberately broken!

It was a disgraceful deed, because the great majority of the ejected ministers might easily have been retained in the Church by a few small concessions. They had no abstract objection to episcopacy, or to a liturgy. A few alterations in the prayers, and a moderate liberty in the conduct of Divine worship, according to Baxter's calculation, would have satisfied 1,600 out of the 2,000.

But the ruling party were determined not to make a single concession. They had no wish to keep the Puritans in the Church. When some one observed to Archbishop Sheldon, the chief mover in the business, that he thought many of the Puritans would conform, and accept the Act of Uniformity, the Archbishop replied, “I am afraid they will.” To show the spirit of the ruling party in the Church, they actually added to the number of apocryphal lessons in the Prayer-book calendar at this time. They made it a matter of congratulation among themselves that they had thrust out the Puritans, and got in Bel and the Dragon!

It was a disgraceful deed, because the ejected ministers were, many of them, men of such ability and attainments, that great concessions ought to have been made in order to retain them in the Church. Baxter, Poole, Manton, Bates, Calamy, Brooks, Watson, Charnock, Caryl, Howe, Flavel, Bridge, Jenkyn, Owen, Goodwin, are names whose praise is even now in all the Churches. The men who turned them out were not to be compared to them. The names of the vast majority of them are hardly known. But they had power on their side, and they were resolved to use it.

It was a disgraceful deed, because it showed the world that the leaders of the Church of England, like the Bourbons in modern times, had learned nothing and forgotten nothing during their exile. They had not forgotten the old bad ways of Laud, which had brought such misery on England. They had not learned that conciliation and concession are the most becoming graces in the rulers of a Church, and that persecution in the long run is sure to be a losing game.

I dare not dwell longer on this point. I might easily bring forward more illustrations of this sad feature in Baxter's times. I might speak of the infamous Oxford Act, in 1665, which forbade the unhappy ejected ministers to live within five miles of any corporate town, or of any place where they had formerly preached. But enough has been said to show that when I spoke of the suicidal blindness of the Church of England, I did not speak without cause. The consequences of this blindness are manifest to any one who knows England. The divided state of Protestantism in this country is of itself a great fact, which speaks volumes.

Against the policy of the ruling party in the Church of England, under the Stewarts, I always shall protest. I do not feel the scruples which Baxter and his ejected brethren felt about the Act of Uniformity. Much as I respect them, I think them wrong and misguided in their judgments. But I think that Archbishop Sheldon, and the men who refused to go one step to meet them, were far more wrong and far more misguided. I believe they did an injury to the cause of true religion in England, which will probably never be repaired, by sowing the seeds of endless divisions. They were the men who laid the foundation of English dissent. I believe they recklessly threw away a golden opportunity of doing good. They might easily have made my own beloved Church far more effective and far more useful than she ever has been by wise and timely concessions. They refused to do this, and, instead of a healing measure, brought forward their unhappy Act of Uniformity. I disavow any sympathy with their proceedings, and can never think of them without the deepest regret.

I cannot leave the subject of Baxter's times without offering one piece of counsel to my readers. I advise you, then, not to believe everything you may happen to read on the subject of the times of the Stewarts. There are no times, perhaps, about which prejudice and party-spirit have so warped the judgment and jaundiced the eye-sight of historians. If any one wants a really fair and impartial history of the times, I strongly advise him to read Marsden's “History of the Puritans.” I regard

these two volumes as the most valuable addition which has been made to our stock of religious history in modern times.

I now turn from Baxter's times to Baxter himself. Without some knowledge of the times, we can hardly understand the character and conduct of the man. A few plain facts about the man will be more likely than anything I can write to fasten in our minds the times.

Richard Baxter was the son of a small landed proprietor of Eaton Constantine, in Shropshire, and was born, in 1615, at Rowton, in the same county, where Mr. Adeney, his mother's father, resided.

He seems to have been under religious impressions from a very early period of his life, and for this, under God, he was indebted to the training of a pious father. Shropshire was a very dark, ungodly county in those days. The ministers were generally ignorant, graceless, and unable to preach; and the people, as might be expected, were profligate, and despisers of them that were good. In Eaton Constantine, the parishioners spent the greater part of the Lord's Day in dancing round a Maypole near old Mr. Baxter's door, to his great distress and annoyance. Yet even here grace triumphed over the world in the case of his son, and he was added to the noble host of those who “serve the Lord from their youth.”

It is always interesting to observe the names of religious books, which God is pleased to use in bringing souls to the knowledge of Himself. The books which had the most effect on Baxter were, Bunny's “Resolution;” Perkins “On Repentance, on Living and Dying well, and on the Government of the Tongue; “Culverwell “On Faith;” and Sibbs's “Bruised Reed.” Disease and the prospect of death did much to carry on the spiritual work within him. He says in his Autobiography, “Weakness and pain helped me to study how to die. That set me on studying how to live, and that on studying the doctrines from which I must fetch my motives and my comforts.”

At the age of twenty-two he was ordained a clergyman, by Thornborough, Bishop of Worcester. He had never had the advantage of an University education. A free-school at Wroxeter, and a private tutor at Ludlow, had done something for him; and his own insatiable love of study had done a good deal more. He, probably, entered the ministry far better furnished with theological learning than most young men of his day. He certainly entered it with qualifications far better than a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. He entered it truly moved by the Holy Ghost, and a converted man. He says himself, “I knew that the want of academical honours and degrees were like to make me contemptible with the most. But yet, expecting to be so quickly in another world, the great concernment of miserable souls did prevail with me against all impediments. And being conscious of a thirsty desire of men's conscience and salvation, I resolved, that if one or two souls only might be won to God, it would easily recompense all the dishonour which, for want of titles, I might undergo from men.”

From the time of his ordination to his death, Baxter's life was a constant series of strange vicissitudes, and intense physical and mental exertions. Sometimes in prosperity and sometimes in adversity,-sometimes praised and sometimes persecuted,-at one period catechising in the lanes of Kidderminster, at another disputing with bishops in the Savoy Conference,-one year writing the “Saint's Rest,” at the point of death, in a quiet country house, another year a marching chaplain to a regiment in Cromwell's army,-one day offered a bishopric by Charles II., another cast out of the Church by the Act of Uniformity,-one year arguing for monarchy with Cromwell, and telling him it

was a blessing, another tried before Jeffreys on a charge of seditious writing,-one time living quietly at Acton in the society of Judge Hale, at another languishing in prison under some atrocious ecclesiastical persecution,-one day having public discussions about infant baptism, with Mr. Tombes, in Bewdley Church, another holding the reading-desk of Amersham Church from morning to night against the theological arguments of Antinomian dragoons in the gallery,-sometimes preaching the plainest doctrines, sometimes handling the most abstruse metaphysical points,-sometimes writing folios for the learned, sometimes writing broad-sheets for the poor,-never, perhaps, did any Christian minister fill so many various positions; and never, certainly, did any one come out of them all with such an unblemished reputation. Always suffering under incurable disease, and seldom long out of pain,-always working his mind to the uttermost, and never idle for a day,-seemingly overwhelmed with business, and yet never refusing new work,-living in the midst of the most exciting scenes, and yet holding daily converse with God,-not sufficiently a partisan to satisfy any side, and yet feared and courted by all,-too much of a Royalist to please the Parliamentary party, and yet too much connected with the Parliament and too holy to be popular with the Cavaliers,-too much of an Episcopalian to satisfy the violent portion of the Puritan body, and too much of a Puritan to be trusted by the bishops,-never, probably, did Christian man enjoy so little rest, though serving God with a pure conscience, as did Richard Baxter.

In 1638 he began his ministry, by preaching in the Upper Church at Dudley. There he continued a year. From Dudley he removed to Bridgnorth. There he continued a year and three-quarters. From Bridgnorth he removed to Kidderminster. From thence, after two years, he retired to Coventry, at the beginning of the Common-wealth troubles, and awaited the progress of the civil war. From Coventry, after the battle of Naseby, he joined the Parliamentary army in the capacity of Regimental Chaplain. He took this office in the vain hope that he might do some good among the soldiers, and counteract the ambitious designs of Cromwell and his friends. He was obliged by illness to give up his chaplaincy in 1646, and lingered for some months between life and death at the hospitable houses of Sir John Coke of Melbourne, in Derbyshire, and Sir Thomas Rotas of Rouslench, in Worcestershire. At the end of 1646 he returned to Kidderminster, and there continued labouring indefatigably as parish Minister for fourteen years. In 1660 he left Kidderminster for London, and took an active part in promoting the restoration of Charles II., and was made one of the King's Chaplains. In London, he preached successively at St. Dunstan's, Black Friars', and St. Bride's. Shortly after this he was offered the Bishopric of Hereford, but thought fit to refuse it. In 1662 he was one of the 2000 ministers who were turned out of the Church by the Act of Uniformity. Immediately after his ejection he married a wife who seems to have been every way worthy of him, and who was spared to be his loving and faithful companion for nineteen years. Her name was Margaret Charlton, of Apley Castle, in Shropshire. After this he lived in various places in and about London,-at Acton, Totteridge, Bloomsbury, and at last in Charterhouse Square. The disgraceful treatment of his enemies made it almost impossible for him to have any certain dwelling-place. Once, at this period of his life, he was offered a Scotch Bishopric, or the Mastership of a Scotch University, but declined both offices. With few exceptions, the last twenty-nine years of his life were embittered by repeated prosecutions, fines, imprisonment, and harassing controversies. When he could he preached, and when he could not preach he wrote books; but something he was always doing. The revolution and accession of William III. brought him some little respite from persecution, and death at last removed the good

old man to that place “where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest,” in the year 1691, and the seventy-sixth year of his age.

Such is a brief outline of the life of one of the most distinguished Puritans who lived under the Stewarts, and one of the most devoted ministers of the Gospel this country has ever seen. It is an outline which, we may readily believe, might be filled up to an indefinite length. I cannot, of course, pretend to do more than direct attention to a few leading particulars. If I do not tell more, it is not from want of matter. But if any one wishes to know why Baxter's name stands so high as it does in the list of English worthies, I ask him to give me his attention for a few minutes, and I will soon show him cause.

For one thing, Baxter was a man of most eminent personal holiness. Few men have ever lived before the eyes of the world for fifty or sixty years, as he did, and left so fair and unblemished a reputation. Bitterly and cruelly as many hated him, they could find no fault in the man, except “concerning the law of his God.” He seems to have been holy in all the relations of life, and in all the circumstances in which man can be placed: holy as a son, a husband, a minister, and a friend,-holy in prosperity and in adversity, in sickness and in health, in youth and in old age. It is a fine saying of Orme, in his admirable life of him, that he was, in the highest sense, a most “unearthly” man. He lived with God, and Christ, and heaven, and death, and judgment, and eternity continually before his eyes. He cared nothing for the good things of this world: a bishopric, with all its emoluments and honours, had no charms for him. He cared nothing for the enmity of the world: no fear of man's displeasure ever turned him an inch out of his way. He was singularly independent of man's praise or blame. He could be bold as a lion in the presence of Cromwell or Charles II., and his bishops; and yet he could be gentle as a lamb with poor people seeking how to be saved. He could be zealous as a Crusader for the rights of conscience, and yet he was of so catholic a spirit that he loved all who loved Jesus Christ in sincerity. “Be it by Conformists or by Nonconformists,” he would say, “I rejoice that Christ is preached.” He was a truly humble man. To one who wrote to him expressing admiration for his character, he replied, “You admire one you do not know: knowledge would cure your error.” So fair an epistle of Christ, considering the amazing trials of patience he had to go through, this country has seldom seen as Richard Baxter. Let us remember this point in Baxter's character. No argument has such lasting power with the world as a holy and consistent life. Let us remember that this holiness was attained by a man of like passions with ourselves. Let Baxter be an encouragement and an example. Let us remember the Lord God of Baxter is not changed.

For another thing, Baxter was one of the most powerful preachers that ever addressed an English congregation. He seems to have possessed all the gifts which are generally considered to make a perfect “master of assemblies.” He had an amazing fluency,-an enormous store of matter,-a most clear and lucid style,-an unlimited command of forcible language,-a pithy, pointed, emphatic way of presenting truth,-a singularly moving and pathetic voice,-and an earnestness of manner which swept everything before it like a torrent. He used to say, “It must be serious preaching which will make men serious in hearing and obeying it.” Two well-known lines of his show you the man:

“I'll preach as though I ne'er should preach again,

And as a dying man to dying men.”

Dr. Bates, a contemporary, says of him, “He had a marvellous felicity and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style. His great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words. He despised flashy oratory. But his expressions were so clear and powerful, so convincing to the understanding, so entering into the soul, so engaging the affections, that those were as deaf as an adder who were not charmed by so wise a charmer.”

The effects that his preaching produced were those which such preaching always has produced, and always will. As it was under the pulpit of Latimer and Whitfield, so it was under the pulpit of Baxter. At Dudley the poor nailers would not only crowd the church, but even hang upon the windows and the leads without. At Kidderminster it became necessary to build five new galleries, in order to accommodate the congregation. In London the crowds who attended his ministry were so large that it was sometimes dangerous, and often impossible, to be one of his hearers.

Once, when he was about to preach at St. Lawrence, Jewry, he sent word to Mr. Vines, the minister, that the Earl of Suffolk and Lord Broghill were coming in a coach with him, and would be glad to have seats. But when he and his noble companions reached the door, the crowd had so little respect for persons, that the two peers had to go home again because they could not get within hearing. Mr. Vines himself was obliged to get up into the pulpit, and sit behind the preacher, from want of room; and Baxter actually preached standing between Mr. Vines' feet.

On another occasion, when he was preaching to an enormous crowd in St. Dunstan's, Fleet Street, he made a striking use of an incident which took place during the sermon. A piece of brick fell down in the steeple, and an alarm was raised that the church, an old and rotten building, was falling. Scarcely was the alarm allayed, when a bench, on which some people were standing, broke with their weight, and the confusion was worse than ever. Many crowded to the doors to get out, and all were in a state of panic. One old woman was heard loudly asking God forgiveness for having come to the church at all, and promising, if she only got out safe, never to come there again. In the midst of all the confusion Baxter alone was calm and unmoved. As soon as order was restored, he rose and said, “We are in the service of God to prepare ourselves that we may be fearless at the great noise of the dissolving world, when the heavens shall pass away, and the elements melt with fervent heat.” This was Baxter all over. This was the kind of thing he had not only grace, but gifts and nerve, to do. He always spoke like one who saw God, and felt death at his back.

Such a man will seldom fail to preach well. Such a man will seldom be in want of hearers. Such a man deserves to be embalmed in the memory of all who want to know what God can do for a child of Adam by His Spirit. Such a man deserves to be praised.

For another thing, Baxter was one of the most successful pastors of a parish and congregation that ever lived. When he came to Kidderminster he found it a dark, ignorant, immoral, irreligious place, containing, perhaps, 3,000 inhabitants. When he left it, at the end of fourteen years, he had completely turned the parish upside down. “The place before his coming,” says Dr. Bates, “was like a piece of dry and barren earth; but, by the blessing of heaven upon his labour, the face of Paradise appeared there. The bad were changed to good, and the good to better.” The number of his regular communicants averaged 600. “Of these,” Baxter tells us, “there were not twelve of whom I had not good hope as to their sincerity.” The Lord's Day was thoroughly reverenced and observed. It was said, “You might have heard an hundred families singing psalms and repeating

sermons as you passed through the streets." When he came there, there was about one family in a street which worshipped God at home. When he went away, there were some streets in which there was not more than one family on a side that did not do it; and this was the case even with inns and public houses. Even of the irreligious families, there were very few which had not some converted relations. "Some of the poor people became so well versed in theology that they understood the whole body of divinity, and were able to judge difficult controversies. Some were so able in prayer that few ministers could match them in order, fulness, apt expressions, holy oratory and fervour. Best of all, the temper of their minds and the innocency of their lives were much more laudable even than their gifts."

The grand instrument to which Baxter used to attribute this astounding success, was his system of household visitation and regular private conference with his parishioners. No doubt this did immense good, and the more so because it was a new thing in those days. Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that the most elaborate parochial machinery of modern times has never produced such effects as those you have just heard of at Kidderminster. And the true account of this I believe to be, that no parish has ever had such a wonderful mainspring in the middle of it as Baxter was. While some divines were wrangling about the divine right of Episcopacy or Presbytery, or splitting hairs about reprobation and free-will, Baxter was always visiting from house to house, and beseeching men, for Christ's sake, to be reconciled to God and flee from the wrath to come. While others were entangling themselves in politics, and "burying their dead" amidst the potsherds of the earth, Baxter was living a crucified life, and daily preaching the Gospel. I suspect he was the best and wisest pastor that an English parish has ever had, and a model that many a modern rector or vicar would do well to follow. Once more I say, have I not a right to say such a polished instrument as this ought not to be allowed to rust in oblivion? Such a man as this deserves to be praised.

For another thing, Baxter was one of the most diligent theological writers the world has ever seen. Few have the slightest idea of the immense number of works in divinity which he wrote in the fifty years of his active life. It is reckoned that they would fill sixty octavo volumes, comprising not less than 35,000 closely-printed pages. These works, no doubt, are not all of equal merit, and many of them probably will never repay perusal. Like the ships from Tarshish, they contain not only gold, and silver, and ivory, but also a large quantity of apes and peacocks. Still, after every deduction, the writings of Baxter generally contain a great mass of solid truths, and truths often handled in a most striking and masterly way. Dr. Barrow, no mean judge, says "That his practical writings were never mended, and his controversial ones seldom confuted." Bishop Wilkins declares "That he had cultivated every subject he had handled, that if he had lived in the primitive times he would have been one of the Fathers of the Church, and that it was enough for one age to produce such a man as Mr. Baxter." That great and good man, William Wilberforce, says, "His practical writings are a treasury of Christian wisdom;" and he adds, "I must beg to class among the brightest ornaments of the Church of England this great man, who was so shamefully ejected from the Church in 1662."

No one man has certainly ever written three such books as Baxter's three master-pieces, "The Saint's Rest," "The Reformed Pastor," and "The Call to the Unconverted." I believe they have been made blessings to thousands of souls, and are alone sufficient to place the author in the foremost rank of theological writers. Of "The Call to the Unconverted," 20,000 were printed in one year. Six brothers were converted at one time by reading it. Eliot, the missionary, thought so highly of it that

he translated it into the Indian language, the first book after the Bible. And really, when we consider that all Baxter's writings were composed in the midst of intense labour and fierce persecution, and often under the pressure of heavy bodily disease, the wonder is not only that he wrote so much, but that so much of what he wrote should be so good. Such wonderful diligence and redemption of time the world has never seen. Once more I say, have I not a right to say such a man deserves to be praised?

For another thing, Baxter was one of the most patient martyrs for conscience' sake that England has ever seen. Of course I do not mean that he was called upon to seal his faith with his blood, as our Protestant Reformers were. But there is such a thing as “wearing out the saints of the Most High” by persecutions and prisons, as well as shedding the blood of the saints. There is a “dying daily,” which, to some natures, is worse even than dying at the stake. If anything tries faith and patience I believe it to be the constant dropping of such wearing persecution as Baxter had to endure for nearly the last twenty-nine years of his life. He had robbed no one. He had murdered no one. He had injured no one. He held no heresy. He believed all the Articles of the Christian faith. And yet no thief or felon in the present day was ever so shamefully treated as this good man. To tell you how often he was summoned, fined, silenced, imprisoned, driven from one place to another, would be an endless task. To describe all the hideous perversions of justice to which he was subjected would be both painful and unprofitable. I will only allow myself to give one instance, and that shall be his trial before Chief Justice Jeffreys.

Baxter was tried before Jeffreys in 1685, at Westminster Hall, on a charge of having published seditious matter, reflecting on the bishops, in a paraphrase on the New Testament, which he had recently brought out. A more unfounded charge could not have been made. The book is still extant, and any one will see at a glance that the alleged seditious passages do not prove the case. Fox, in his history of James II's reign, tells us plainly “that the real motive for bringing him to trial was the desire of punishing an eminent dissenting teacher, whose reputation was high among his sect, and who was supposed to favour the political opinions of the Whigs.”

A long and graphic account of the trial was drawn up by a bystander, and it gives so vivid a picture of the administration of justice in Baxter's days that it may be useful to give a few short extracts from it.

From the very opening of the trial it was clear which way the verdict was intended to go. The Lord Chief Justice of England behaved as if he were counsel for the prosecution, and not judge. He condescended to use abusive language towards the defendant, such as was more suited to Billingsgate than a court of law. One after another the counsel for the defence were browbeaten, silenced, and put down, or else interrupted by violent invectives against Baxter.

At one time the Lord Chief Justice exclaimed: “This is an old rogue, who hath poisoned the world with his Kidderminster doctrine. He encouraged all the women and maids to bring their bodkins and thimbles to carry on war against the King of ever blessed memory. An old schismatical knave! A hypocritical villain!”

By and by he called Baxter “an old blockhead, an unthankful villain, a conceited, stubborn, fanatical dog. Hang him!” he said, “this one old fellow hath cast more reproaches on the constitution and discipline of our Church than will be wiped off for this hundred years. But I'll

handle him for it, for he deserves to be whipped through the city.”

Shortly afterwards, when Baxter began to say a few words on his own behalf, Jeffreys stopped him, crying out, “Richard, Richard, dost thou think we'll hear thee poison the Court? Richard, thou art an old fellow, an old knave; thou hast written books enough to load a cart, every one as full of sedition, I might say treason, as an egg is full of meat. Hadst thou been whipped out of thy writing trade forty years ago, it had been happy. Thou pretendest to be a preacher of the Gospel of peace, and thou hast one foot in the grave: it is time for thee to think what kind of an account thou intendest to give. But leave thee to thyself and I see thou wilt go on as thou hast begun; but, by the grace of God, I will look after thee. I know thou hast a mighty party, and I see a great many of the brotherhood in corners, waiting to see what will become of this mighty dove; but, by the grace of God Almighty, I'll crush you all! Come, what do you say for yourself, you old knave? Come, speak up!”

All this, and much more of the same kind, and even worse, went on at Baxter's trial. The extracts I have given form but a small portion of the whole account.

It is needless to say, that in such a court as this Baxter was at once found guilty. He was fined five hundred marks, which it was known he could not pay; condemned to lie in prison till he paid it, and bound over to good behaviour for seven years. And the issue of the matter was, that this poor, old, diseased, childless widower, of threescore years and ten, lay for two years in Southwark gaol!

It is needless, I hope, to remark in this present century that such a trial as this was a disgrace to the judicial bench of England, and a still greater disgrace to those persons with whom the information originated, understood commonly to have been Sherlock and L'Estrange. Thank God! I trust England, at any rate, has bid a long farewell to such trials as these, whatever may be done in other lands! Wretched, indeed, is that country where low, sneaking informers are encouraged;-where the terrors of the law are directed more against holiness, and Scriptural religion, and freedom of thought, than against vice and immorality;-and where the seat of justice is used for the advancement of political purposes, or the gratification of petty ecclesiastical spite!

But it is right that we should know that under all this foul injustice and persecution, Baxter's grace and patience never failed him. “These things,” he said, in Westminster Hall, “will surely be understood one day, what fools one sort of Protestants are made to prosecute the other.” When he was reviled, he reviled not again. He returned blessing for cursing, and prayer for ill-usage. Few martyrs have ever glorified God so much in their one day's fire as Richard Baxter did for twenty years under the ill-usage of so-called Protestants! Once more, I say, have I not a right to tell you such a man as this deserves to be remembered? Such a man surely deserves to be praised.

And now I hope I have proved my case. I trust it will be allowed that there are men who lived in times long gone by whose character it is useful to review, and that Baxter is undeniably one of them: a real man-a true spiritual hero.

I do not ask men to regard him as a perfect and faultless being, any more than Cranmer, or Calvin, or Knox, or Wesley. I do not at all defend some of Baxter's doctrinal statements. He tried to systematise things which cannot be systematised, and he failed. You will not find such a clear, full gospel in his writings as in those of Owen, and Bridge, and Traill. I do not think he was always right in his judgment. I regard his refusal of a bishopric as a huge mistake. By that refusal he rejected a

glorious opportunity of doing good. Had Baxter been on the episcopal bench, and in the House of Lords, I do not believe the Act of Uniformity would ever have passed.

But in a world like this we must take true Christians as they are, and be thankful for what they are. It is not given to mortal man to be faultless. Take Baxter for all together, and there are few English ministers of the Gospel whose names deserve to stand higher than his. Some have excelled him in some gifts, and some in others. But it is seldom that so many gifts are to be found united in one man as they are in Baxter. Eminent personal holiness,-amazing power as a preacher,-unrivalled pastoral skill,-indefatigable diligence as a writer,-meekness and patience under undeserved persecution,-all meet together in the character of this one man. Let us place him high in our list of great and good men. Let us give him the honour he deserves. It is no small thing to be the fellow-countryman of Richard Baxter.

And here let me remark that few bodies of men are under greater obligation to Baxter and his friends than the members of voluntary religious societies in the present day.

We are allowed to associate together upon Evangelical principles and for religious ends, and no one hinders us. We are allowed to meet in large numbers, and take sweet counsel with one another, and strengthen one another's hands in the service of Christ, and no one interferes to prevent us. We are allowed to assemble for devotional purposes, to read the Word of God, and stir one another up to perseverance in the faith, and no one dares to prohibit us. How great are all these privileges! How incalculable the benefit of union, conference, sympathy, and encouragement to Christians who are voyaging over the stormy waters of this evil world, and trying to do good. Blessed is the labour of those by whose care and attention these societies are kept together! They are sowing precious seed. They may sow with much toil and discouragement, but they may be sure they are sowing seed which shall yet bear fruit after many days.

But never let us forget to whom we are indebted for all this liberty of conference and association which we enjoy. Never let us forget that there was a time when informers would have tracked all our steps-when constables and soldiers would have rudely broken up our gatherings at Exeter Hall, and when our proceedings would have entailed upon us pains, penalties, fines, and imprisonments. Never let us forget that the happy and profitable freedom which we enjoy was only won by long-continued and intense struggles, by the blood and sufferings of noble-minded men, of whom the world was not worthy; and never forget that the men who won this freedom for us were those much-abused men-the Puritans.

Yes! we all owe a debt to the Puritans, which I trust we shall never refuse to acknowledge. We live in days when many are disposed to run them down. As we travel through life, we often hear them derided and abused as seditious, rebellious levellers in the things of Caesar, and ignorant, fanatical, hypocritical enthusiasts in the things of God. We often hear some conceited stripling fresh from college, puffed up with new-fledged views of what he calls “apostolical succession,” and proud of a little official authority, depreciating and sneering at the Puritans, as men alike destitute of learning and true religion, while, in reality he is scarcely worthy to sit at their feet and carry their books. To all such calumnies and false statements, I trust we shall never give heed.

Let us settle it down in our minds that for sound doctrine, spirituality, and learning combined, the Puritans stand at the head of English divines. With all their faults, weaknesses, and defects, they

alone kept the lamp of pure, Evangelical religion burning in this country in the times of the Stuarts,-they alone prevented Laud's Popish inclinations carrying England back into the arms of Rome. It was they who fought the battle of religious freedom, of which we are reaping such fruits. It was they who crushed the wretched spirit of inquisitorial persecution which misguided High Churchmen tried to introduce into this land. Let us give them the honour they deserve. Let us suffer no man to speak lightly of them in our presence. Let us remember our obligations to them, reverence their memory, stand up boldly for their reputation, and never be afraid to plead their cause. It is the cause of pure, Evangelical religion. It is the cause of an open Bible and liberty to meet, and read, and pray together. It is the cause of liberty of conscience. All these are bound up with Baxter and the Puritans. Let us remember this, and give them their due.

Baxter's last days were almost as remarkable as any in his life. He went down to his grave as calmly and peacefully as the setting sun in summer. His death-bed was a glorious death-bed indeed.

I like to know how great men die. I am not satisfied with knowing that men are great Christians in the plenitude of riches and honour. I want to know whether they were great in view of the tomb. I do not want merely to know how men meet Kings and Bishops and Parliaments; I want to know how they meet the king of terrors, and how they feel in the prospect of standing before the King of kings. I suspect that greatness which forsakes a man at last. I like to know how great men die, and I must be allowed to dwell for a few moments upon Baxter's death.

Few death-beds, perhaps, were ever more truly instructive than that of this good old Puritan. His friend, Dr. Bates, has given a full description of it, and I think a few facts drawn from it may prove a suitable conclusion to this biography.

Baxter's last illness found him quietly living in Charterhouse Square, close to the meeting-house of his friend, Dr. Sylvester. Here for the four years preceding his death, he was allowed to enjoy great quietness. The liberty of preaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, no man forbidding him, was at length fully conceded. “Here;” says Dr. Calamy, “he used to preach with great freedom about another world, like one that had been there, and was come as a sort of express to make a report of it.” The storm of persecution was at length over. The winds and waves that had so long burst over him were at last lulled. The saintly old Puritan was mercifully allowed to go down to the banks of Jordan in a great calm.

He continued to preach so long, notwithstanding his wasted body, that the last time he almost died in the pulpit. When disease compelled him to give over his beloved work, and take to his dying bed, it found him the same man that he had been for fifty years. His last hours were spent in preparing others and himself to meet God. He said to the friends who visited him, “You come hither to learn to die. I am not the only person that must go this way. Have a care of this vain, deceitful world, and the lust of the flesh. Be sure you choose God for your portion, heaven for your home, God's glory for your end, God's Word for your rule, and then you need never fear but we shall meet again with comfort.”

Never was penitent sinner more humble, and never was sincere believer more calm and comfortable. He said, “God may justly condemn me for the best duty I ever did; and all my hopes are from the free mercy of God in Christ.” He had often said before, “I can more readily believe that

God will forgive me, than I can forgive myself."

After a slumber, he waked, saying, "I shall rest from my labours." A minister present said, "And your works will follow you." He replied, "No works; I will leave out works, if God will grant me the other." When a friend comforted him with the remembrance of the good many had received from his writings, he replied, "I was but pen in God's hand, and what praise is due to a pen?"

When extremity of pain made him long for death, he would check himself and say, "It is not fit for me to prescribe: when Thou wilt-what Thou wilt-how Thou wilt!" Being in great anguish, he said, "How unsearchable are His ways!" and then he said to his friends, "Do not think the worse of religion for what you see me suffer."

Being often asked by his friend how it was with his inward man, he replied, "I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within; but it is my trouble that I cannot triumphantly express it, by reason of extreme pain." He added, "Flesh must perish, and we must feel the perishing; and though my judgment submit, sense will make me groan."

Being asked by a nobleman whether he had great joy from his believing apprehension of the invisible state, he replied, "What else, think you, Christianity serves for?" And then he added, "that the consideration of the Deity, in His glory and greatness, was too high for our thoughts; but the consideration of the Son of God in our nature, and of the saints in heaven whom we knew and loved, did much sweeten and familiarise heaven to him." The description of heaven in the 12th chapter of Hebrews, beginning with the "innumerable company of angels," and ending with "Jesus the Mediator, and the blood of sprinkling," was very comfortable to him. "That scripture," he said, "deserves a thousand thousand thoughts! "And then he added, "Oh, how comfortable is that promise, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things God hath laid up for them that love Him!'"

At another time he said, that "he found great comfort and sweetness in repeating the words of the Lord's Prayer, and was sorry that some good men were prejudiced against the use of it; for there were all necessary petitions for soul and body contained in it."

He gave excellent counsel to young ministers who visited him on his death-bed. He used to pray earnestly "that God would bless their labours, and make them very successful in converting many souls to Christ." He expressed great joy in the hope that God would do a great deal of good by them, and that they would be of moderate, peaceful spirits.

He did not forget the world he was leaving. He frequently prayed "that God would be merciful to this miserable, distracted world; and that he would preserve His Church and interest in it."

He advised his friends "to beware of self-conceitedness, as a sin likely to ruin this nation." Being asked at the same time whether he had altered his mind in controversial points, he replied, "Those that please may know my mind in my writings. What I have done was not for my own reputation, but the glory of God."

The day before he died, Dr. Bates visited him; and on his saying some words of comfort, he replied, "I have pain: there is no arguing against sense; but I have peace: I have peace!" Bates told him he was going to his long-desired home. He answered, "I believe: I believe." He expressed great willingness to die. During his sickness, when the question was asked how he did, his reply

was, “Almost well!” or else, “Better than I deserve to be, but not so well as I hope to be.” His last words were addressed to Dr. Sylvester, “The Lord teach you how to die l”

On Tuesday, the 8th of December, 1691, Baxter's warfare was accomplished; and at length he entered what he had so beautifully described:-“the saint's everlasting rest.”

He was buried at Christchurch, amidst the tears of many who knew his worth, if the world and the Established Church of that day did not. The funeral was that kind of funeral which is above all in real honour: “devout men carried him to his grave, and made great lamentation over him.”

He left no family, but he left behind him hundreds of spiritual sons and daughters. He left works which are still owned by God in every part of the world to the awakening and edification of immortal souls. Thousands, I doubt not, will stand up in the morning of the resurrection, and thank God for the grace and gifts bestowed on the old Puritan of Shropshire. He left a name which must always be dear to every lover of holiness, and every friend of religious liberty. No Englishman, perhaps, ever exemplified the one, or promoted the other, more truly and really than did Richard Baxter.

Let me conclude by quoting the last paragraph of Dr. Bates' funeral sermon on the occasion of Baxter's death: “Blessed be the gracious God, that He was pleased to prolong the life of His servant, so useful and beneficial to the world, to a full age, and that He brought him slowly and safely to heaven. I shall conclude this account with my own deliberate wish: May I live the short remainder of my life as entirely to the glory of God as he lived; and when I shall come to the period of my life, may I die in the same blessed peace wherein he died; may I be with him in the kingdom of light and love for ever.

Be Content

[chapter taken from]

SHALL WE KNOW

ONE ANOTHER? BY THE

RIGHT REV. J. C. RYLE,

Lord Bishop of Liverpool.

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NEW EDITION.

Fortieth Thousand.

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BE CONTENT.

I.

THE words which head this paper are soon spoken, and often cost the speaker very little. Nothing is cheaper than good advice. Everybody fancies he can give his neighbour good counsel, and tell him exactly what he ought to do.

Yet to practise the lesson which heads this paper is very hard. To talk of contentment in the day of health and prosperity is easy enough; but to be content in the midst of poverty, sickness, trouble, disappointments, and losses, is a state of mind to which very few can attain.

Let us turn to the Bible and see how it treats this great duty of contentment. Let us mark how the great Apostle of the Gentiles speaks when he would persuade the Hebrew Christians to be content. He backs up his injunction by a beautiful motive. He does not say nakedly, “Be content;” he adds words which would ring in the ears of all who read his letter, and nerve their hearts for a struggle: “Be content,” he says, “with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Reader, I see things in this golden sentence, which, I venture to think, deserve special notice. Give me your attention for a few minutes, and we will try to find out what they are.

1. Let us first examine the precept which St. Paul gives us-“Be content with such things as ye have.”

These words are very simple. A little child might easily understand them. They contain no high doctrine; they involve no deep metaphysical question; and yet, simple as they are, the duty which these words enjoin on us is one of the highest practical importance to all classes.

Contentment is one of the rarest graces. Like all precious things, it is most uncommon. The old Puritan divine, who wrote a book about it, did well to call his book “The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment.” An Athenian philosopher is said to have gone into the market-place at midday with a lantern, in order to find out an honest man. I think he would have found it equally difficult to find one quite contented.

The fallen angels had heaven itself to dwell in, before they fell, and the immediate presence and favour of God; but they were not content. Adam and Eve had the garden of Eden to live in, with a free grant of everything in it excepting one tree; but they were not content. Ahab had his throne and kingdom, but so long as Naboth's vineyard was not his, he was not content. Haman was the chief favourite of the Persian king; but, so long as Mordecai sat at the gate, he was not content.

It is just the same everywhere in the present day. Murmuring, dissatisfaction, discontent with what we have, meet us at every turn. To say, with Jacob, “I have enough,” seems flatly contrary to the grain of human nature. To say, “I want more,” seems the mother tongue of every child of Adam. Our little ones around our family hearths are daily illustrations of the truth of what I am saying. They learn to ask for “more” much sooner than they learn to be satisfied. They are far more ready to cry for what they want, than to say “thank you” when they have got it.

There are few readers of this very paper, I will venture to say, who do not want something or other different from what they have-something more or something less. What you have does not seem so good as what you have not. If you only had this or that thing granted, you fancy you would be quite happy.

Hear now with what power St. Paul's direction ought to come to all our consciences: “Be content,” he says, “with such things as ye have,” not with such things as ye once used to have-not with such things as ye hope to have-but with such things as ye have now. With such things, whatever they may be, we are to be content-with such a dwelling, such a position, such health, such income, such work, such circumstances as we have, we are to be content.

Reader, a spirit of this kind is the secret of a light heart and an easy mind. Few, I am afraid, have the least idea what a short cut to happiness it is to be content.

To be content is to be rich and well off. He is the rich man who has no wants, and requires no more. I ask not what his income may be. A man may be rich in a cottage and poor in a palace.

To be content is to be independent. He is the independent man who hangs on no created things for comfort, and has God for his portion.

Such a man is the only one who is always happy. Nothing can come amiss or go wrong with such a man. Afflictions will not shake him, and sickness will not disturb his peace. He can gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles, for he can get good out of evil. Like Paul and Silas, he will sing

in prison, with his feet fast in the stocks. Like Peter, he will sleep quietly in prospect of death, the very night before his execution. Like Job, he will bless the Lord, even when stripped of all his comforts.

Ah! reader, if you would be truly happy (who does not want this?) seek it where alone it can be found. Seek it not in money, seek it not in pleasure, nor in friends, nor in learning. Seek it in having a will in perfect harmony with the will of God. Seek it in studying to be content.

You may say, It is fine talking: how can we be always content in such a world? I answer, that you need to cast away your pride, and know your deserts, in order to be thankful in any condition. If men really knew that they deserve nothing, and are debtors to God's mercy every day, they would soon cease to complain.

You may say, perhaps, that you have such crosses, and trials, and troubles, that it is impossible to be content. I answer, that you would do well to remember your ignorance. Do you know best what is good for you, or does God? Are you wiser than He?

The things you want might ruin your soul. The things you have lost might have poisoned you. Remember, Rachel must needs have children, and she had them and died. Lot must needs live near Sodom, and all his goods were burned. Let these things sink down into your heart.

2. Let us, in the second place, examine the ground on which St. Paul builds his precept. That ground is one single text of Scripture.

It is striking to observe what a small foundation the apostle seems to lay down, when he bids us be content. He holds out no promise of earthly good things and temporal rewards. He simply quotes a verse of God's word. The Master hath spoken. “He hath said.”

It is striking, beside this, to observe that the text he quotes was not originally addressed to the Hebrew Christians, but to Joshua; and yet St. Paul applies it to them. This shows that Bible promises are the common property of all believers. All have a right and title to them. All believers make one mystical body; and in hundreds of cases that which was spoken to one may be fairly used by all.

But the main point I want to impress on men's minds is this: that we ought to make the texts and promises of the Bible our refuge in time of trouble, and the fountain of our soul's comfort.

When St. Paul wanted to enforce a grace and recommend a duty, he quoted a text. When you and I would give a reason for our hope, or when we feel that we need strength and consolation, we must go to our Bibles, and try to find out suitable texts. The lawyer uses old cases and decisions when he pleads his cause. “Such a judge has said such a thing, and therefore,” he argues, “it is a settled point.” The soldier on the battle-field takes up certain positions, and does certain things; and if you ask him why, he will say, “I have such and such orders from my general, and I obey them.”

The true Christian must always use his Bible in like manner. The Bible must be his book of reference and precedents. The Bible must be to him his captain's orders. If any one asks him why he thinks as he does, lives as he does, feels as he does, all he has need to reply is, “God has spoken to such an effect: I have my orders, and that is enough.”

Reader, I know not whether I make the point clear, but it is one which, simple as it seems, is of great practical importance. I want you to see the place and office of the Bible, and the unspeakable importance of knowing it well, and being acquainted with its contents. I want you to arm yourself with texts and verses of the Bible fastened down in your memory, to read so as to remember, and to remember so as to use what you read.

You and I have trouble and sorrow before us: it needs no prophetic eye to see that. Sicknesses, deaths, partings, separations, disappointments, are sure to come. What is to sustain us in the days of darkness, which are many? Nothing so able to do it as texts out of the Bible.

You and I, in all probability, may lie for months on a bed of sickness. Heavy days and weary nights, an aching body, and an enfeebled mind, may make life a burden. And what will support us? Nothing is likely to cheer and sustain us so much as verses out of the Bible.

You and I have death to look forward to. There will be friends to be left, home to be given up, the grave to be visited, an unknown world to be entered, and the last judgment after all. And what will sustain and comfort us when our last moments draw nigh? Nothing, I firmly believe, is so able to help our heart in that solemn hour as texts out of the Bible.

I want men to fill their minds with passages of Scripture while they are well and strong, that they may have sure help in the day of need. I want them to be diligent in studying their Bibles, and becoming familiar with their contents, in order that the grand old Book may stand by them and talk with them when all earthly friends fail.

II. From the bottom of my heart I pity that man who never reads his Bible. I wonder whence he expects to draw his consolation by-and-by. I do implore him to change his plan, and to change it without delay. Cardinal Wolsey said on his death-bed, “If I had served my God half as well as I have served my king, he would not have left me in my trouble.” I fear it will be said of many, one day, “If they had read their Bibles as diligently as they read their newspapers, they would not have been devoid of consolation when they needed it most.”

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost is the only magazine of consolation. Without it we have nothing to depend on; “our feet will slide in due time” (Deuteronomy 32:35). With it we are like those who stand on a rock. That man is ready for anything who has got a firm hold of God's promises.

Once more, then, I say to every reader, arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of God's word. Read it, and be able to say, “I have hope, because it is thus and thus written; I am not afraid, because it is thus and thus written.” Happy is that soul who can say with Job, “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12).

Let us examine, in the last place, the particular text St. Paul quotes in enforcing the duty of contentment. He tells the Hebrews, “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

It matters little to what person in the Trinity we ascribe these words, whether to Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. It all comes to the same in the end. They all are engaged to save man in the covenant of grace. Each of the three Persons says, as the other two, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

There is great sweetness in this peculiar promise. It deserves close attention. God says to every man or woman, who is willing to commit his or her soul to the mercy that is in Christ, “I will never leave thee, and never forsake thee.” I, the eternal Father, the mighty God, the King of kings, “will never leave thee.” The English language fails to give the full meaning of the Greek. It implies, “never-no never-no, nor ever!”

Now, if I know anything of this world, it is a world of “leaving, forsaking, parting, separation, failure, and disappointment.” Think how immense the comfort of finding something that will never leave nor fail.

Earthly good things leave us. Health, money, property, friendship, all make themselves wings and flee away. They are here to-day, and gone tomorrow. But God says, “I will never leave thee.”

We leave one another. We grow up in families full of affections and tender feelings, and then we are all thoroughly scattered. One follows his calling or profession one way, and another in another. We go north and south, and east and west, and perhaps meet no more. We meet our nearest friends and relations only at rare intervals, and then to part again. But God says, “I will never leave thee.”

We are left by those we love. They die and diminish, and become fewer and fewer every year. The more lovely-like flowers-the more frail, and delicate, and short-lived, they seem to be. But God says, “I will never leave thee.”

Separation is the universal law everywhere, except between Christ and his people. Death and failure stamp every other thing; but there is none in the love of God to believers.

The closest relation on earth-the marriage bond-has an end. To use the words of the Prayer-book service, it is only “till death us do part.” But the relation between Christ and the sinner that trusts in him never ends. It lives when the body dies. It lives when flesh and heart fail. Once begun, it never withers. It is only made brighter and stronger by the grave. “I am persuaded,” says St. Paul, “that neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

But this is not all. There is a peculiar depth of wisdom in the words, “I will never leave nor forsake.” Observe, God does not say, “My people shall always have pleasant things; they shall always be fed in green pastures, and have no trials-or trials very short and few.” He neither says so, nor does he appoint such a lot to his people. On the contrary, he sends them affliction and chastisement. He tries them by suffering. He purifies them by sorrow. He exercises their faith by disappointments. But still, in all these things he promises, “I will never leave nor forsake.”

Let every believer grasp these words, and store them up in his heart. Keep them ready, and have them fresh in your memory; you will want them one day. The Philistines will be upon you; the hand of sickness will lay you low; the king of terror will draw near: the valley of the shadow of death will open up before your eyes. Then comes the hour when you will find nothing so comforting as a text like this-nothing so cheering as a realising sense of God's companionship.

Stick to that word “never.” It is worth its weight in gold. Cling to it as a drowning man clings to a rope. Grasp it firmly, as a soldier attacked on all sides grasps his sword. God has said, and will

stand to it, “I will never leave thee.”

“Never!” Though your heart often faints, and you are sick of self, and your many failures and infirmities: even then the promise will not fail.

“Never!” Though the devil whispers, I shall have you at last. Yet a little time and your faith will fail, and you will be mine. Even then God will keep his word.

“Never!” Though waves of trouble go over your head, and all hope seems taken away. Even then the word of God will stand.

“Never!” When the cold chill of death is creeping over you, and friends can do no more, and you are starting on that journey from which there is no return. Even then Christ will not forsake you.

“Never!” When the Day of Judgment comes, and the books are opened, and the dead are rising from their graves, and eternity is beginning. Even then the promise will bear all your weight. Christ will not leave his hold on your soul.

Oh, believing reader, trust in the Lord for ever, for he says, “I will never leave you.” Lean back all your weight upon him: do not be afraid. Glory in his promise. Rejoice in the strength of your consolation. You may say boldly, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear.”

I conclude this paper with three practical remarks. Consider them well, reader, and lay them to heart:-

(1.) Let me tell you why there is so little contentment in the world. The simple answer is, because there is so little grace, and true religion. Few know their own sin; few feel their desert; and so few are content with such things as they have. Humility, self-knowledge, a clear sight of our own utter vileness and corruption, these are the true roots of contentment.

Let me show you, secondly, what you should do, if you would be content. You must know your own heart, seek God for your portion, take Christ for your Saviour, and use God's word for your daily food.

Contentment is not to be learned at the feet of Gamaliel, but at the feet of Jesus Christ. He who has God for his friend and heaven for his home can wait for his good things, and be content with little here below.

Let me tell you, lastly, that there is one thing with which we ought never to be content. That thing is a little religion, a little faith, a little hope, and a little grace. Let us never sit down satisfied with a little of these things. On the contrary, let us seek them more and more.

When Alexander the Great visited the Greek philosopher Diogenes, he asked him if there was anything that he wanted and he could give him. He got this short answer: “I want nothing but that you should stand from between me and the sun.” Let the spirit of that answer run through our religion. One thing there is which should never satisfy and content us, and that is, “anything that stands between our souls and Christ.”

Chapter 17

Beware!

BEWARE! by

Rev. J. C. Ryle “Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

— Matthew 16:6.

READER, The title of the tract now in your hands has been chosen with special reference to its subject. It is a tract of warning against one of the greatest dangers of these last days. It is not a warning about things that I fear your doing, but about things that I fear your believing; it is not a warning against vice and immorality, but against false doctrine in religion: and it is a warning founded on the express words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. If the Chief Bishop of the Church has thought it good to give men warnings, it cannot be wrong in His ministers to do the same.

Every word spoken by the Lord Jesus is precious. It is the voice of the chief Shepherd. It is the Great Head of the Church speaking to all its members,—the King of kings speaking to His subjects,—the Master of the house speaking to His servants,—the Captain of our salvation speaking to His soldiers. Above all, it is the voice of Him who said, “I have not spoken of Myself: but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49). The heart of every believer in the Lord Jesus ought to burn within him when he hears his Master’s words: he ought to say, This is “the voice of my beloved” (Son_2:8).

And every kind of word spoken by the Lord Jesus is of the greatest value. Precious as gold are all His words of doctrine and precept; precious are all His parables and prophecies; precious are all His words of comfort and of consolation; precious, not least, are all His words of caution and of warning. You and I are not merely to hear Him when He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden;” we are to hear Him also when He says, “Take heed and beware.”

Reader, I am going to ask your attention to one of the most solemn and emphatic warnings which the Lord Jesus ever delivered. You will find it in the text which stands at the head of this tract: “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” I wish to erect a beacon for all who desire to be saved, and to preserve some souls, if possible, from making shipwreck. The times call loudly for such beacons: the spiritual shipwrecks of the last few years have been deplorably numerous. The watchmen of the Church ought to speak out plainly now, or for ever hold their peace.

In considering the words which form the subject of this tract, there are four points which I desire to enforce on your notice.

I. First of all, I will ask you to observe the persons to whom this warning was addressed.

II. Secondly, the dangers against which we are here warned.

III Thirdly, the peculiar name under which those dangers are described.

IV. Fourthly, some safeguards and antidotes against the dangers of which our Lord Jesus Christ warns us.

I offer up my prayer to God that He with whom alone is all power,—without whom ministers preach, and write, and speak in vain,—may send down the Holy Ghost upon all who read this tract. I pray that every reader may lay it down more thoroughly acquainted with the dangers by which we are surrounded, and the best safeguards against those dangers,—more careful over his own heart, and more thankful for the truth as it is in Jesus.

I. First of all, I ask you to observe who they were to whom the warning of the text was addressed.

You will observe that our Lord Jesus Christ was not speaking to men who were worldly, ungodly, and unsanctified, but to His own disciples, companions, and friends: He addressed men who, with the exception of the apostate Judas Iscariot, were right-hearted in the sight of God; He spoke to the twelve apostles, the first founders of the Church of Christ, and the first ministers of the Word of salvation: and yet even to them he addressed the solemn caution of our text, “Take heed and beware.” There is deep instruction here for all who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It tells us loudly that the most decided servants of Christ are not beyond the need of warnings, and ought to be always on their guard. It shows us plainly that the holiest of believers ought to walk humbly with his God, and to watch and pray, lest he fall into temptation, and be overtaken in a fault. None is so holy, but that he may fall,—not finally, not hopelessly, but to his own they are yet in the body, and yet in the world. They are ever near temptation: they are ever liable to err, both in doctrine and in practice. Their hearts, though renewed, are very feeble; their understanding, though enlightened, is still very dim: they have need to live like those who dwell in an enemy’s land, and every day to put on the armour of God. The devil is very busy: he never slumbers or sleeps. Let us remember the falls of Noah, and Abraham, and Lot, and Moses, and David, and Peter; and remembering them, be humble, and take heed lest we fall.

Reader, I know not into whose hands this tract may fall; but as a minister myself, I may be allowed to say that none need warnings so much as the ministers of Christ’s Gospel. Our office and our ordination are no security against errors and mistakes. It is, alas, too true, that the greatest heresies have crept into the Church of Christ by means of ordained men. Neither Episcopal ordination, nor Presbyterian ordination, nor any other ordination, confers any immunity from error and false doctrine. Our very familiarity with the Gospel often begets in us a hardened state of mind: we are apt to read the Scriptures, and preach the Word, and conduct public worship, and carry on the service of God, in a dry, hard, formal, callous spirit; our very familiarity with sacred things, except we watch our hearts, is likely to lead us astray. “Nowhere,” says an old writer, “is a man’s soul in more danger than in a priest’s office.”

The history of the Church of Christ contains many melancholy proofs that the most distinguished ministers may for a time fall away. Who has not heard of Archbishop Cranmer recanting and going back from those opinions he had defended so stoutly, though, by God’s mercy, raised again to witness a glorious confession at last? Who has not heard of Bishop Jewell, signing documents that he most thoroughly disapproved, and of which signature he afterwards bitterly repented? Who does not know that many others might be named, who, at one time or another, have been overtaken by faults, have fallen into errors, and been led astray? And who does not know the mournful fact that many of them never came back to the truth, but died in hardness of heart, and

held their errors to the last?

Reader, these things ought to make us all humble and cautious. They tell us to distrust our own hearts, and to pray to be kept from falling. In these days, when we are specially called upon to cleave firmly to the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, let us take heed that our zeal for Protestantism does not puff us up, and make us proud. Let us never say in our self-conceit, “I shall never fall into Popery or Neologianism: those views will never suit me.” Let us remember that many have begun well and run well for a season, and yet afterwards turned aside out of the right way; let us take heed that we are spiritual men as well as Protestants, and real friends of Christ as well as enemies of anti-Christ; let us pray that we may be kept from error; let us never forget that the twelve apostles themselves were the men to whom the Great Head of the Church addressed these words: “Take heed and beware.”

II. I now propose, in the second place, to explain what were those dangers against which our Lord warned the Apostles. “Take heed,” He says, “and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

The danger against which He warns them is false doctrine. He says nothing about the sword of persecution, or the open breach of the ten commandments, or the love of money, or the love of pleasure: all these things no doubt were perils and snares to which the souls of the apostles were exposed; against these things, however, our Lord raises no warning voice here. His warning is confined to one single point: “The leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” We are not left to conjecture what our Lord meant by that word “leaven.” The Holy Ghost, a few verses after the very text on which I am now dwelling, tells us plainly that by leaven was meant the “doctrine” of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Reader, let us try to understand what we mean when we speak of the “doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” Without a clear understanding of this point the whole tract you are now reading will be useless.

The doctrine of the Pharisees may be summed up in three words,— they were formalists, tradition worshippers, and self-righteous. They attached such weight to the traditions of men that they practically regarded them as of more importance than the inspired writings of the Old Testament; they valued themselves upon excessive strictness in their attention to all the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic law; they thought much of being descended from Abraham,—they said in their hearts, “We have Abraham for our father;” they fancied because they had Abraham for their father that they were not in peril of hell like other men, and that their descent from him was a kind of title to heaven; they attached great value to washings and ceremonial purifyings of the body, and believed that the very touching of the dead body of a fly or gnat would defile them; they made a great ado about the outward parts of religion, and such things as could be seen of men; they made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the fringes of their garments; they prided themselves on paying great honour to dead saints, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous. They were very zealous to make proselytes. They thought much of having power, rank, and pre-eminence, and of being called by men, “Rabbi, Rabbi.” These things, and many such-like things, the Pharisees did.

All this time, remember, they did not formally deny any part of the Old Testament Scripture; but they brought in, over and above it, so much of human invention, that they virtually put Scripture aside, and buried it under their own traditions: and of this sort of religion, our Lord says to the apostles, “Take heed and beware.”

The doctrine of the Sadducees, on the other hand, may be summed up in three words,—free-thinking, scepticism, and rationalism. Their creed was one far less popular than that of the Pharisees, and, therefore, we find them less often mentioned in the New Testament Scriptures. So far as we can judge from the New Testament, they appear to have held the doctrine of degrees of inspiration; at all events they attached exceeding value to the Pentateuch above the other parts of the Old Testament, if indeed they did not altogether ignore the latter; they believed that there was no resurrection, no angel, and no spirit; they tried to laugh men out of their belief in these things, by supposing hard cases, and bringing forward difficult questions. We have an instance of their mode of argument in the case which they propounded to our Lord of the woman who had had seven husbands, when they asked “In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven?” And in this way they probably hoped, by rendering religion absurd, and its chief doctrines ridiculous, to make men altogether give up the faith they had received from the Scriptures.

All this time, remember, we may not say that the Sadducees were downright infidels: this they were not. We may not say they denied revelation altogether: this they did not do. They observed the law of Moses. Many of them were found among the priests in the times described in the Acts of the Apostles. But the practical effect of their teaching was to shake men’s faith in any revelation, and to throw a cloud of doubt over men’s minds, which was only one degree better than infidelity. And of all such kind of doctrine,—free-thinking, scepticism, rationalism, our Lord says, “Take heed and beware.”

Now the question arises, Why did our Lord Jesus Christ deliver this warning? He knew, no doubt, that within forty years the schools of the Pharisees and the Sadducees would be completely overthrown. He that knew all things from the beginning, knew perfectly well that in forty years Jerusalem, with its magnificent temple, would be destroyed, and the Jews scattered over the face of the earth. Why then do we find Him giving this warning about the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

Reader, I believe that our Lord delivered this solemn warning for the perpetual benefit of that Church which He came on earth to found. He spoke with a prophetic knowledge. He knew well the diseases to which human nature is always liable; He foresaw that the two great plagues of His Church upon earth would always be the doctrine of the Pharisees and the doctrine of the Sadducees; He knew that these would be the upper and nether mill-stones, between which His truth would be perpetually crushed and bruised until He came the second time; He knew that there always would be Pharisees in spirit, and Sadducees in spirit, among professing Christians; He knew that their succession would never fail, and their generation never become extinct,—that though the names of Pharisees and Sadducees were no more, yet their principles would always exist. He knew that during the time that the Church lasts, until His return, there would always be some that would add to the Word, and some that would subtract from it,—some that would stifle it, by adding to it other things, and some that would bleed it to death, by subtracting from its principal truths. And this is the reason why we find Him delivering this solemn warning: “Take heed and

beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

And now comes the question, Had not our Lord Jesus Christ good reason to give this warning? I appeal to all who know anything of Church history, Was there not indeed a cause? I appeal to all who remember what took place soon after the apostles were dead. Do we not read that in the Church of Christ there rose up two distinct parties; one ever inclined to err, like the Arians, in holding less than the truth,—the other ever inclined to err, like the relic worshippers and saint worshippers, in holding more than the truth as it is in Jesus? Do we not see the same thing coming out in after times, in the form of Romanism on the one side and Socinianism on the other? Do we not read in the history of our own Church of two great parties, the nonjurors on the one side, and the latitudinarians on the other? These are ancient things. Time and space make it impossible for me to enter more fully into them. They are things well known to all who are familiar with records of past days. There always have been these two great parties,—the party representing the principles of the Pharisee, and the party representing the principles of the Sadducee. And therefore our Lord had good cause to say of these two great principles, "Take heed and beware."

But, reader, I desire to bring the subject near to you at the present moment. I ask you to consider whether warnings like this are not especially needed in these times in which our lot is cast. We have, undoubtedly, much to be thankful for in England. We have made great advances in arts and sciences: we have much of the form and show of morality and religion. But, I ask anybody who can see beyond his own door, or his own fireside, whether we do not live in the midst of dangers from false doctrine?

We have amongst us, on the one side, a school of men who, wittingly or unwittingly, are paving the way into the Church of Rome; a school that professes to draw its principles from primitive tradition, the writings of the Fathers, and the voice of the Church; a school that talks and writes so much about the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments, that it makes them, like Aaron's rod, swallow up everything else in Christianity; a school that attaches vast importance to the outward form and ceremonial of religion,—to gestures, postures, bowings, crosses, piscinas, sedilia, credence-tables, rood screens, albs, tunicles, chasubles, altar cloths, and many other like things, about which not a word is to be found in the Holy Scriptures. When we examine the proceedings of that school there can be but one conclusion concerning them. I believe, whatever be the meaning and intention of its teachers, that upon them has fallen the mantle of the Pharisees.

We have, on the other hand, a school of men who, wittingly or unwittingly, appear to pave the way to Socinianism; a school which holds strange views about the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture,—strange views about the doctrine of sacrifice, and the atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,—strange views about the eternity of punishment, and God's love to man; a school strong in negatives, but very weak in positives,—skilful in raising doubts, but impotent in laying them,—clever in unsettling and unscrewing men's faith, but powerless to offer any firm rest for the sole of our foot. And whether the leaders of this school mean it or not, I believe that on them has fallen the mantle of the Sadducees.

These things sound harsh. It saves a vast deal of trouble to shut our eyes, and say, "I see no danger," and because it is not seen, therefore not to believe it. It is easy to stop our ears, and say, "I hear nothing," and because we hear nothing, therefore to feel no alarm. But we know well who they are that rejoice over the state of things we have to deplore in some quarters of our own

Church. We know what the Roman Catholic thinks: we know what the Socinian thinks. The Roman Catholic rejoices over the rise of the Tractarian party: the Socinian rejoices over the rise of men who teach such views as those lately set forth about the atonement and inspiration. They would not rejoice as they do if they did not see their work being done and their cause being helped forward. The danger, I believe, is far greater than we are apt to suppose: the books that are read in many quarters are most mischievous; the tone of thought on religious subjects, among many classes, and especially among the higher ranks, is deeply unsatisfactory. The plague is abroad. If we love life, we ought to search our own hearts, and try our own faith, and make sure that we stand on the right foundation. Above all, we ought to take heed that we ourselves do not imbibe the poison of false doctrine, and go back from our first love.

I feel deeply the painfulness of speaking out on these subjects. I know well that plain speaking about false doctrine is very unpopular, and that the speaker must be content to find himself thought very uncharitable, very troublesome, and very narrow-minded. Thousands of people can never distinguish differences in religion: to them a clergyman is a clergyman, and a sermon is a sermon, and as to any difference between one minister and another, or one doctrine and another, they are utterly unable to understand it. I cannot expect such people to approve of any warning against false doctrine. I must make up my mind to meet with their disapprobation, and must bear it as I best can.

But I will ask any honest-minded, unprejudiced Bible reader to turn to the New Testament and see what he will find there. He will find many plain warnings against false doctrine: “Beware of false prophets,”—”Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,”—”Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines,”—”Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” (Matthew 7:15; Colossians 2:8; Hebrews 13:9; 1 John 4:1). He will find a large part of several inspired epistles taken up with elaborate explanations of true doctrine and warnings against false teaching. I ask whether it is possible for a minister who takes the Bible for his rule of faith to avoid giving warnings against doctrinal error?

Finally, I ask any one to mark what is going on in England at this very day. I ask whether it is not true that hundreds have left the Established Church and joined the Church of Rome within the last thirty years? I ask whether it is not true that hundreds remain within our pale, who in heart are little better than Romanists, and who ought, if they were consistent, to walk in the steps of Newman and Manning, and go to their own place? I ask again whether it is not true that scores of young men, both at Oxford and Cambridge, are spoiled and ruined by the withering influence of scepticism, and have lost all positive principles in religion? Sneers at religious newspapers, loud declarations of dislike to “parties,” high-sounding, vague phrases about “deep thinking, broad views, new light, and the effete weakness of certain schools of theology,” make up the whole Christianity of many of the rising generation. And yet, in the face of these notorious facts, men cry out, “Hold your peace about false doctrine. Let false doctrine alone!” I cannot hold my peace. Faith in the Word of God, love to the souls of men, the vows I took when I was ordained, alike call on me to bear witness against the errors of the day. And I believe that the saying of our Lord is eminently a truth for the times: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

III. The third thing to which I wish to call your attention is the peculiar name by which our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the doctrines of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Reader, the words which our Lord used were always the wisest and the best that could be used. He might have said, “Take heed and beware of the doctrine, or of the teaching, or of the opinions of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees; “but He does not say so: He uses a word of a peculiar nature. He says, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”

Now we all know what is the true meaning of the word “leaven.” It is what we commonly call yeast,—the yeast which is added to the lump of dough in making a loaf of bread. This yeast or leaven bears but a small proportion to the lump into which it is thrown; just so, our Lord would have us know, the first beginning of false doctrine is but small compared to the body of Christianity. It works quietly and noiselessly; just so, our Lord would have us know, false doctrine works secretly in the heart in which it is once planted.. It insensibly changes the character of the whole mass with which it is mingled; just so, our Lord would have us know, the doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees turn everything upside down, when once admitted into a church or into a man’s heart. Let us mark these points: they throw light on many things that we see in the present day. It is of vast importance to receive the lessons of wisdom that this word “leaven” contains in itself.

False doctrine does not meet men face to face, and proclaim that it is false; it does not blow a trumpet before it, and endeavour openly to turn us away from the truth as it is in Jesus; it does not come before men in broad day, and summon them to surrender. It approaches us secretly, quietly, insidiously, plausibly, and in such a way as to disarm man’s suspicion, and throw him off his guard. It is the wolf in sheep’s clothing, and Satan in the garb of an angel of light, who have always proved the most dangerous foes of the Church of Christ.

I believe the most powerful champion of the Pharisees is not the man who bids you openly and honestly come out and join the Church of Rome: it is the man who says that he agrees on all points with you in doctrine. He would not take anything away from those evangelical views that you hold; he would not have you make any change at all: all he asks you to do is to add a little more to your belief, in order to make your Christianity perfect. “Believe me,” he says, “we do not want you to give up anything. We only want you to hold a few more clear views about the church and the sacraments. We want you to add to your present opinions a little more about the office of the ministry, and a little more about the Prayer-book, and a little more about the necessity of order and of discipline. We only want you to add a little more of these things to your system of religion, and you will be quite right.” But when men speak to you in this way, then is the time to remember what our Lord said, and to “take heed and beware.” This is the leaven of the Pharisees, against which you are to stand upon your guard.

Why do I say this? I say it because there is no security against the doctrine of the Pharisees, unless we resist its principles in their beginnings. Beginning with a “little more about the church,” you may one day place the church in the room of Christ. Beginning with a “little more about the ministry,” you may one day regard the minister as the mediator between God and man. Beginning with a “little more about the sacraments,” you may one day altogether give up the doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law. Beginning with a “little more reverence for the Prayer-book,” you may one day place it above the holy Word of God Himself. Beginning with a “little more honour to bishops,” you may at last refuse salvation to every one who does not belong to an Episcopal Church. I only tell you an old story: I only mark out roads that have been trodden by hundreds of members of the Church of England in the last few years. They began by carping at

the Reformers, and have ended by swallowing the decrees of the Council of Trent; they began by crying up Laud and the non-jurors, and have ended by going far beyond them, and formally joining the Church of Rome. I believe that when we hear men asking us to “add a little more” to our good old plain Evangelical views, we should stand upon our guard. We should remember our Lord’s caution: “Of the leaven of the Pharisees take heed and beware.”

I believe the most dangerous champion of the Sadducee school is not the man who tells you openly that he wants you to lay aside any part of the truth, and to become a free-thinker and a sceptic. It is the man who begins with quietly insinuating doubts as to the position that we ought to take up about religion,—doubts whether we ought to be so positive in saying “this is truth, and that falsehood,”—doubts whether we ought to think men wrong who differ from us on religious opinions, since they may after all be as much right as we are. It is the man who tells us we ought not to condemn anybody’s views, lest we err on the side of want of charity. It is the man who always begins talking in a vague way about God being a God of love, and hints that we ought to believe perhaps that all men, whatever doctrine they profess, will be saved. It is the man who is ever reminding us that we ought to take care how we think lightly of men of powerful minds, and great intellects (though they are deists and sceptics), who do not think as we do, and that, after all, great minds are all, more or less, taught of God. It is the man who is ever harping on the difficulties of inspiration, and raising questions whether all men may not be found saved in the end, and whether all may not be right in the sight of God. It is the man who crowns this kind of talk by a few calm sneers against what he is pleased to call “old-fashioned views,” and “narrow-minded theology,” and “bigotry,” and the “want of liberality and charity,” in the present day. But when men begin to speak to us in this kind of way, then is the time to stand upon our guard. Then is the time to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and “to take heed and beware.”

Once more, why do I say this? I say it because there is no security against Sadduceeism, any more than against Phariseeism, unless we resist its principles in the bud. Beginning with a little vague talk about “charity,” you may end in the doctrine of universal salvation, fill heaven with a mixed multitude of wicked as well as good, and deny the existence of hell. Beginning with a few high-sounding phrases about intellect and the inner light in man, you may end with denying the work of the Holy Ghost, and maintaining that Homer and Shakespeare were as truly inspired as St. Paul, and practically casting aside the Bible. Beginning with some dreamy, misty idea about all religions containing more or less truth, you may end with utterly denying the necessity of missions, and maintaining that the best plan is to leave everybody alone. Beginning with dislike to “Evangelical religion,” as old-fashioned, narrow, and exclusive, you may end by rejecting every leading doctrine of Christianity,—the atonement, the need of grace, and the divinity of Christ. Again I repeat that I only tell an old story: I only give a sketch of a path which scores have trodden in the last few years. They were once satisfied with such divinity as that of Newton, Scott, Cecil, and Romaine; they are now fancying they have found a more excellent way in the principles which have been propounded by the theologians of the Broad school! I believe there is no safety for a man’s soul unless he remembers the lesson involved in those solemn words, “Beware of the leaven of the Sadducees.”

Reader, beware of the insidiousness of false doctrine. Like the fruit of which Eve and Adam ate, it looks at first sight pleasant and good, and a thing to be desired. Poison is not written upon it; like counterfeit coin it is not stamped “bad”: it passes current from the very likeness it bears to the

truth.

Beware of the very small beginnings of false doctrine. Every heresy began at one time with some little departure from the truth. There is only a little seed of error needed to create a great tree: it is the little stones that make up the mighty building; it was the little timbers that made the great ark that carried Noah and his family over a deluged world; it is the little leaven that leavens the whole lump; it is the little flaw in one link of the chain cable that wrecks the gallant ship, and drowns the crew; it is the omission or addition of one little item in the doctor's prescription that spoils the whole medicine, and turns it into poison. We do not tolerate quietly a little dishonesty, or a little cheating, or a little lying: just so, let us never allow a little false doctrine to ruin us, by thinking it is but a "little one," and can do no harm. The Galatians seemed to be doing nothing very dangerous when they "observed days and months, and times and years; yet St. Paul says, "I am afraid of you" (Galatians 4:10-11).

Finally, beware of supposing that you at any rate are not in danger. "Your views are sound: your feet stand firm: others may fall away, but you are safe!" Hundreds have thought the same, and come to a bad end. In their self-confidence they tampered with little temptations; and little forms of false doctrine ; in their self-conceit they went near the brink of danger: and now they seem lost for ever. They appear given over to a strong delusion, so as to believe a lie. Some of them have exchanged the Prayer-book for the Breviary, and are praying to the Virgin Mary, and bowing down to images: others of them are casting overboard one doctrine after another, and bid fair to strip themselves of every sort of religion but a few scraps of Deism. Very striking is the vision in Pilgrim's Progress, which describes the hill Error as "very steep on the farthest side;" and "when Christian and Hopeful looked down they saw at the bottom several men dashed all to pieces by a fall they had from the top." Never, never let us forget the caution to beware of "leaven"; and if we think we stand let us "take heed lest we fall."

IV. I propose, in the fourth and last place, to suggest some safeguards and antidotes against the dangers of the present day,—the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of the Sadducees.

I feel that we all need more and more the presence of Holy Ghost in our hearts, to guide, to teach,

and keep us sound in the faith. We all need to watch more and to pray to be held up, and preserved from falling away. But still, there are certain great truths in a day like this, we are specially bound to keep in mind. There are times when some common epidemic invades a land, when medicines, at all times valuable, become of peculiar value ; there are places where a peculiar malaria prevails, in which remedies, in every place valuable, are more than ever valuable in consequence of it. So I believe there are times and seasons in the Church of Christ when we are bound to tighten our hold upon certain great leading truths, to grasp them in our hands, to press them to our hearts, and not to let them go. Such doctrines I desire to set before you in a few words, as the great antidotes to the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. When Saul and Jonathan were slain by the archers, David ordered the children of Israel to be taught the use of the bow.

For one thing, if you would be kept sound in the faith, I charge you to take heed to your doctrine about the total corruption of human nature. Bear in mind that the corruption of human nature is no slight thing. It is no partial, skin-deep disease: it is a radical and universal corruption of man's will,

intellect, affections, and conscience. We are not merely poor and pitiable sinners in God's sight: we are guilty sinners; we are blameworthy sinners; we deserve justly God's wrath and God's condemnation. I believe there are very few errors and false doctrines of which the beginning may not be traced up to unsound views about the corruption of human nature. Wrong views of a disease will always bring with them wrong views of the remedy: wrong views of the corruption of human nature will always carry with them wrong views of the grand antidote and cure of that corruption. Reader, remember this point, and it will do you good.

For another thing, I charge you to take heed to your doctrine about the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures. I would have you boldly maintain, in the face of all gainsayers, that the whole of the Bible is given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost,—that all is inspired completely, not one part more than another,—and that there is an entire gulf between the Word of God and any other book in the world. You need not be afraid of difficulties in the way of the doctrine of plenary inspiration. There may be many things about it far too high for you and me to comprehend: it is a miracle, and all miracles are necessarily mysterious. But if we are not to believe anything until we can entirely explain it, there are very few things indeed that we shall believe. You need not be afraid of all the assaults that criticism brings to bear upon the Bible. From the days of the apostles the Word of the Lord has been incessantly "tried," and has never failed to come forth as gold, uninjured, and unsullied. You need not be afraid of the discoveries of science. Astronomers may sweep the heavens with telescopes, and geologists may dig down into the heart of the earth, and never shake the authority of the Bible: "The voice of God, and the work of God's hands never will be found to contradict one another." You need not be afraid of the researches of travellers. They will never discover anything that contradicts God's Bible. I believe that if a Layard were to go over all the earth and dig up a hundred buried Ninevehs, there would not be found a single inscription which would contradict a single fact in the Word of God.

Furthermore, I would have you boldly maintain that this Word of God is the only rule of faith and of practice,—that whatsoever is not written in it cannot be required of any man as needful to salvation,—and that however plausibly new doctrines may be defended, if they be not in the Word of God they cannot be worth your attention. It matters nothing who says a thing, whether he be bishop, archdeacon, dean, or presbyter; it matters nothing that the thing is well said, eloquently, attractively, forcibly, and in such a way as to turn the laugh against you: you are not to believe it except it be proved to you by Holy Scripture.

Last, but not least, I would have you use the Bible as if you believed it were given by inspiration. Use it with reverence: read it with all the tenderness with which you would read the words of an absent father. Remember, you must not expect to find in a book inspired by the Spirit of God no mysteries: rather remember that in nature there are many things you cannot understand ; and that as it is in the book of nature, so it will always be in the book of Revelation. Draw near to the Word of God in that spirit of piety recommended by Lord Bacon many years ago. "Remember," he says, speaking of the book of nature, "that man is not the master of that book, but the interpreter of that book." And as you deal with the book of nature, so you must deal with the Book of God. Draw near to it, not to teach, but to learn,—not as if you were the master of it, but like a humble scholar, seeking to understand it. Reader, once more I say, remember this point, and it will do you good.

For another thing, I charge you to take heed to your doctrine respecting the atonement and priestly office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I would have you boldly maintain that the death of our Lord upon the cross was no common death. It was not the death of one who only died like Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, as a martyr; it was not the death of one who only died to give us a mighty example of self-sacrifice and self-denial. The death of Christ was an offering up unto God of Christ's own body and blood, to make satisfaction for man's sin and transgression. It was a sacrifice and propitiation; a sacrifice typified in every offering of the Mosaic law, a sacrifice of the mightiest influence upon all mankind. Without the shedding of that blood there could not be,—there never was to be,—any remission of sin.

Furthermore, I would have you boldly maintain that this crucified Saviour ever sitteth at the right hand of God, to make intercession for all that come to God by Him; that He there represents and pleads for them that put their trust in Him; and that He has deputed His office of Priest and Mediator to no man, or set of men on the face of the earth. We need none beside. We need no Virgin Mary, no angels, no saint, no priest, no person ordained or unordained, to stand between as and God, but the one Mediator, Christ Jesus.

Furthermore, I would have you boldly maintain that peace of conscience is not to be bought by confession to a priest, and by receiving a man's absolution from sin. It is to be had only by going to the great High Priest, Christ Jesus; by confession before Him, not before man; and by absolution from Him only, who alone can say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee: go in peace."

Last, but not least, I would have you boldly maintain that peace with God, once obtained by faith in Christ, is to be kept up, not by mere outward ceremonial acts of worship,—not by receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper every day,—but by the daily habit of looking to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith,—eating by faith His body, and drinking by faith His blood; that eating and drinking of which our Lord says that he who eats and drinks shall find His "body meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed." Holy John Owen declared, long ago, that if there was any one point more than another that Satan wished to overthrow, it was the Priestly office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: Satan knew well, he said, that it was the "principal foundation of faith and consolation of the church." Right views upon that office are of essential importance in the present day, if men would not fall into error. Reader, once more I say, remember this point, and it will do you good.

One more remedy I must mention. I charge you to take heed to your doctrine about the work of God the Holy Ghost. Settle it in your mind that His work is no uncertain, invisible operation upon the heart: that where He is, He is not hidden; that where He is, He is not unfelt; that where he is, He is not unobserved. You do not believe that the dew, when it falls, cannot be felt, or that where there is life in a man it cannot be seen and observed by his breath. So is it with the influence of the Holy Ghost. No man has any right to lay claim to it, except its fruits,—its experimental effects,—can be seen in his life. Where He is, there will ever be a new creation; where He is, there will ever be a new man; where He is, there will ever be new knowledge, new faith, new holiness, new fruits in the family, in the world, in the church. And where these new things are not to be seen we may well say, with confidence, there is no work of the Holy Ghost. These are times in which we all need to be upon our guard about the doctrine of the work of the Spirit. Madame Guyon said, long ago, that the time would perhaps come when men might have to be martyrs for the work of the Holy Ghost: that time seems not far distant. At any rate, if there is one truth in religion that

seems to have more contempt showered upon it than another, it is the work of the Spirit. Reader, once more I say, remember this point, and it will do you good.

Reader, I desire to impress these four points upon you: clear views of the sinfulness of human nature; clear views of the inspiration of Scripture; clear views of the Atonement and Priestly office of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and clear views of the work of the Holy Ghost. I believe that strange doctrines about the church, the ministry, and the sacraments,—about the love of God, the death of Christ, and the eternity of punishment,—will find no foothold in the heart which is sound on these four points. I believe that they are four great safeguards against the leaven of the Pharisees. and of the Sadducees by way of practical application. My desire is to make the whole subject useful to those into whose hands these pages may fall, and to supply an answer to the questions which may possibly arise in some hearts,—What are we to do? What advice have you got to offer for the times?

1. In the first place, I will ask every reader of this tract to find out whether he has saving personal religion for his own soul. This is the principal thing after all. It will profit no man anything to belong to a sound visible church, if he does not himself belong to Christ: it will avail a man nothing to be intellectually sound in the faith, and to approve sound doctrine, if he is not himself sound at heart. Reader, is this the case with you? Can you say that your heart is right in the sight of God? Is it renewed by the Holy Ghost? Does Christ dwell in it by faith? Oh, rest not, rest not, till you can give a satisfactory answer to these questions! The man who dies unconverted, however sound his views, is as truly lost for ever as the worst Pharisee or Sadducee that ever lived.

2. In the next place, let me beseech every reader of this tract who desires to be sound in the faith, to study diligently the Bible. That blessed book is given to be a light to our feet, and a lantern to our path. No man who reads it reverently, prayerfully, humbly, and regularly, shall ever be allowed to miss the way to heaven. By it every sermon, and every religious book, and every ministry ought to be weighed and proved. Reader, would you know what is truth? Do you feel confused and puzzled by the war of words which you hear on every side about religion? Do you want to know what you ought to believe, and what you ought to be and do, in order to be saved? Take down your Bible, and cease from man. Read your Bible with earnest prayer for the teaching of the Holy Ghost; read it with honest determination to abide by its lessons. Do so steadily and perseveringly, and you shall see light: you shall be kept from the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and be guided to eternal life. The way to do a thing is to do it. Act upon this advice without delay.

3. In the next place, let me advise every reader of this tract who has reason to hope that he is sound in faith and heart, to take heed to the proportion of truths. I mean by that to impress the importance of giving each several truth of Christianity the same place and position in our hearts which is given to it in God’s Word. The first things must not be put second, and the second things must not be put first in our religion: the church must not be put above Christ; the sacraments must not be put above faith and the work of the Holy Ghost; ministers must not be exalted above the place assigned to them by Christ; means of grace must not be regarded as an end instead of a means. Reader, attention to this point is of great moment: the mistakes which arise from neglecting it are neither few nor small. Here lies the immense importance of studying the whole Word of God, omitting nothing, and avoiding partiality in reading one part more than another. Here again lies the value of having a clear system of Christianity in our minds. Well would it be for the

Church of England if all its members read the thirty-nine Articles, and marked the beautiful order in which those Articles state the main truths which men ought to believe.

4. In the next place, let me entreat every true-hearted servant of Christ not to be deceived by the specious guise under which false doctrines often approach our souls in the present day. Beware of supposing that a teacher of religion is to be trusted, because, although he holds some unsound views, he yet “teaches a great deal of truth:” such a teacher is precisely the man to do you harm: poison is always most dangerous when it is given in small doses and mixed with wholesome food. Beware of being taken in by the apparent earnestness of many of the teachers and upholders of false doctrine: remember that zeal and sincerity and fervour are no proof whatever that a man is working for Christ, and ought to he believed. Peter no doubt was in earnest when he bade our Lord spare Himself, and not go to the cross; yet our Lord said to him, “Get thee behind me, Satan”: Saul no doubt was in earnest when he went to and fro persecuting Christians; yet he did it ignorantly, and his zeal was not according to knowledge: the founders of the Spanish Inquisition were no doubt in earnest, and in burning God’s saints alive thought they were doing God’s service; yet they were actually persecuting Christ’s members and walking in the steps of Cain.—It is an awful fact that, “Satan himself is transformed as an angel of light.” Of all the delusions prevalent in these latter days, there is no greater than the common notion that “if good a man is in earnest about his religion he must be a good man!”

Reader, beware of being carried away by this delusion: beware of being led astray by “earnest-minded men.” Earnestness is in itself an excellent thing; but it must be earnestness in behalf of Christ and His whole truth, or else it is worth nothing at all. The things that are highly esteemed among men are often abominable in the sight of God.

5. In the next place, let me counsel every true servant of Christ to examine his own heart frequently and carefully as to his state before God. This is a practice which is useful at all times: it is specially desirable at the present day. When the great plague of London was at its height people remarked the least symptoms that appeared on their bodies in a way that they never remarked them before: a spot here, or a spot there, that in time of health men thought nothing of, received close attention when the plague was decimating families, and striking down one after another So ought it to be with ourselves, in the times in which we live. We ought to watch our hearts with double watchfulness; we ought to give more time to meditation, self-examination, and reflection. It is a hurrying, bustling age: if we would be kept from falling, we must make time for being frequently alone with God.

6. Last of all, let me urge all true believers to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. You and I have no cause to be ashamed of that faith. There is no system so life-giving, so calculated to awaken the sleeping, lead on the inquiring, and build up the saints, as that system which is called the Evangelical system of Christianity. It may be spoken against and mocked by some; but so it was in the days of the apostles. It may be weakly set forth and defended by many of its advocates; but, after all, its fruits and its results are its highest praise. No other system of religion can point to such fruits. Nowhere are so many souls converted to God as in those congregations where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in all its fulness, without any admixture of the Pharisee or Sadducee doctrine. We are not called upon, beyond all doubt, to be nothing but controversialists; but we never ought to be ashamed to testify to the truth as it is in

Jesus. We have the truth, and we need not be afraid to say so. The judgment-day will prove who is right, and to that day we may boldly appeal.

Bible Reading

[CHAPTER FROM]

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

BEING PLAIN PAPERS

ON THE DAILY DUTIES, EXPERIENCE, DANGERS, AND

PRIVILEGES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. BY JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL;

Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels," etc. fourth Edition.

LONDON:

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1887.

CHAPTER V

BIBLE-READING “Search the Scriptures.”- John 5:39.

“How readest thou?”- Luke 10:26.

NEXT to praying there is nothing so important in practical religion as Bible-reading. God has mercifully given us a book which is “able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:15) By reading that book we may learn what to believe, what to be, and what to do; how to live with comfort, and how to die in peace. Happy is that man who possesses a Bible! Happier still is he who reads it! Happiest of all is he who not only reads it, but obeys it, and makes it the rule of his faith and practice!

Nevertheless it is a sorrowful fact that man has an unhappy skill in abusing God's gifts. His privileges, and power, and faculties, are all ingeniously perverted to other ends than those for which they were bestowed. His speech, his imagination, his intellect, his strength, his time, his influence, his money,-instead of being used as instruments for glorifying his Maker,-are generally wasted, or employed for his own selfish ends. And just as man naturally makes a bad use of his other mercies, so he does of the written Word. One sweeping charge may be brought against the whole of Christendom, and that charge is neglect and abuse of the Bible.

To prove this charge we have no need to look abroad: the proof lies at our own doors. I have no doubt that there are more Bibles in Great Britain at this moment than there ever were since the world began. There is more Bible buying and Bible selling, more Bible printing and Bible

distributing,-than ever was since England was a nation. We see Bibles in every bookseller's shop,-Bibles of every size, price, and style; Bibles great, and Bibles small,-Bibles for the rich, and Bibles for the poor. There are Bibles in almost every house in the land. But all this time I fear we are in danger of forgetting, that to have the Bible is one thing, and to read it quite another.

This neglected Book is the subject about which I address the readers of this paper today. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely, when the plague is abroad, you should search and see, whether the plague-spot is on you. Give me your attention while I supply you with a few plain reasons why every one who cares for his soul ought to value the Bible highly, to study it regularly, and to make himself thoroughly acquainted with its contents.

I. In the first place, there is no book in existence written in such a manner as the Bible.

The Bible was “given by inspiration of God.” (2 Timothy 3:16) In this respect it is utterly unlike all other writings. God taught the writers of it what to say. God put into their minds thoughts and ideas. God guided their pens in setting down those thoughts and ideas. When you read it, you are not reading the self-taught compositions of poor imperfect men like yourself, but the words of the eternal God. When you hear it, you are not listening to the erring opinions of short-lived mortals, but to the unchanging mind of the King of kings. The men who were employed to indite the Bible, spoke not of themselves. They “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:21) All other books in the world, however good and useful in their way, are more or less defective. The more you look at them the more you see their defects and blemishes. The Bible alone is absolutely perfect. From beginning to end it is “the Word of God.”

I shall not waste time by attempting any long and laboured proof of this. I say boldly, that the Book itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. It is utterly inexplicable and unaccountable in any other point of view. It is the greatest standing miracle in the world. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired, let him give a reasonable account of it, if he can. Let him explain the peculiar nature and character of the Book in a way that will satisfy any man of common sense. The burden of proof seems to my mind to lie on him.

It proves nothing against inspiration, as some have asserted, that the writers of the Bible have each a different style. Isaiah does not write like Jeremiah, and Paul does not write like John. This is perfectly true, and yet the works of these men are not a whit less equally inspired. The waters of the sea have many different shades. In one place they look blue, and in another green. And yet the difference is owing to the depth or shallowness of the part we see, or to the nature of the bottom. The water in every case is the same salt sea.-The breath of a man may produce different sounds, according to the character of the instrument on which he plays. The flute, the pipe, and the trumpet, have each their peculiar note. And yet the breath that calls forth the notes, is in each case one and the same.-The light of the planets we see in heaven is very various. Mars, and Saturn, and Jupiter, have each a peculiar colour. And yet we know that the light of the sun, which each planet reflects, is in each case one and the same. Just in the same way the books of the Old and New Testaments are all inspired truth, and yet the aspect of that truth varies according to the mind through which the Holy Ghost makes it flow. The handwriting and style of the writers differ enough to prove that each had a distinct individual being; but the Divine Guide who dictates and directs the whole is always one. All is alike inspired. Every chapter, and verse, and word, is from God.

Oh, that men who are troubled with doubts, and questionings, and sceptical thoughts about inspiration, would calmly examine the Bible for themselves! Oh, that they would act on the advice which was the first step to Augustine's conversion,-“Take it up and read it!-take it up and read it!” How many Gordian knots this course of action would cut! How many difficulties and objections would vanish away at once like mist before the rising sun! How many would soon confess, “The finger of God is here! God is in this Book, and I knew it not.”

This is the Book about which I address the readers of this paper. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with this Book. It is no light thing that God should have caused this Book to be “written for your learning,” and that you should have before you “the oracles of God.” (Romans 3:2; Romans 15:4) I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my question. What art thou doing with the Bible?-Dost thou read it at all?-HOW READEST THOU?

II. In the second place, there is no knowledge absolutely needful to a man's salvation, except a knowledge of the things which are to be found in the Bible.

We live in days when the words of Daniel are fulfilled before our eyes.-“Many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased.” (Daniel 12:4) Schools are multiplying on every side. New colleges are set up. Old Universities are reformed and improved. New books are continually coming forth. More is being taught,-more is being learned,-more is being read,-than there ever was since the world began.

It is all well. I rejoice at it. An ignorant population is a perilous and expensive burden to any nation. It is a ready prey to the first Absalom, or Catiline, or Wat Tyler, or Jack Cade, who may arise to entice it to do evil. But this I say,-we must never forget that all the education a man's head can receive, will not save his soul from hell, unless he knows the truths of the Bible.

A man may have prodigious learning, and yet never be saved. He may be master of half the languages spoken round the globe. He may be acquainted with the highest and deepest things in heaven and earth. He may have read books till he is like a walking cyclopaedia. He may be familiar with the stars of heaven,-the birds of the air,-the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea. He may be able, like Solomon, to “speak of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows on the wall, of beasts also, and fowls, and creeping things, and fishes.” (1 Kings 4:33) He may be able to discourse of all the secrets of fire, air, earth, and water. And yet, if he dies ignorant of Bible truths, he dies a miserable man! Chemistry never silenced a guilty conscience. Mathematics never healed a broken heart. All the sciences in the world never smoothed down a dying pillow. No earthly philosophy ever supplied hope in death. No natural theology ever gave peace in the prospect of meeting a holy God. All these things are of the earth, earthy, and can never raise a man above the earth's level. They may enable a man to strut and fret his little season here below with a more dignified gait than his fellow-mortals, but they can never give him wings, and enable him to soar towards heaven. He that has the largest share of them, will find at length that without Bible knowledge he has got no lasting possession. Death will make an end of all his attainments, and after death they will do him no good at all.

A man may be a very ignorant man, and yet be saved. He may be unable to read a word, or write a letter. He may know nothing of geography beyond the bounds of his own parish, and be utterly unable to say which is nearest to England, Paris or New York. He may know nothing of arithmetic,

and not see any difference between a million and a thousand. He may know nothing of history, not even of his own land, and be quite ignorant whether his country owes most to Semiramis, Boadicea, or Queen Elizabeth. He may know nothing of the affairs of his own times, and be incapable of telling you whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or the Commander-in-Chief, or the Archbishop of Canterbury is managing the national finances. He may know nothing of science, and its discoveries,-and whether Julius Caesar won his victories with gunpowder, or the apostles had a printing press, or the sun goes round the earth, may be matters about which he has not an idea. And yet if that very man has heard Bible truth with his ears, and believed it with his heart, he knows enough to save his soul. He will be found at last with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, while his scientific fellow-creature, who has died unconverted, is lost for ever.

There is much talk in these days about science and “useful knowledge.” But after all a knowledge of

the Bible is the one knowledge that is needful and eternally useful. A man may get to heaven without money, learning, health, or friends,-but without Bible knowledge he will never get there at all. A man may have the mightiest of minds, and a memory stored with all that mighty mind can grasp,-and yet, if he does not know the things of the Bible, he will make shipwreck of his soul for ever. Woe! woe! woe to the man who dies in ignorance of the Bible!

This is the Book about which I am addressing the readers of these pages today. It is no light matter what you do with such a book. It concerns the life of your soul. I summon you,-I charge you to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? HOW READEST THOU?

III. In the third place, no book in existence contains such important matter as the Bible.

The time would fail me if I were to enter fully into all the great things which are to be found in the Bible, and only in the Bible. It is not by any sketch or outline that the treasures of the Bible can be displayed. It would be easy to fill this volume with a list of the peculiar truths it reveals, and yet the half of its riches would be left untold.

How glorious and soul-satisfying is the description it gives us of God's plan of salvation, and the way by which our sins can be forgiven! The coming into the world of Jesus Christ, the God-man, to save sinners,-the atonement He has made by suffering in our stead, the just for the unjust,-the complete payment He has made for our sins by His own blood,-the justification of every sinner who simply believes on Jesus, the readiness of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to receive, pardon, and save to the uttermost,-how unspeakably grand and cheering are all these truths! We should know nothing of them without the Bible.

How comforting is the account it gives us of the great Mediator of the New Testament,-the man Christ Jesus! Four times over His picture is graciously drawn before our eyes. Four separate witnesses tell us of His miracles and His ministry,-His sayings and His doings,-His life and His death,-His power and His love,-His kindness and His patience,-His ways, His words, His works, His thoughts, His heart. Blessed be God, there is one thing in the Bible which the most prejudiced reader can hardly fail to understand, and that is the character of Jesus Christ!

How encouraging are the examples the Bible gives us of good people! It tells us of many who were of like passions with ourselves,-men and women who had cares, crosses, families, temptations, afflictions, diseases, like ourselves, and yet “ by faith and patience inherited the promises,” and got safe home. (Hebrews 6:12) It keeps back nothing in the history of these people. Their mistakes, their infirmities, their conflicts, their experience, their prayers, their praises, their useful lives, their happy deaths,-all are fully recorded. And it tells us the God and Saviour of these men and women still waits to be gracious, and is altogether unchanged.

How instructive are the examples the Bible gives us of bad people! It tells us of men and women who had light, and knowledge, and opportunities, like ourselves, and yet hardened their hearts, loved the world, clung to their sins, would have their own way, despised reproof, and ruined their own souls for ever. And it warns us that the God who punished Pharaoh, and Saul, and Ahab, and Jezebel, and Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira, is a God who never alters, and that there is a hell.

How precious are the promises which the Bible contains for the use of those who love God! There is hardly any possible emergency or condition for which it has not some “word in season.” And it tells men that God loves to be put in remembrance of these promises, and that if He has said He will do a thing, His promise shall certainly be performed.

How blessed are the hopes which the Bible holds out to the believer in Christ Jesus! Peace in the hour of death,-rest and happiness on the other side of the grave,-a glorious body in the morning of the resurrection,-a full and triumphant acquittal in the day of judgment,-an everlasting reward in the kingdom of Christ,-a joyful meeting with the Lord's people in the day of gathering together; these, these are the future prospects of every true Christian. They are all written in the book,-in the book which is all true.

How striking is the light which the Bible throws on the character of man! It teaches us what men may be expected to be and do in every position and station of life. It gives us the deepest insight into the secret springs and motives of human actions, and the ordinary course of events under the control of human agents. It is the true “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) How deep is the wisdom contained in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes! I can well understand an old divine saying, “Give me a candle and a Bible, and shut me up in a dark dungeon, and I will tell you all that the whole world is doing.”

All these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Bible. We have probably not the least idea how little we should know about these things if we had not the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the value of the treasures this one volume contains. Well might old John Newton say that some books were copper books in his estimation, some were silver, and some few were gold;-but the Bible alone was like a book all made up of bank notes.

This is the Book about which I address the reader of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. It is no light matter in what way you are using this treasure. I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my question,-What art thou doing with the Bible?-Dost thou read it?-HOW READEST THOU?

IV. In the fourth place, no book in existence has produced such wonderful effects on mankind at large as the Bible.

(a) This is the Book whose doctrines turned the world upside down in the days of the Apostles.

Eighteen centuries have now passed away since God sent forth a few Jews from a remote corner of the earth, to do a work which according to man's judgment must have seemed impossible. He sent them forth at a time when the whole world was full of superstition, cruelty, lust, and sin. He sent them forth to proclaim that the established religions of the earth were false and useless, and must be forsaken. He sent them forth to persuade men to give up old habits and customs, and to live different lives. He sent them forth to do battle with the most grovelling idolatry, with the vilest and most disgusting immorality, with vested interests, with old associations, with a bigoted priesthood, with sneering philosophers, with an ignorant population, with bloody-minded emperors, with the whole influence of Rome. Never was there an enterprise to all appearance more Quixotic, and less likely to succeed!

And how did He arm them for this battle? He gave them no carnal weapons. He gave them no worldly power to compel assent, and no worldly riches to bribe belief. He simply put the Holy Ghost into their hearts, and the Scriptures into their hands. He simply bade them to expound and explain, to enforce and to publish the doctrines of the Bible. The preacher of Christianity in the first century was not a man with a sword and an army to frighten people, like Mahomet,-or a man with a license to be sensual, to allure people, like the priests of the shameful idols of Hindustan. No! he was nothing more than one holy man with one holy book.

And how did these men of one book prosper? In a few generations they entirely changed the face of society by the doctrines of the Bible. They emptied the temples of the heathen gods. They famished idolatry, or left it high and dry like a stranded ship. They brought into the world a higher tone of morality between man and man. They raised the character and position of woman. They altered the standard of purity and decency. They put an end to many cruel and bloody customs, such as the gladiatorial fights.-There was no stopping the change. Persecution and opposition were useless. One victory after another was won. One bad thing after another melted away. Whether men liked it or not, they were insensibly affected by the movement of the new religion, and drawn within the whirlpool of its power. The earth shook, and their rotten refuges fell to the ground. The flood rose, and they found themselves obliged to rise with it. The tree of Christianity swelled and grew, and the chains they had cast round it to arrest its growth, snapped like tow. And all this was done by the doctrines of the Bible! Talk of victories indeed! What are the victories of Alexander, and Caesar, and Marlborough, and Napoleon, and Wellington, compared with those I have just mentioned? For extent, for completeness, for results, for permanence, there are no victories like the victories of the Bible.

(b) This is the Book which turned Europe upside down in the days of the glorious Protestant Reformation.

No man can read the history of Christendom as it was five hundred years ago, and not see that darkness covered the whole professing Church of Christ, even a darkness that might be felt. So great was the change which had come over Christianity that if an apostle had risen from the dead he would not have recognised it, and would have thought that heathenism had revived again. The

doctrines of the Gospel lay buried under a dense mass of human traditions. Penances, and pilgrimages, and indulgences, relic-worship, and image-worship, and saint-worship, and worship of the Virgin Mary, formed the sum and substance of most people's religion. The Church was made an idol. The priests and ministers of the Church usurped the place of Christ. And by what means was all this miserable darkness cleared away? By none so much as by bringing forth once more the Bible.

It was not merely the preaching of Luther and his friends, which established Protestantism in Germany. The grand lever which overthrew the Pope's power in that country was Luther's translation of the Bible into the German tongue.-It was not merely the writings of Cranmer and the English Reformers which cast down popery in England. The seeds of the work thus carried forward were first sown by Wycliffe's translation of the Bible many years before.-It was not merely the quarrel of Henry VIII and the Pope of Rome, which loosened the Pope's hold on English minds. It was the royal permission to have the Bible translated and set up in churches, so that every one who liked might read it. Yes! it was the reading and circulation of Scripture which mainly established the cause of Protestantism in England, in Germany, and Switzerland. Without it the people would probably have returned to their former bondage when the first reformers died. But by the reading of the Bible the public mind became gradually leavened with the principles of true religion. Men's eyes became thoroughly open. Their spiritual understandings became thoroughly enlarged. The abominations of popery became distinctly visible. The excellence of the pure Gospel became a rooted idea in their hearts. It was then in vain for Popes to thunder forth excommunications. It was useless for Kings and Queens to attempt to stop the course of Protestantism by fire and sword. It was all too late. The people knew too much. They had seen the light. They had heard the joyful sound. They had tasted the truth. The sun had risen on their minds. The scales had fallen from their eyes. The Bible had done its appointed work within them, and that work was not to be overthrown. The people would not return to Egypt. The clock could not be put back again. A mental and moral revolution had been effected, and mainly effected by God's Word. Those are the true revolutions which the Bible effects. What are all the revolutions recorded by Vertot,-what are all the revolutions which France and England have gone through, compared to these? No revolutions are so bloodless, none so satisfactory, none so rich in lasting results, as the revolutions accomplished by the Bible!

This is the book on which the well-being of nations has always hinged, and with which the best interests of every nation in Christendom at this moment are inseparably bound up. Just in proportion as the Bible is honoured or not, light or darkness, morality or immorality, true religion or superstition, liberty or despotism, good laws or bad, will be found in a land. Come with me and open the pages of history, and you will read the proofs in time past. Read it in the history of Israel under the Kings. How great was the wickedness that then prevailed! But who can wonder? The law of the Lord had been completely lost sight of, and was found in the days of Josiah thrown aside in a corner of the temple. (2 Kings 22:8)-Read it in the history of the Jews in our Lord Jesus Christ's time. How awful the picture of Scribes and Pharisees, and their religion! But who can wonder? The Scripture was “made of none effect by man's traditions.” (Matthew 15:6)-Read it in the history of the Church of Christ in the middle ages. What can be worse than the accounts we have of its ignorance and superstition? But who can wonder? The times might well be dark, when men had not the light of the Bible.

This is the Book to which the civilized world is indebted for many of its best and most praise-worthy institutions. Few probably are aware how many are the good things that men have adopted for the public benefit, of which the origin may be clearly traced up to the Bible. It has left lasting marks wherever it has been received. From the Bible are drawn many of the best laws by which society is kept in order. From the Bible has been obtained the standard of morality about truth, honesty, and the relations of man and wife, which prevails among Christian nations, and which,-however feebly respected in many cases,-makes so great a difference between Christians and heathen. To the Bible we are indebted for that most merciful provision for the poor man, the Sabbath day. To the influence of the Bible we owe nearly every humane and charitable institution in existence. The sick, the poor, the aged, the orphan, the lunatic, the idiot, the blind, were seldom or never thought of before the Bible leavened the world. You may search in vain for any record of institutions for their aid in the histories of Athens or of Rome. Alas! there are many who sneer at the Bible, and say the world would get on well enough without it, who little think how great are their own obligations to the Bible. Little does the infidel workman think, as he lies sick in some of our great hospitals, that he owes all his present comforts to the very book he affects to despise. Had it not been for the Bible, he might have died in misery, uncared for, unnoticed and alone. Verily the world we live in is fearfully unconscious of its debts. The last day alone, I believe, will tell the full amount of benefit conferred upon it by the Bible.

This wonderful book is the subject about which I address the reader of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. The swords of conquering Generals,-the ship in which Nelson led the fleets of England to victory,-the hydraulic press which raised the tubular bridge at the Menai-each and all of these are objects of interest as instruments of mighty power. The Book I speak of this day is an instrument a thousand-fold mightier still. Surely it is no light matter whether you are paying it the attention it deserves. I charge you, I summon you to give me an honest answer this day,-What art thou doing with the Bible? Dost thou read it? HOW READEST THOU?

V. In the fifth place, no book in existence can do so much for every one who reads it rightly as the Bible.

The Bible does not profess to teach the wisdom of this world. It was not written to explain geology or astronomy. It will neither instruct you in mathematics, nor in natural philosophy. It will not make you a doctor, or a lawyer, or an engineer.

But there is another world to be thought of, beside that world in which man now lives. There are other ends for which man was created, beside making money and working. There are other interests which he is meant to attend to, beside those of his body, and those interests are the interests of his soul. It is the interests of the immortal soul which the Bible is especially able to promote. If you would know law, you may study Blackstone or Sugden. If you would know astronomy or geology, you may study Herschel and Lyell. But if you would know how to have your soul saved, you must study the written Word of God.

The Bible is “able to make a man wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:15) It can show you the way which leads to heaven. It can teach you everything you need to know, point out everything you need to believe, and explain everything you need to do. It can show you what you are,-a sinner. It can show you what God is,-perfectly holy. It can show you

the great giver of pardon, peace, and grace,-Jesus Christ. I have read of an Englishman who visited Scotland in the days of Blair, Rutherford, and Dickson, three famous preachers,-and heard all three in succession. He said that the first showed him the majesty of God,-the second showed him the beauty of Christ,-and the third showed him all his heart. It is the glory and beauty of the Bible that it is always teaching these three things more or less, from the first chapter of it to the last.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost, is the grand instrument by which souls are first converted to God. That mighty change is generally begun by some text or doctrine of the Word, brought home to a man's conscience. In this way the Bible has worked moral miracles by thousands. It has made drunkards become sober, unchaste people become pure,-thieves become honest; and violent-tempered people become meek. It has wholly altered the course of men's lives. It has caused their old things to pass away, and made all their ways new. It has taught worldly people to seek first the kingdom of God. It has taught lovers of pleasure to become lovers of God. It has taught the stream of men's affections to run upwards instead of running downwards. It has made men think of heaven, instead of always thinking of earth, and live by faith, instead of living by sight. All this it has done in every part of the world.

All this it is doing still. What are the Romish miracles which weak men believe, compared to all this, even if they were true? Those are the truly great miracles which are yearly worked by the Word.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost, is the chief means by which men are built up and established in the faith, after their conversion. It is able to cleanse them, to sanctify them, to instruct them in righteousness, and to furnish them thoroughly for all good works. (Psalms 119:9; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) The Spirit ordinarily does these things by the written Word; sometimes by the Word read, and sometimes by the Word preached, but seldom, if ever, without the Word. The Bible can show a believer how to walk in this world so as to please God. It can teach him how to glorify Christ in all the relations of life, and can make him a good master, servant, subject, husband, father, or son. It can enable him to bear afflictions and privations without murmuring, and say, “It is well.” It can enable him to look down into the grave, and say, “I fear no evil.” (Psalms 23:4) It can enable him to think on judgment and eternity, and not feel afraid. It can enable him to bear persecution without flinching, and to give up liberty and life rather than deny Christ's, truth. Is he drowsy in soul? It can awaken him.-Is he mourning? It can comfort him.-Is he erring? It can restore him.-Is he weak? It can make him strong.-Is he in company? It can keep him from evil.-Is he alone? It can talk with him.-(Proverbs 6:22) All this the Bible can do for all believers, for the least as well as the greatest,-for the richest as well as the poorest. It has done it for thousands already, and is doing it for thousands every day.

The man who has the Bible, and the Holy Spirit in his heart, has everything which is absolutely needful to make him spiritually wise. He needs no priest to break the bread of life for him. He needs no ancient traditions, no writings of the Fathers, no voice of the Church, to guide him into all truth. He has the well of truth open before him, and what can he want more? Yes! though he be shut up alone in a prison, or cast on a desert island, though he never see a church, or minister, or sacrament again,-if he has but the Bible, he has got the infallible guide, and wants no other. If he has but the will to read that Bible rightly, it will certainly teach him the road that leads to heaven. It

is here alone that infallibility resides. It is not in the Church. It is not in the Councils. It is not in ministers. It is only in the written Word.

(a) I know well that many say they have found no saving power in the Bible. They tell us they have tried to read it, and have learned nothing from it. They can see in it nothing but hard and deep things. They ask us what we mean by talking of its power.

I answer, that the Bible no doubt contains hard things, or else it would not be the book of God. It contains things hard to comprehend, but only hard because we have not grasp of mind to comprehend them. It contains things above our reasoning powers, but nothing that might not be explained if the eyes of our understanding were not feeble and dim. But is not an acknowledgment of our own ignorance the very corner-stone and foundation of all knowledge? Must not many things be taken for granted in the beginning of every science, before we can proceed one step towards acquaintance with it? Do we not require our children to learn many things of which they cannot see the meaning at first? And ought we not then to expect to find “deep things” when we begin studying the Word of God, and yet to believe that if we persevere in reading it the meaning of many of them will one day be made clear? No doubt we ought so to expect, and so to believe. We must read with humility. We must take much on trust. We must believe that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter; some part in this world, and all in the world to come.

But I ask that man who has given up reading the Bible because it contains hard things, whether he did not find many things in it easy and plain? I put it to his conscience whether he did not see great landmarks and principles in it all the way through? I ask him whether the things needful to salvation did not stand out boldly before his eyes, like the light-houses on English headlands from the Land's-end to the mouth of the Thames. What should we think of the captain of a steamer who brought up at night in the entrance of the Channel, on the plea that he did not know every parish, and village, and creek, along the British coast? Should we not think him a lazy coward, when the lights on the Lizard, and Eddystone, and the Start, and Portland, and St. Catherine's, and Beachy Head, and Dungeness, and the Forelands, were shining forth like so many lamps, to guide him up to the river? Should we not say, Why did you not steer by the great leading lights? And what ought we to say to the man who gives up reading the Bible because it contains hard things, when his own state, and the path to heaven, and the way to serve God, are all written down clearly and unmistakably, as with a sunbeam? Surely we ought to tell that man that his objections are no better than lazy excuses, and do not deserve to be heard.

(b) I know well that many raise the objection, that thousands read the Bible and are not a whit the better for their reading. And they ask us, when this is the case, what becomes of the Bible's boasted power?

I answer, that the reason why so many read the Bible without benefit is plain and simple;-they do not read it in the right way. There is generally a right way and a wrong way of doing everything in the world; and just as it is with other things, so it is in the matter of reading the Bible. The Bible is not so entirely different from all other books as to make it of no importance in what spirit and manner you read it. It does not do good, as a matter of course, by merely running our eyes over the print, any more than the sacraments do good by mere virtue of our receiving them. It does not ordinarily do good, unless it is read with humility and earnest prayer. The best steam-engine that was ever built is useless if a man does not know how to work it. The best sun-dial that was ever

constructed will not tell its owner the time of day if he is so ignorant as to put it up in the shade. Just as it is with that steam-engine, and that sun-dial, so it is with the Bible. When men read it without profit, the fault is not in the Book, but in themselves.

I tell the man who doubts the power of the Bible, because many read it, and are no better for the reading, that the abuse of a thing is no argument against the use of it. I tell him boldly, that never did man or woman read that book in a childlike persevering spirit, like the Ethiopian eunuch, and the Bereans (Acts 8:28; Acts 17:11),-and miss the way to heaven. Yes, many a broken cistern will be exposed to shame in the day of judgment; but there will not rise up one soul who will be able to say, that he went thirsting to the Bible, and found in it no living water,-he searched for truth in the Scriptures, and searching, did not find it. The words which are spoken of Wisdom in the Proverbs are strictly true of the Bible: " If, thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2:3-5)

This wonderful Book is the subject about which I address the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. What should you think of the man who in time of cholera despised a sure receipt for preserving the health of his body? What must be thought of you if you despise the only sure receipt for the everlasting health of your soul? I charge you, I entreat you, to give an honest answer to my question. What dost thou do with the Bible?-Dost thou read it?-HOW READEST THOU?

VI. In the sixth place, the Bible is the only rule by which all questions of doctrine or of duty can be tried.

The Lord God knows the weakness and infirmity of our poor fallen understandings. He knows that, even after conversion, our perceptions of right and wrong are exceedingly indistinct. He knows how artfully Satan can gild error with an appearance of truth, and can dress up wrong with plausible arguments, till it looks like right. Knowing all this, He has mercifully provided us with an unerring standard of truth and error, right and wrong, and has taken care to make that standard a written book,-even the Scripture.

No one can look round the world, and not see the wisdom of such a provision. No one can live long, and not find out that he is constantly in need of a counsellor and adviser,-of a rule of faith and practice, on which he can depend. Unless he lives like a beast, without a soul and conscience, he will find himself constantly assailed by difficult and puzzling questions. He will be often asking himself, What must I believe? and what must I do?

(a) The world is full of difficulties about points of doctrine. The house of error lies close alongside the house of truth. The door of one is so like the door of the other that there is continual risk of mistakes.

Does a man read or travel much? He will soon find the most opposite opinions prevailing among those who are called Christians. He will discover that different persons give the most different answers to the important question, What shall I do to be saved? The Roman Catholic and the Protestant,-the Neologian and the Tractarian,-the Mormonite and the Swedenborgian, each and all will assert that he alone has the truth. Each and all will tell him that safety is only to be found in his party. Each and all say, "Come with us." All this is puzzling. What shall a man do?

Does he settle down quietly in some English or Scotch parish? He will soon find that even in our own land the most conflicting views are held. He will soon discover that there are serious differences among Christians as to the comparative importance of the various parts and articles of the faith. One man thinks of nothing but Church government,-another of nothing but sacraments, services, and forms,-a third of nothing but preaching the Gospel. Does he apply to ministers for a solution? He will perhaps find one minister teaching one doctrine, and another another. All this is puzzling. What shall a man do?

There is only one answer to this question. A man must make the Bible alone his rule. He must receive nothing, and believe nothing, which is not according to the Word. He must try all religious teaching by one simple test,-Does it square with the Bible? What saith the Scripture? I would to God the eyes of the laity of this country were more open on this subject.

I would to God they would learn to weigh sermons, books, opinions, and ministers, in the scales of the Bible, and to value all according to their conformity to the Word. I would to God they would see that it matters little who says a thing, whether he be Father or Reformer,-Bishop or Archbishop,-Priest or Deacon,-Archdeacon or Dean. The only question is,-Is the thing said Scriptural? If it is, it ought to be received and believed. If it is not, it ought to be refused and cast aside. I fear the consequences of that servile acceptance of everything which “the parson” says, which is so common among many English laymen. I fear lest they be led they know not whither, like the blinded Syrians, and awake some day to find themselves in the power of Rome. (2 Kings vi. 20.) Oh, that men in England would only remember for what purpose the Bible was given them

I tell English laymen that it is nonsense to say, as some do, that it is presumptuous to judge a minister's teaching by the Word. When one doctrine is proclaimed in one parish, and another in another, people must read and judge for themselves. Both doctrines cannot be right, and both ought to be tried by the Word. I charge them, above all things, never to suppose that any true minister of the Gospel will dislike his people measuring all he teaches by the Bible. On the contrary, the more they read the Bible, and prove all he says by the Bible, the better he will be pleased. A false minister may say, “You have no right to use your private judgment: leave the Bible to us who are ordained.” A true minister will say, “Search the Scriptures, and if I do not teach you what is Scriptural, do not believe me.” A false minister may cry, “Hear the Church,” and “Hear me.” A true minister will say, “Hear the Word of God.”

(b) But the world is not only full of difficulties about points of doctrine; it is equally full of difficulties about points of practice. Every professing Christian, who wishes to act conscientiously, must know that it is so. The most puzzling questions are continually arising. He is tried on every side by doubts as to the line of duty, and can often hardly see what is the right thing to do.

He is tried by questions connected with the management of his worldly calling, if he is in business or in trade. He sometimes sees things going on of a very doubtful character,-things that can hardly be called fair, straightforward, truthful, and doing as you would be done by. But then everybody in the trade does these things. They have always been done in the most respectable houses. There would be no carrying on a profitable business if they were not done. They are not things distinctly named and prohibited by God. All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about worldly amusements. Races, and balls, and operas, and theatres, and card parties, are all very doubtful methods of spending time. But then he sees numbers of great people taking part in them. Are all these people wrong? Can there really be such mighty harm in these things? All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about the education of his children. He wishes to train them up morally and religiously, and to remember their souls. But he is told by many sensible people, that young persons will be young,-that it does not do to check and restrain them too much, and that he ought to attend pantomimes and children's parties, and give children's balls himself. He is informed that this nobleman, or that lady of rank, always does so, and yet they are reckoned religious people. Surely it cannot be wrong. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do?

There is only one answer to all these questions. A man must make the Bible his rule of conduct. He must make its leading principles the compass by which he steers his course through life. By the letter or spirit of the Bible he must test every difficult point and question. “To the law and to the testimony! What saith the Scripture?” He ought to care nothing for what other people may think right. He ought not to set his watch by the clock of his neighbour, but by the sun-dial of the Word.

I charge my readers solemnly to act on the maxim I have just laid down, and to adhere to it rigidly all the days of their lives. You will never repent of it. Make it a leading principle never to act contrary to the Word. Care not for the charge of over-strictness, and needless precision. Remember you serve a strict and holy God. Listen not to the common objection, that the rule you have laid down is impossible, and cannot be observed in such a world as this. Let those who make such an objection speak out plainly, and tell us for what purpose the Bible was given to man. Let them remember that by the Bible we shall all be judged at the last day, and let them learn to judge themselves by it here, lest they be judged and condemned by it hereafter.

This mighty rule of faith and practice is the book about which I am addressing the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely when danger is abroad on the right hand and on the left, you should consider what you are doing with the safe-guard which God has provided. I charge you, I beseech you, to give an honest answer to my question. What art thou doing with the Bible?-Dost thou read it? HOW READEST THOU?

VII. In the seventh place, the Bible is the book which all true servants of God have always lived on and loved. Every living thing which God creates requires food. The life that God imparts needs sustaining and nourishing. It is so with animal and vegetable life,-with birds, beasts, fishes, reptiles, insects, and plants. It is equally so with spiritual life. When the Holy Ghost raises a man from the death of sin and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, the new principle in that man's heart requires food, and the only food which will sustain it is the Word of God.

There never was a man or woman truly converted, from one end of the world to the other, who did not love the revealed will of God. Just as a child born into the world desires naturally the milk provided for its nourishment, so does a soul “born again” desire the sincere milk of the Word. This is a common mark of all the children of God-they “delight in the law of the Lord.” (Psalms 1:2) Show me a person who despises Bible reading, or thinks little of Bible preaching, and I hold it to be a certain fact that he is not yet “born again.” He may be zealous about forms and ceremonies. He may be diligent in attending sacraments and daily services. But if these things are more precious

to him than the Bible, I cannot think he is a converted man. Tell me what the Bible is to a man, and I will generally tell you what he is. This is the pulse to try,-this is the barometer to look at,-if we would know the state of the heart. I have no notion of the Spirit dwelling in a man and not giving clear evidence of His presence. And I believe it to be a signal evidence of the Spirit's presence when the Word is really precious to a man's soul.

Love to the Word is one of the characteristics we see in Job. Little as we know of this Patriarch and his age, this at least stands out clearly. He says, “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” (Job 23:12)

Love to the Word is a shining feature in the character of David. Mark how it appears all through that wonderful part of Scripture, the cxixth Psalm. He might well say, “ Oh, how I love thy law! “ (Psalms 119:97)

Love to the Word is a striking point in the character of St. Paul. What were he and his companions but men “mighty in the Scriptures?” What were his sermons but expositions and applications of the Word?

Love to the Word appears pre-eminently in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He read it publicly. He quoted it continually. He expounded it frequently. He advised the Jews to “search” it. He used it as His weapon to resist the devil. He said repeatedly, “The Scripture must be fulfilled.”-Almost the last thing He did was to “open the understanding of His disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:45) I am afraid that man can be no true servant of Christ, who has not something of his Master's mind and feeling towards the Bible.

Love to the Word has been a prominent feature in the history of all the saints, of whom we know anything, since the days of the Apostles. This is the lamp which Athanasius and Chrysostom and Augustine followed. This is the compass which kept the Waldenses and Albigenses from making shipwreck of the faith. This is the well which was re-opened by Wycliffe and Luther, after it had been long stopped up. This is the sword with which Latimer, and Jewell, and Knox won their victories. This is the manna which fed Baxter and Owen, and the noble host of the Puritans, and made them strong to battle. This is the armoury from which Whitefield and Wesley drew their powerful weapons. This is the mine from which Bickersteth and M'Cheyne brought forth rich gold. Differing as these holy men-did in some matters, on one point they were all agreed,-they all delighted in the Word.

Love to the Word is one of the first things that appears in the converted heathen, at the various Missionary stations throughout the world. In hot climates and in cold,-among savage people and among civilized,-in New Zealand, in the South Sea Islands, in Africa, in Hindustan,-it is always the same. They enjoy hearing it read. They long to be able to read it themselves. They wonder why Christians did not send it to them before. How striking is the picture which Moffat draws of Africaner, the fierce South African chieftain, when first brought under the power of the Gospel! “Often have I seen him,” he says, “under the shadow of a great rock nearly the live-long day, eagerly perusing the pages of the Bible.”-How touching is the expression of a poor converted Negro, speaking of the Bible! He said, “It is never old and never cold.”-How affecting was the language of another old negro, when some would have dissuaded him from learning to read, because of his great age. “No!” he said, “I will never give it up till I die. It is worth all the labour to

be able to read that one verse, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.'"

Love to the Bible is one of the grand points of agreement among all converted men and women in our own land. Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Independents, Methodists and Plymouth Brethren,-all unite in honouring the Bible, as soon as they are real Christians. This is the manna which all the tribes of our Israel feed upon, and find satisfying food. This is the fountain round which all the various portions of Christ's flock meet together, and from which no sheep goes thirsty away. Oh, that believers in this country would learn to cleave more closely to the written Word! Oh, that they would see that the more the Bible, and the Bible only, is the substance of men's religion, the more they agree. It is probable there never was an uninspired book more universally admired than Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. It is a book which all denominations of Christians delight to honour. It has won praise from all parties. Now what a striking fact it is, that the author was pre-eminently a man of one book! He had read hardly anything but the Bible.

It is a blessed thought that there will be “much people” in heaven at last. Few as the Lord's people undoubtedly are at any one given time or place, yet all gathered together at last, they will be “a multitude that no man can number.” (Revelation 7:9; Revelation 19:1) They will be of one heart and mind. They will have passed through like experience. They will all have repented, believed, lived holy, prayerful, and humble. They will all have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But one thing beside all this they will have in common: they will all love the texts and doctrines of the Bible. The Bible will have been their food and delight in the days of their pilgrimage on earth. And the Bible will be a common subject of joyful meditation and retrospect, when they are gathered together in heaven.

This Book, which all true Christians live upon and love, is the subject about which I am addressing the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely it is matter for serious inquiry, whether you know anything of this love to the Word, and have this mark of walking “in the footsteps of the flock.” (Son_1:8) I charge you, I entreat you to give me an honest answer. What art thou doing with the Bible?-Dost thou read it?-HOW READEST THOU?

VIII. In the last place; the Bible is the only book which can comfort a man in the last hours of his life. Death is an event which in all probability is before us all. There is no avoiding it. It is the river which each of us must cross. I who write, and you who read, have each one day to die. It is good to remember this. We are all sadly apt to put away the subject from us. “Each man thinks each man mortal but himself.” I want every one to do his duty in life, but I also want every one to think of death. I want every one to know how to live, but I also want every one to know how to die.

Death is a solemn event to all. It is the winding up of all earthly plans and expectations. It is a separation from all we have loved and lived with. It is often accompanied by much bodily pain and distress. It brings us to the grave, the worm, and corruption. It opens the door to judgment and eternity,-to heaven or to hell. It is an event after which there is no change, or space for repentance. Other mistakes may be corrected or retrieved, but not a mistake on our death-beds. As the tree falls, there it must lie. No conversion in the coffin! No new birth after we have ceased to breathe! And death is before us all. It may be close at hand. The time of our departure is quite uncertain. But sooner or later we must each lie down alone and die. All these are serious considerations.

Death is a solemn event even to the believer in Christ. For him no doubt the “sting of death” is taken away. (1 Corinthians 15:55) Death has become one of his privileges, for he is Christ's. Living or dying, he is the Lord's. If he lives, Christ lives in him; and if he dies, he goes to live with Christ. To him “to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Php_1:21) Death frees him from many trials,-from a weak body, a corrupt heart, a tempting devil, and an ensnaring or persecuting world. Death admits him to the enjoyment of many blessings. He rests from his labours: the hope of a joyful resurrection is changed into a certainty:-he has the company of holy redeemed spirits: he is “with Christ.” All this is true, and yet, even to a believer, death is a solemn thing. Flesh and blood naturally shrink from it. To part from all we love is a wrench and trial to the feelings. The world we go to is a world unknown, even though it is our home. Friendly and harmless as death is to a believer, it is not an event to be treated lightly. It always must be a very solemn thing.

It becomes every thoughtful and sensible man to consider calmly how he is going to meet death. Gird up your loins, like a man, and look the subject in the face. Listen to me, while I tell you a few things about the end to which we are coming.

The good things of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. All the gold of California and Australia will not provide light for the dark valley. Money can buy the best medical advice and attendance for a man's body; but money cannot buy peace for his conscience, heart, and soul.

Relatives, loved friends, and servants, cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. They may minister affectionately to his bodily wants. They may watch by his bed-side tenderly, and anticipate his every wish. They may smooth down his dying pillow, and support his sinking frame in their arms. But they cannot “minister to a mind diseased.” They cannot stop the achings of a troubled heart. They cannot screen an uneasy conscience from the eye of God.

The pleasures of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The brilliant ball-room; the merry dance,-the midnight revel,-the party to Epsom races, the card table,-the box at the opera,-the voices of singing men and singing women,-all these are at length distasteful things. To hear of hunting and shooting engagements gives him no pleasure. To be invited to feasts, and regattas, and fancy-fairs, gives him no ease. He cannot hide from himself that these are hollow, empty, powerless things. They jar upon the ear of his conscience. They are out of harmony with his condition. They cannot stop one gap in his heart, when the last enemy is coming in like a flood. They cannot make him calm in the prospect of meeting a holy God.

Books and newspapers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The most brilliant writings of Macaulay or Dickens will pall on his ear. The most able article in the Times will fail to interest him. The Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews will give him no pleasure. Punch and the Illustrated News, and the last new novel, will lie unopened and unheeded. Their time will be past. Their vocation will be gone. Whatever they may be in health, they are useless in the hour of death.

There is but one fountain of comfort for a man drawing near to his end, and that is the Bible. Chapters out of the Bible,-texts out of the Bible,-statements of truth taken out of the Bible, books containing matter drawn from the Bible,-these are a man's only chance of comfort when he comes to die. I do not at all say that the Bible will do good, as a matter of course, to a dying man, if he has not valued it before. I know, unhappily, too much of death-beds to say that. I do not say whether it

is probable that he who has been unbelieving and neglectful of the Bible in life, will at once believe and get comfort from it in death. But I do say positively, that no dying man will ever get real comfort, except from the contents of the Word of God. All comfort from any other source is a house built upon sand.

I lay this down as a rule of universal application. I make no exception in favour of any class on earth. Kings and poor men, learned and unlearned,-all are on a level in this matter. There is not a jot of real consolation for any dying man, unless he gets it from the Bible. Chapters, passages, texts, promises, and doctrines of Scripture,-heard, received, believed, and rested on,-these are the only comforters I dare promise to any one, when he leaves the world. Taking the sacrament will do a man no more good than the Popish extreme unction, so long as the Word is not received and believed. Priestly absolution will no more ease the conscience than the incantations of a heathen magician, if the poor dying sinner does not receive and believe Bible truth. I tell every one who reads this paper, that although men may seem to get on comfortably without the Bible while they live, they may be sure that without the Bible they cannot comfortably die. It was a true confession of the learned Selden,-“There is no book upon which we can rest in a dying moment but the Bible.”

I might easily confirm all I have just said by examples and illustrations. I might show you the death-beds of men who have affected to despise the Bible. I might tell you how Voltaire and Paine, the famous infidels, died in misery, bitterness, rage, fear, and despair. I might show you the happy death-beds of those who have loved the Bible and believed it, and the blessed effect the sight of their death-beds had on others. Cecil,-a minister whose praise ought to be in all churches,-says, “I shall never forget standing by the bed-side of my dying mother. 'Are you afraid to die?' I asked.-'No!' she replied: 'But why does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern?'--'Because God has said, Fear not; when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.'” (Isaiah 43:2) I might easily multiply illustrations of this kind. But I think it better to conclude this part of my subject by giving the result of my own observations as a minister.

I have seen not a few dying persons in my time. I have seen great varieties of manner and deportment among them. I have seen some die sullen, silent, and comfortless. I have seen others die ignorant, unconcerned, and apparently without much fear. I have seen some die so wearied out with long illness that they were quite willing to depart, and yet they did not seem to me at all in a fit state to go before God. I have seen others die with professions of hope and trust in God, without leaving satisfactory evidences that they were on the rock. I have seen others die who, I believe, were “in Christ,” and safe, and yet they never seemed to enjoy much sensible comfort. I have seen some few dying in the full assurance of hope, and like Bunyan's “Standfast,” giving glorious testimony to Christ's faithfulness, even in the river. But one thing I have never seen. I never saw any one enjoy what I should call real, solid, calm, reasonable peace on his death bed, who did not draw his peace from the Bible. And this I am bold to say, that the man who thinks to go to his death-bed without having the Bible for his comforter, his companion, and his friend, is one of the greatest madmen in the world. There are no comforts for the soul but Bible comforts, and he who has not got hold of these, has got hold of nothing at all, unless it be a broken reed.

The only comforter for a death-bed is the book about which I address the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter whether you read that book or not. Surely a dying man, in a dying

world, should seriously consider whether he has got anything to comfort him when his turn comes to die. I charge you, I entreat you, for the last time, to give an honest answer to my question. What art thou doing with the Bible?-Dost thou read it? -HOW READEST THOU?

I have now given the reasons why I press on every reader the duty and importance of reading the Bible. I have shown that no book is written in such a manner as the Bible,-that knowledge of the Bible is absolutely necessary to salvation,-that no book contains such matter,-that no book has done so much for the world generally,-that no book can do so much for every one who reads it aright,-that this book is the only rule of faith and practice,-that it is, and always has been, the food of all true servants of God,-and that it is the only book which can comfort men when they die. All these are ancient things. I do not pretend to tell anything new. I have only gathered together old truths, and tried to mould them into a new shape. Let me finish all by addressing a few plain words to the conscience of every class of readers.

(1) This paper may fall into the hands of some who can read, but never do read the Bible at all. Are you one of them? If you are, I have something to say to you.

I cannot comfort you in your present state of mind. It would be mockery and deceit to do so. I cannot speak to you of peace and heaven, while you treat the Bible as you do. You are in danger of losing your soul.

You are in danger, because your neglected Bible is a plain evidence that you do not love God. The health of a man's body may generally be known by his appetite. The health of a man's soul may be known by his treatment of the Bible. Now you are manifestly labouring under a sore disease. Will you not repent?

I know I cannot reach your heart. I cannot make you see and feel these things. I can only enter my solemn protest against your present treatment of the Bible, and lay that protest before your conscience. I do so with all my soul. Oh, beware lest you repent too late! Beware lest you put off reading the Bible till you send for the doctor in your last illness, and then find the Bible a sealed book, and dark, as the cloud between the hosts of Israel and Egypt, to your anxious soul! Beware lest you go on saying all your life, “Men do very well without all this Bible-reading,” and find at length, to your cost, that men do very ill, and end in hell! Beware lest the day come when you will feel, “Had I but honoured the Bible as much as I have honoured the newspaper, I should not have been left without comfort in my last hours! “Bible neglecting reader, I give you a plain warning. The plague-cross is at present on your door. The Lord have mercy upon your soul!

(2) This paper may fall into the hands of someone who is willing to begin reading the Bible, but wants advice on the subject. Are you that man? Listen to me, and I will give a few short hints.

(a) For one thing, begin reading your Bible this very day. The way to do a thing is to do it, and the way to read the Bible is actually to read it. It is not meaning, or wishing, or resolving, or intending, or thinking about it, which will advance you one step. You must positively read. There is no royal road in this matter, any more than in the matter of prayer. If you cannot read yourself, you must persuade somebody else to read to you. But one way or another, through eyes or ears, the words of Scripture must actually pass before your mind.

(b) For another thing, read the Bible with an earnest desire to understand it. Think not for a moment that the great object is to turn over a certain quantity of printed paper, and that it matters nothing whether you understand it or not. Some ignorant people seem to fancy that all is done if they clear off so many chapters every day, though they may not have a notion what they are all about, and only know that they have pushed on their mark so many leaves. This is turning Bible reading into a mere form. It is almost as bad as the Popish habit of buying indulgences, by saying an almost fabulous number of ave-marias and paternosters. It reminds one of the poor Hottentot who ate up a Dutch hymn-book because he saw it comforted his neighbours' hearts. Settle it down in your mind as a general principle, that a Bible not understood is a Bible that does no good. Say to yourself often as you read, “What is all this about?” Dig for the meaning like a man digging for Australian gold. Work hard, and do not give up the work in a hurry.

(c) For another thing, read the Bible with child-like faith and humility. Open your heart as you open your book, and say, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” Resolve to believe implicitly whatever you find there, however much it may run counter to your own prejudices. Resolve to receive heartily every statement of truth, whether you like it or not. Beware of that miserable habit of mind into which some readers of the Bible fall. They receive some doctrines because they like them: they reject others because they are condemning to themselves, or to some lover, or relation, or friend. At this rate the Bible is useless. Are we to be judges of what ought to be in the Word? Do we know better than God? Settle it down in your mind that you will receive all and believe all, and that what you cannot understand you will take on trust. Remember, when you pray, you are speaking to God, and God hears you. But, remember, when you read, God is speaking to you, and you are not to “answer again,” but to listen.

(d) For another thing, read the Bible in a spirit of obedience and self-application. Sit down to the study of it with a daily determination that you will live by its rules, rest on its statements, and act on its commands. Consider, as you travel through every chapter, “How does this affect my position and course of conduct? What does this teach me?” It is poor work to read the Bible from mere curiosity, and for speculative purposes, in order to fill your head and store your mind with opinions, while you do not allow the book to influence your heart and life. That Bible is read best which is practised most.

(e) For another thing, read the Bible daily. Make it a part of every day's business to read and meditate on some portion of God's Word. Private means of grace are just as needful every day for our souls as food and clothing are for our bodies. Yesterday's bread will not feed the labourer today, and today's bread will not feed the labourer tomorrow. Do as the Israelites did in the wilderness. Gather your manna fresh every morning. Choose your own seasons and hours. Do not scramble over and hurry your reading. Give your Bible the best, and not the worst part of your time. But whatever plan you pursue, let it be a rule of your life to visit the throne of grace and the Bible every day.

(f) For another thing, read all the Bible, and read it in an orderly way. I fear there are many parts of the Word which some people never read at all. This is to say the least, a very presumptuous habit. “All Scripture is profitable.” (2 Timothy 3:16) To this habit maybe traced that want of broad, well-proportioned views of truth, which is so common in this day. Some people's Bible-reading is a system of perpetual dipping and picking. They do not seem to have an idea of regularly going

through the whole book.

This also is a great mistake. No doubt in times of sickness and affliction it is allowable to search out seasonable portions. But with this exception, I believe it is by far the best plan to begin the Old and New Testaments at the same time,-to read each straight through to the end, and then begin again. This is a matter in which every one must be persuaded in his own mind. I can only say it has been my own plan for nearly forty years, and I have never seen cause to alter it.

(g) For another thing, read the Bible fairly and honestly. Determine to take everything in its plain, obvious meaning, and regard all forced interpretations with great suspicion. As a general rule, whatever a verse of the Bible seems to mean, it does mean. Cecil's rule is a very valuable one, “The right way of interpreting Scripture is to take it as we find it, without any attempt to force it into any particular system.” Well said Hooker, “I hold it for a most infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that when a literal construction will stand, the furthest from the literal is commonly the worst”

(h) In the last place, read the Bible with Christ continually in view. The grand primary object of all Scripture is to testify of Jesus. Old Testament ceremonies are shadows of Christ. Old Testament judges and deliverers are types of Christ. Old Testament prophecies are full of Christ's sufferings, and of Christ's glory yet to come. The first advent and the second,-the Lord's humiliation and the Lord's kingdom,-the cross and the crown, shine forth everywhere in the Bible. Keep fast hold on this clue, if you would read the Bible aright.

I might easily add to these hints, if space permitted. Few and short as they are, you will find them worth attention. Act upon them, and I firmly believe you will never be allowed to miss the way to heaven. Act upon them, and you will find light continually increasing in your mind. No book of evidence can be compared with that internal evidence which he obtains who daily uses the Word in the right way. Such a man does not need the books of learned men, like Paley, and Wilson, and M'Ilvaine. He has the witness in himself. The book satisfies and feeds his soul. A poor Christian woman once said to an infidel, “I am no scholar. I cannot argue like you. But I know that honey is honey, because it leaves a sweet taste in my mouth. And I know the Bible to be God's book, because of the taste it leaves in my heart”

(3) This paper may fall into the hands of some one who loves and believes the Bible, and yet reads it but little. I fear there are many such in this day. It is a day of bustle and hurry. It is a day of talking, and committee meetings, and public work. These things are all very well in their way, but I fear that they sometimes clip and cut short the private reading of the Bible. Does your conscience tell you that you are one of the persons I speak of? Listen to me, and I will say a few things which deserve your serious attention.

You are the man that is likely to get little comfort from the Bible in time of need. Trial is a sifting season. Affliction is a searching wind, which strips the leaves off the trees, and brings to light the birds' nests. Now I fear that your stores of Bible consolations may one day run very low. I fear lest you should find yourself at last on very short allowance, and come into harbour weak, worn and thin.

You are the man that is likely never to be established in the truth. I shall not be surprised to hear that you are troubled with doubts and questionings about assurance, grace, faith, perseverance,

and the like. The devil is an old and cunning enemy. Like the Benjamites, he can “throw stones at a hair-breadth, and not miss.” (Judges 20:16) He can quote Scripture readily enough when he pleases. Now you are not sufficiently ready with your weapons to be able to fight a good fight with him. Your armour does not fit you well. Your sword sits loosely in your hand.

You are the man that is likely to make mistakes in life. I shall not wonder if I am told that you have erred about your own marriage,-erred about your children's education,-erred about the conduct of your household, erred about the company you keep. The world you steer through is full of rocks, and shoals, and sandbanks. You are not sufficiently familiar either with the lights or charts.

You are the man that is likely to be carried away by some specious false teacher for a season. It will not surprise me if I hear that some one of those clever, eloquent men, who can “make the worse appear the better cause,” is leading you into many follies. You are wanting in ballast. No wonder if you are tossed to and fro, like a cork on the waves.

All these are uncomfortable things. I want every reader of this paper to escape them all. Take the advice I offer you this day. Do not merely read your Bible” a little,” but read it a great deal. “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (Colossians 3:16) Do not be a mere babe in spiritual knowledge. Seek to become “well instructed in the kingdom of heaven,” and to be continually adding new things to old. A religion of feeling is an uncertain thing. It is like the tide, sometimes high, and sometimes low. It is like the moon, sometimes bright, and sometimes dim. A religion of deep Bible knowledge, is a firm and lasting possession. It enables a man not merely to say,” I feel hope in Christ,”-but “I know whom I have believed.” (2 Timothy 1:12)

(4) This paper may fall into the hands of some one who reads the Bible much, and yet fancies he is no better for his reading. This is a crafty temptation of the devil. At one stage he says, “ Do not read the Bible at all.” At another be says, “Your reading does you no good: give it up.” Are you that man? I feel for you from the bottom of my soul. Let me try to do you good.

Do not think you are getting no good from the Bible, merely because you do not see that good day by day. The greatest effects are by no means those which make the most noise, and are most easily observed. The greatest effects are often silent, quiet, and hard to detect at the time they are being produced. Think o£ the influence of the moon upon the earth, and of the air upon the human lungs. Remember how silently the dew falls, and how imperceptibly the grass grows. There may be far more doing than you think in your soul by your Bible-reading.

The Word may be gradually producing deep impressions on your heart, of which you are not at present aware. Often when the memory is retaining no facts, the character of a man is receiving some everlasting impression. Is sin becoming every year more hateful to you? Is Christ becoming every year more precious? Is holiness becoming every year more lovely and desirable in your eyes? If these things are so, take courage. The Bible is doing you good, though you may not be able to trace it out day by day.

The Bible may be restraining you from some sin or delusion into which you would otherwise run. It may be daily keeping you back, and hedging you up, and preventing many a false step. Ah, you might soon find this out to your cost, if you were to cease reading the Word! The very familiarity of blessings sometimes makes us insensible to their value. Resist the devil. Settle it down in your mind as an established rule, that, whether you feel it at the moment or not, you are inhaling

spiritual health by reading the Bible, and insensibly becoming more strong.

(5) This paper may fall into the hands of some who really love the Bible, live upon the Bible, and read it much. Are you one of these? Give me your attention, and I will mention a few things which we shall do well to lay to heart for time to come.

Let us resolve to read the Bible more and more every year we live. Let us try to get it rooted in our memories, and engrafted into our hearts. Let us be thoroughly well provisioned with it against the voyage of death. Who knows but we may have a very stormy passage? Sight and hearing may fail us, and we may be in deep waters. Oh, to have the Word “ hid in our hearts “ in such an hour as that! (Psalms 119:11)

Let us resolve to be more watchful over our Bible reading every year that we live. Let us be jealously careful about the time we give to it, and the manner that time is spent. Let us beware of omitting our daily reading without sufficient cause. Let us not be gaping, and yawning, and dozing over our book, while we read. Let us read like a London merchant studying the city article in the Times,-or like a wife reading a husband's Letter from a distant land. Let us be very careful that we never exalt any minister, or sermon, or book, or tract, or friend above the-Word. Cursed be that book, or tract, or human counsel, which creeps in between us and the Bible, and hides the Bible from our eyes! Once more I say, let us be very watchful. The moment we open the Bible the devil sits down by our side. Oh, to read with a hungry spirit, and a simple desire for edification!

Let us resolve to honour the Bible more in our families. Let us read it morning and evening to our children and households, and not be ashamed to let men see that we do so. Let us not be discouraged by seeing no good arise from it. The Bible-reading in a family has kept many a one from the gaol, the workhouse, and the Gazette, if it has not kept him from hell.

Let us resolve to meditate more on the Bible. It is good to take with us two or three texts when we go out into the world, and to turn them over and over in our minds whenever we have a little leisure. It keeps out many vain thoughts. It clenches the nail of daily reading. It preserves our souls from stagnating and breeding corrupt things. It sanctifies and quickens our memories, and prevents them becoming like those ponds where the frogs live but the fish die.

Let us resolve to talk more to believers about the Bible when we meet them. Alas, the conversation of Christians, when they do meet, is often sadly unprofitable! How many frivolous, and trifling, and uncharitable things are said! Let us bring out the Bible more, and it will help to drive the devil away, and keep our hearts in tune. Oh, that we may all strive so to walk together in this evil world; that Jesus may often draw near, and go with us, as He went with the two disciples journeying to Emmaus!

Last of all, let us resolve to live by the Bible more and more every year we live. Let us frequently take account of all our opinions and practices,-of our habits and tempers,-of our behaviour in public and in private,-in the world, and by our own firesides. Let us measure all by the Bible, and resolve, by God's help, to conform to it. Oh that we may learn increasingly to “cleanse our ways” by the Word! (Psalms 119:9)

I commend all these things to the serious and prayerful attention of every one into whose hands this paper may fall. I want the ministers of my beloved country to be Bible-reading ministers, the

congregations, Bible-reading congregations,-and the nation, a Bible-reading nation. To bring about this desirable end I cast in my mite into God's treasury. The Lord grant that it may prove not to have been in vain!

Calvary

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short "Helmingham Series" tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you these three exactly word for word as they were first published about the middle of the last century, while J. C. Ryle was a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk.

CALVARY!

READER,

You probably know that Calvary was a place close to Jerusalem, where the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crucified. We know nothing else about Calvary beside this. I call this tract "Calvary," because I am going to speak to you about the sufferings and crucifixion of Christ.

I am afraid that much ignorance prevails among people on the subject of Jesus Christ's sufferings. I suspect that many see no peculiar glory and beauty in the history of the crucifixion: on the contrary; they think it painful, humbling, and degrading. They do not see much profit in the story of Christ's death and sufferings: they rather turn from it as an unpleasant thing.

Now I believe that such persons are quite wrong. I cannot agree with them. I believe it is an excellent thing for us all to be continually dwelling on the crucifixion of Christ. That is a good thing to be often reminded how Jesus was betrayed into the hands of wicked men,—how they condemned Him with most unjust judgment,—how they spit on Him, scourged Him, beat Him, and crowned Him with thorns,—how they led Him forth as a lamb to the slaughter, without His murmuring or resisting, —how they drove the nails through His hands and feet, and set Him on Calvary between two thieves, how they pierced His side with a spear, mocked Him in His suffering, and let Him hang there naked and bleeding till He died. Of all these things, I say, it is good to be reminded. It is not for nothing that the crucifixion is described four times over in the New Testament. There are very few things that all the four writers of the Gospel describe: generally speaking, if Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell a thing in our Lord's history, John does not tell it; but there is one thing that all the four give us most fully, and that one thing is the story of the cross. This is a telling fact, and not to be overlooked.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings at Calvary were fore-ordained. They did not come on Him by chance or accident: they were all planned, counselled, and determined from all eternity; the cross was foreseen, in all the provisions of the everlasting Trinity for the salvation of sinners. In the purposes of God the cross was set up from everlasting. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did Jesus shed, which had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that redemption should be by the cross: infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings at Calvary were necessary for man's salvation. He had to bear our sins, if ever they were to be borne at all: with His stripes alone could we be healed. This was the one payment of our debts that God would accept; this was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depended. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us; there would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed. The cross was necessary, in order that there might be an atonement for sin.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings were endured voluntary and of His own free will. He was under no compulsion: of His own choice He laid down His life: of His own choice He went to Calvary to finish the work He came to do. He might easily have summoned legions of angels with a word, and scattered Pilate and Herod, and all their armies, like chaff before the wind; but He was a willing sufferer: His heart was set on the salvation of sinners. He was resolved to open a fountain for all sin and uncleanness, by shedding His own blood.

Reader, when I think of all this, I see nothing painful or disagreeable in the subject of Christ's crucifixion; on the contrary, I see in it wisdom and power, peace and hope, joy and gladness, comfort and consolation. The more I keep the cross in my mind's eye, the more fulness I seem to discern in it; the longer I dwell on the crucifixion in my thoughts, the more I am satisfied that there is more to he learned at Calvary than anywhere else in the world.

Would I know the length and breadth of God the Father's love towards a sinful world? Where shall I see it most displayed? Shall I look at His glorious sun, shining down daily on the unthankful and evil? Shall I look at the seed time and harvest, returning in regular yearly succession? Oh, no! I can find a stronger proof of love than anything of this sort. I look at the cross of Christ: I see in it not the cause of the Father's love, but the effect. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son,—gave Him to suffer and die—that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. I know that the Father loves us, because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son. Ah, reader, I might sometimes fancy that God the Father is too high and holy to care for such miserable, corrupt creatures as we are: but I cannot, must not, dare not think it, when I look at Christ's sufferings on Calvary.

Would I know how exceedingly sinful and abominable sin is in the sight of God? Where shall I see that most fully brought out? Shall I turn to the history of the flood, and read how sin drowned the world? Shall I go to the shore of the Dead Sea, and mark what sin brought on Sodom and Gomorrah? Shall I turn to the wandering Jews, and observe how sin has scattered them over the face of the earth? No: I can find a clearer proof still, I look at what happened on Calvary. There I see that sin is so black and damnable that nothing but the blood of God's own Son can wash it away; there I see that sin has so separated me from my holy Maker that all the angels in heaven could never have made peace between us: nothing could reconcile us, short of the death of Christ. Ah, if I listened to the wretched talk of proud men I might sometimes fancy sin was not so very sinful; but I cannot think little of sin when I look at Calvary.

Would I know the fullness and completeness of the salvation God has provided for sinners? Where shall I see it most distinctly? Shall I go to the general declarations in the Bible about God's mercy? Shall I rest in the general truth that God is a God of love? Oh, no! I will look at the crucifixion at Calvary. I find no evidence like that: I find no balm for a sore conscience and a troubled heart like

the sight of Jesus dying for me on the accursed tree. There I see that a full payment has been made for all my enormous debts. The curse of that law which I have broken, has come down on One who there suffered in my stead; the demands of that law are all satisfied: payment has been made for me even to the uttermost farthing. It will not be required twice over. Ah, I might sometimes imagine I was too bad to be forgiven; my own heart sometimes whispers that I am too wicked to be saved. But I know in my better moments this is all my foolish unbelief; I read an answer to my doubts in the blood shed on Calvary. I feel sure that there is a way to heaven for the very vilest of men, when I look at the cross.

Would I find strong reasons for being a holy man? Whither shall I turn for them? Shall I listen to the ten commandments merely? Shall I study the examples given me in the Bible of what grace can do? Shall I meditate on the rewards of heaven, and the punishments of hell? Is there no stronger motive still? Yes: I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. There I see the love of Christ constraining me to live not unto myself, but unto Him: there I see that I am not my own now,—I am bought with a price: I am bound by the most solemn obligations to glorify Jesus with body and spirit, which are His. There I see that Jesus gave Himself for me, not only to redeem me from iniquity, but also to purify me, and make me one of a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He bore my sins in His own body on the tree, that I being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness. Ah, reader, there is nothing so sanctifying as a clear view of the cross of Christ! It crucifies the world unto us, and us unto the world. How can we love sin when we remember that because of our sins Jesus died? Surely none ought to be so holy as the disciples of a crucified Lord.

Would I learn how to be contented and cheerful under all the cares and anxieties of life? What school shall I go to? How shall I attain this state of mind most easily? Shall I look at the sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God, the providence of God, the love of God? It is well to do so: but I have a better argument still. I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. I feel that He who spared not His only begotten Son but delivered Him up to die for me, will surely with Him give me all things that I really need: He that endured that pain for my soul, will surely not withhold from me anything that is really good: He that has done the greater things for me, will doubtless do the lesser things also. He that gave His own blood to procure me a home, will unquestionably supply me with all that is really profitable for me by the way. Ah, reader, there is no school for learning contentment that can be compared with Calvary and the foot of the cross.

Would I gather arguments for hoping that I shall never be cast away? Where shall I go to find them? Shall I look at my own graces and gifts? Shall I take comfort in my own faith and love, and penitence and zeal, and prayer? Shall I turn to my own heart, and say, "This same heart will never be false and cold"? Oh, no! God forbid! I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. This is my grand argument: this is my mainstay. I cannot think that He who went through such sufferings to redeem my soul, will let that soul perish after all, when it has once cast itself on Him. Oh, no! What Jesus paid for Jesus will surely keep. He paid dearly for it: He will not let it easily be lost. He died for me when I was yet a dark sinner: He will never forsake me after I have believed. Ah, reader, when Satan tempts you to doubt whether Christ's people will be kept from falling, you should tell Satan that you cannot despair when you look at the cross. And now, reader, will you marvel when I say that all Christians ought to make much of the crucifixion? Will you not rather wonder that any can hear of Christ's sufferings on Calvary and remain unmoved? I declare I know no greater proof of

man's depravity than the fact that thousands of so-called Christians see nothing lovely in the cross. Well may our hearts be called stony, well may the eyes of our mind be called blind, well may our whole nature be called diseased, well may we all be called dead,—when the cross of Christ is heard of, and yet neglected. Surely we may take up the words of the prophet, and say, "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth: a wonderful and horrible thing is done," —Christ was crucified for sinners, and yet many Christians live as if He was never crucified at all!

Reader, if you never thought much about Calvary and the crucifixion before,—I trust you will have learned something today.

Christ Crucified

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

by

Bishop J. C. Ryle

READER,

There is no doctrine in Christianity so important as the doctrine of Christ crucified. There is none which the devil tries so hard to destroy. There is none which it is so needful for our own peace to understand.

By "Christ crucified," I mean the doctrine that Christ suffered death on the cross to make atonement for our sins,-that by His death He made a full, per-fect, and complete satisfaction to God for the ungodly,-and that through the merits of that death all who believe in Him are forgiven all their sins, however many and great, entirely, and for ever.

About this blessed doctrine let me say a few words.

The doctrine of Christ crucified is the grand peculiarity of the Christian re-ligion. Other religions have laws and moral precepts, forms and ceremonies, rewards and punishments; but other religions cannot tell us of a dying Sav-iour: they cannot show us the cross. This is the crown and glory of the Gos-pel; this is that special comfort which belongs to it alone. Miserable indeed is that religious teaching which calls itself Christian, and yet contains nothing of the cross. A man who teaches in this way might as well profess to explain the solar system, and yet tell his hearers nothing about the sun.

The doctrine of Christ crucified is the strength of a minister. I for one would not be without it for all the world. I should feel like a soldier without arms, like an artist without his pencil, like a pilot without his compass, like a labourer without his tools. Let others, if they will, preach the law and moral-ity; let others hold forth the terrors of hell, and the joys of heaven; let others dwell on the sacraments and the Church: give me the cross of Christ. This is the only lever which has ever turned the world upside down hitherto, and made men forsake their sins: and if this will not, nothing will. A man may begin preaching with a perfect knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; but he will do little or no good among his hearers unless he knows something of the cross. Never was there a minister who did much for the conversion of souls who did not dwell much on Christ crucified. Luther, Rutherford, Whit-field, M'Cheyne, were all most eminently preachers of the cross. This is the preaching that the Holy Ghost delights to bless: He loves to honour those who honour the cross.

The doctrine of Christ crucified is the secret of all missionary success. Nothing but this has ever moved the hearts of the heathen. Just according as this has been lifted up missions have prospered. This is the weapon that has won victories over hearts of every kind, in every quarter of

the globe: Greenlanders, Africans, South Sea Islanders, Hindoos, and Chinese, all have alike felt its power. Just as that huge iron tube which crosses the Menai Straits is more affected and bent by half an hour's sunshine than by all the dead weight that can be placed in it, so in like manner the hearts of savages have melted before the cross, when every other argument seemed to move them no more than stones. "Brethren," said a North American Indian after his conversion, "I have been a heathen. I know how heathens think. Once a preacher came and began to explain to us that there was a God; but we told him to return to the place from whence he came. Another preacher came and told us not to lie, nor steal, nor drink; but we did not heed him. At last another came into my hut one day, and said, 'I am come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He sends to let you know that He will make you happy, and deliver you from misery. For this end He became a man, gave His life a ransom, and shed His blood for sinners. I could not forget his words. I told them to the other Indians, and an awakening begun among us. I say, therefore, preach the sufferings and death of Christ, our Saviour, if you wish your words to gain entrance among the heathen." Never indeed did the devil triumph so thoroughly as when he persuaded the Jesuit missionaries in China to keep back the story of the cross!

The doctrine of Christ crucified is the foundation of a Church's prosperity. No Church will ever be honoured in which Christ crucified is not continually lifted up. Nothing whatever can make up for the want of the cross. Without it all things may be done decently and in order; without it there may be splendid ceremonies, beautiful music, gorgeous churches, learned ministers, crowded communion tables, huge collections for the poor; but without the cross no good will be done. Dark hearts will not be enlightened, proud hearts will not be humbled, mourning hearts will not be comforted, fainting hearts will not be cheered. Sermons about the catholic church and an apostolic ministry, ser-mons about baptism and the Lord's supper, sermons about unity and schism, sermons about fasts and communion, sermons about fathers and saints,-such sermons will never make up for the absence of sermons about the cross of Christ. They may amuse some, they will feed none.

A gorgeous banqueting room, and splendid gold plate on the table, will never make up to a hungry man for the want of food. Christ crucified is God's grand ordinance for doing good to men. Whenever a Church keeps back Christ crucified, or puts anything whatever in that foremost place which Christ crucified should always have, from that moment a Church ceases to be useful. Without Christ crucified in her pulpits, a Church is little better than a cumberer of the ground, a dead carcass, a well without water, a barren fig-tree, a sleeping watchman, a silent trumpet, a dumb witness, an ambassador without terms of peace, a messenger without tidings, a lighthouse without fire, a stumbling-block to weak believers, a comfort to infidels, a hot-bed for for-malism, a joy to the devil, and an offence to God.

The doctrine of Christ crucified is the grand centre of union among true Christians. Our outward differences are many without doubt: one man is an Episcopalian, another is a Presbyterian; one is an Independent, another a Bap-tist; one is a Calvinist, another an Arminian; one is a Lutheran, another a Ply-mouth Brother; one is a friend to Establishments, another a friend to the Vol-untary system; one is a friend to Liturgies, another a friend to extempore prayer: but after all, what shall we hear about most of these differences in heaven? Nothing, most probably: nothing at all. Does a man really and sin-cerely glory in the cross of Christ? That is the grand question. If he does, he is my brother: we are travelling in the same road; we are journeying towards a home where Christ is

all, and everything outward in religion will be forgotten. But if he does not glory in the cross of Christ, I cannot feel comfort about him. Union on outward points only is union only for time: union about the cross is union for eternity. Error on outward points is only a skin-deep disease: error about the cross is disease at the heart. Union about outward points is a mere man-made union: union about the cross of Christ can only be produced by the Holy Ghost.

Reader, I know not what you think of all this. I feel as if the half of what I desire to tell you about Christ crucified were left untold. But I do hope that I have given you something to think about. Listen to me now for a few mo-ments, while I say something to apply the whole subject to your conscience.

Are you living in any kind of sin? Are you following the course of this world, and neglecting your soul? Hear! I beseech you, what I say to you this day: "Behold the cross of Christ." See there how Jesus loved you! See there what Jesus suffered to prepare for you a way of salvation! Yes: careless men and women, for you that blood was shed! for you those hands and feet were pierced with nails! for you that body hung in agony on the cross! You are they whom Jesus loved, and for whom He died! Surely that love ought to melt you: surely the thought of the cross should draw you to repentance. Oh, that it might be so this very day! Oh, that you would come at once to that Saviour who died for you and is willing to save! Come and cry to Him with the prayer of faith, and I know that He will listen. Come and lay hold upon the cross, and I know that He will not cast you out. Come and believe on Him who died on the cross, and this very day you shall have eternal life.

Are you inquiring the way toward heaven? Are you seeking salvation, but doubtful whether you can find it? Are you desiring to have an interest in Christ, but doubting whether Christ will receive you? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Here is encouragement if you really want it. Draw near to the Lord Jesus with boldness, for nothing need keep you back: His arms are open to receive you; His heart is full of love towards you. He has made a way by which you may approach Him with confidence. Think of the cross. Draw near, and fear not.

Are you an unlearned man? Are you desirous to get to heaven, and yet perplexed and brought to a stand-still by difficulties in the Bible that you can-not explain? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Read there the Father's love and the Son's compassion. Surely they are written in great plain letters, which none can well mistake. What though you are now perplexed by the doctrine of election? What though at present you cannot reconcile your own utter corruption and your own responsibility? Look, I say, at the cross. Does not that cross tell you that Jesus is a mighty, loving, ready Saviour? Does it not make one thing plain,-and that is that if not saved it is all your own fault? Oh, get hold of that truth, and hold it fast!

Are you a distressed believer? Is your heart pressed down with sickness, tried with disappointments, overburdened with cares? To you also I say this day, "Behold the cross of Christ." Think whose hand it is that chastens you: think whose hand is measuring to you the cup of bitterness which you are now drinking. It is the hand of Him that was crucified: it is the same hand that in love to your soul was nailed to the accursed tree. Surely that thought should comfort and hearten you. Surely you should say to yourself, "A crucified Saviour will never lay upon me anything that is not good for me. There is a needs be. It must be well."

Are you a dying believer? Have you gone to that bed from which some-thing within tells you you will never come down alive? Are you drawing near to that solemn hour when soul and body must part for a season, and you must launch into a world unknown? Oh, look steadily at the cross of Christ, and you shall be kept in peace! Fix the eyes of your mind firmly on Jesus cruci-fied, and He shall deliver you from all your fears. Though you walk through dark places, He will be with you: He will never leave you,-never forsake you. Sit under the shadow of the cross to the very last, and its fruits shall be sweet to your taste. There is but one thing needful on a death-bed, and that is to feel one's arms around the cross.

Reader, if you never heard of Christ crucified before this day, I can wish you nothing better than that you may know Him by faith, and rest on Him for salvation. If you do know Him may you know Him better every year you live, till you see Him face to face.

Chapter 21

Come

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

COME!

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

Reader,

The name of the tract before you is short but the subject which that name unfolds is deeply important. It is the first word of a text of Scripture which deserves to be written in letters of gold. I offer that text to you as a friendly invitation: I entreat you to look at it, and ponder it well. That single text may be the salvation of your soul.

Our years are passing quickly away. As each successive stage of the year comes round, we hear of gatherings and invitations: Easter, Whitsuntide, Michaelmas, and Christmas, are all times when friends invite friends to come and see them. But there is one invitation which demands attention every day in the year: that invitation is the one which I bring you this day. It may be unlike any that you have yet received; but it is of unspeakable importance: it concerns the eternal happiness of your soul.

Reader, do not shrink back when you read these words. I do not want to spoil your pleasures, provided always that your pleasures are not mixed with sin. I know that there is a time to laugh, as well as a time to weep. But I do want you to be thoughtful, as well as happy,—to consider, as well as to make mirth. There are some missing every Whitsuntide who a year before were alive and well; there are some every year gathering round Christmas fire-sides, who a year afterwards will be lying in their graves.

Reader, how long have you yourself to live? Will another Whitsuntide, or another Christmas find you alive? Once more I entreat you to listen to the invitations which I bring you this day. I have a message for you from my Master. He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

There are four points in the text before you, to which I ask your attention. On each of these I have somewhat to say.

I. First. Who is the Speaker of this invitation?

II. Secondly. To whom is this invitation addressed?

III. Thirdly. What does the Speaker ask you to do?

IV. Lastly. What does the Speaker offer to give? May the Holy Ghost bless the reading of this tract to your everlasting benefit May this day be a day to be specially remembered in the history of your soul!

I. In the first place, Who is the Speaker of the invitation which heads this tract? Who is it that invites so freely and offers so largely? Who is it that says to your conscience this day, "Come: come unto Me"?

Reader, you have a right to ask these questions. You live in a lying world. The earth is full of cheats, shams, deceptions, impositions, and falsehoods. The value of a promissory note depends entirely on the name which is signed at the bottom. When you hear of a mighty Promiser you have a right to say, Who is this? and what is His name?

The Speaker of the invitation before you is the greatest and best Friend that man has ever had. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

He is One who is almighty. He is God the Father's Fellow and equal; He is very God of very God: by Him were all things made. In His hand are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; He has all power in heaven and earth; in Him all fulness dwells. He has the keys of death and hell. He is now the appointed Mediator between God and man: He will one day be the Judge and King of all the earth. Reader, when such a One as this speaks, you may safely trust Him. What He promises He is able to perform.

He is One who is most loving. He loved us so that He left heaven for our sakes, and laid aside for a season the glory that He had with the Father. He loved us so that He was born of a woman for our sakes and lived thirty-three years in this sinful world. He loved us so that He undertook to pay our mighty debt to God, and died upon the cross to make atonement for our sins. Reader, when such a One as this speaks, He deserves a hearing. When He promises a thing, you need not be afraid to trust him.

He is One who knows the heart of man most thoroughly. He took on Him a body like our own, and was made like man in all things, sin only excepted. He knows by experience what man has to go through. He has tasted poverty, and weariness, and hunger, and thirst, and pain, and temptation; He is acquainted with all our condition upon earth; He has "suffered Himself being tempted." Reader, when such a One as this makes an offer, He makes it with perfect wisdom. He knows exactly what you and I need.

He is One who never breaks His word. He always fulfils His promises: He never fails to do what He undertakes. He never disappoints the soul that trusts Him. Mighty as He is, there is one thing which He cannot do: it is impossible for Him to lie. Reader, when such a One as this makes a promise, you need not doubt that He will stand to it. You may depend with confidence on His word.

Reader, you have now heard who sends you the invitation which is before you today. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. Give Him the credit due to His name: grant Him a full and impartial hearing. Believe that a promise from His month deserves your best attention: see that you refuse not Him that speaketh. It is written, "If they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we refuse Him that speaketh from heaven." (Hebrews 12:25)

II. I will now show you, in the second place, to whom the invitation before you is addressed.

The Lord Jesus addresses "all that labour and are heavy-laden." The expression is deeply comforting and instructive. It is wide, sweeping, and comprehensive. It describes the ease of millions in every part of the world.

Where are the labouring and heavy-laden? They are everywhere: they are a multitude that man can scarcely number; they are to be found in every climate, and in every country under the sun. They live in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and in America; they dwell by the banks of the Seine, as well as the banks of the Thames,—by the banks of the Mississippi as well as the banks of the Niger. They abound under republics as well as under monarchies,—under liberal governments as well as under despotism. Everywhere you will find trouble, care, sorrow, anxiety, murmuring, discontent, and unrest. What does it mean? What does it all come to? Men are "labouring and heavy-laden."

To what class do the labouring and heavy-laden belong to? They belong to every class: there is no exception. They are to be found among masters as well as among servants,—among rich as well as among poor,—among kings as well as among subjects,— among learned as well as among ignorant people. In every class you will find trouble, care, sorrow, anxiety, murmuring, discontent, and unrest. What does it mean? What does it all come to? Men are "labouring and heavy-laden."

Reader, how shall we explain this? What is the cause of the state of things which I have just tried to describe?—Did God create man at the beginning to be unhappy? Most certainly not.—Are human governments to blame because men are not happy? At most to a very slight extent. The fault lies far too deep to be reached by human laws.—There is another cause, a cause which many unhappily refuse to see: THAT CAUSE IS SIN.

Reader, sin and departure from God are the true reasons why men are everywhere labouring and heavy-laden. Sin is the universal disease which infects the whole earth. Sin brought in thorns and thistles at the beginning, and obliged man to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; sin is the reason why the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, and the foundations of the earth are out of course; sin is the cause of all the burdens which now press down mankind. Most men know it not, and weary themselves in vain to explain the state of things among them. But sin is the great root and foundation of all sorrow, whatever proud man may think. How much men ought to hate sin!

Reader, are you one of those who are labouring and heavy-laden? I think it very likely that you are. I am firmly persuaded that there are thousands of men and women in the world who are inwardly uncomfortable; and yet will not confess it. They feel a burden on their hearts, which they would gladly get rid of; and yet they do not know the way. They have a conviction that all is not right in their inward man, which they never tell to any one. Husbands do not tell it to their wives, and wives do not tell it to their husbands; children do not tell it to their parents, and friends do not tell it to their friends; but the inward burden lies heavily on many hearts! There is far more unhappiness than the world sees. Disguise it as some will, there are multitudes uncomfortable because they know they are not prepared to meet God; and you, who are reading this tract, perhaps are one.

Reader, if you are labouring and heavy-laden, you are the very person to whom the Lord Jesus Christ sends an invitation this day. If you have an aching heart, and a sore conscience,—if you want rest for a weary soul, and know not where to find it,—if you want peace for a guilty heart, and

are at a loss which way to turn,—you are the man, you are the woman, to whom Jesus speaks today. There is hope for you. I bring you good tidings. "Come unto Me," says Jesus, "and I will give you rest."

You may tell me this invitation cannot be meant for you, because you are not good enough to be invited by Christ. I answer, that Jesus does not speak to the good, but to the labouring and heavy-laden. Do you know anything of this feeling? Then you are one to whom He speaks.

You may tell me that the invitation cannot be meant for you, because you are a sinner, and know nothing about religion. I answer, that it matters nothing what you are, or what you have been. Do you at this moment feel labouring and heavy-laden? Then you are one to whom Jesus speaks.

You may tell me that you cannot think the invitation is meant for you, because you are not yet converted, and have not got a new heart. I answer, that Christ's invitation is not addressed to the converted, but to the labouring and heavy laden. Is this what you feel? Is there any burden on your heart? Then you are one of those to whom Christ speaks.

You may tell me that you have no right to accept this invitation, because you do not know that you are one of God's elect. I answer, that you have no right to put words in Christ's mouth, which God has not used: He does not say, "Come unto Me, all ye that are elect;" He addresses all the labouring and heavy laden ones, without any exception. Are you one of them? Is there weight within on your soul? This is the only question you have to decide. If you are, you are one of these to whom Christ speaks.

Reader, if you are one of the labouring and heavy-laden ones, once more I entreat you not to refuse the invitation which I bring you today. Do not forsake your own mercies. The harbour of refuge is freely before you: do not turn away from it. The best of Friends holds out His hand to you: let not pride, or self-righteousness, or fear of man's ridicule, make you reject His proffered love. Take Him at His word. Say to Him, "Lord Jesus Christ, I am one of those whom Thine invitation suits: I am labouring and heavy-laden. Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

III. I will now show you in the third place, what the Lord Jesus Christ asks you to do. Three words make up the sum and substance of the invitation which He sends you today. If you are labouring and heavy-laden, Jesus says, "Come unto Me."

Reader, there is a grand simplicity about the three words now before you. Short and plain as the sentence seems, it contains a mine of deep truth and solid comfort. Weigh it: look at it: consider it: ponder it well. I believe that it is one half of saving Christianity to understand what Jesus means when He says, "Come unto Me."

Mark well, that the Lord Jesus does not bid the labouring and heavy-laden "go and work." Those words would carry no comfort to heavy consciences: it would be like requiring labour from an exhausted man. No! He bids them "Come!"—He does not say, "Pay Me what thou owest." That demand would drive a broken heart into despair: it would be like claiming a debt from a ruined bankrupt. No! He says, "Come!"—He does not say, "Stand still and wait." That command would only be a mockery: it would be like promising to give medicine at the end of a week to one at the point of death." No: He says, "Come!" Today,—at once,—without any delay, "Come unto Me."

But, after all, what is meant by coming to Christ? It is an expression often used, but often misunderstood. Beware that you make no mistake at this point. Here, unhappily, thousands turn aside out of the right course, and miss the truth. Beware that you do not make shipwreck at the very mouth of the harbour.

Take notice, that coming to Christ means something more than coming to church and chapel. You may fill your place regularly at a place of worship; and attend all outward means of grace, and yet not be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

Take notice, that coming to Christ is something more than coming to the Lord's table. You may be a regular member and communicant; you may never be missing in the lists of those who eat that bread and drink that wine, which the Lord commanded to be received, and yet never be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

Take notice, that coming to Christ is something more than coming to ministers. You may be a constant hearer of some popular preacher, and a zealous partizan of all his opinions, and yet never be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

Take notice, once more, that coming to Christ is something more than coming to the possession of head-knowledge about Him. You may know the whole system of Evangelical doctrine, and be able to talk, argue, and dispute on every jot of it, and yet never be saved. All this is not coming to Christ.

Coming to Christ is coming to Him with the heart by simple faith. Believing on Christ is coming to Him, and coming to Christ is believing on Him. It is that act of the soul which takes place when a man, feeling his own sins, and despairing of all other hope, commits himself to Christ for salvation, ventures on Him, trusts Him, and casts himself wholly on Him. When a man turns to Christ empty that he may be filled, sick that he may be healed, hungry that he may be satisfied, thirsty that he may be refreshed, needy that he may be enriched, dying that he may have life, lost that he may be saved, guilty that he may be pardoned, sin-defiled that he may be cleansed, confessing that Christ alone can supply his need,—then he comes to Christ. When he uses Christ as the Jews used the city of refuge, as the starving Egyptians used Joseph, as the dying Israelites used the brazen serpent,—then he comes to Christ. It is the empty soul's venture on a full Saviour; it is the drowning man's grasp on the hand held out to help him; it is the sick man's reception of a headlong medicine. This, and nothing more than this, is cooling to Christ.

Hearken, my beloved reader, whoever you may be, listen to a word of caution. Beware of mistakes as to this matter of coming to Christ. Do not stop short in any half-way house; do not allow the devil and the world to cheat you out of eternal life; do not suppose that you will ever get any good from Christ, unless you go straight, direct, thoroughly, and entirely to Christ Himself. Trust not in a little outward formality: content not yourself with a regular use of outward means. A lantern is an excellent help in a dark night, but it is not home: means of grace are useful aids, but they are not Christ. Oh, no! Press onward, forward, upward, till you have had personal, business-like dealings with Christ Himself.

Hearken again, my beloved reader. Beware of mistakes as to the manner of coming to Christ. Dismiss from your mind for ever all idea of worthiness merit, and fitness in yourself; throw away all notions of goodness, righteousness, and deserts: think not that you can bring anything to

recommend you, or to make you deserving of Christ's notice. You must come to Him as a poor, guilty undeserving sinner, or you might just as well not come at all. "To him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5) It is the peculiar mark of the faith that justifies and saves that it brings to Christ nothing but an empty hand.

Hearken once more, my beloved reader. Let there be no mistake in your mind as to the special character of the man who has come to Christ, and is a true Christian. He is not an angel; he is not a half-angelic being, in whom is no weakness, or blemish, or infirmity: he is nothing of the kind. He is nothing more than a sinner who has found out his sinfulness, and has learned the blessed secret of living by faith in Christ. What was the glorious company of the apostles and prophets? What was the noble army of martyrs? What were Isaiah, Daniel, Peter, James, John, Paul, Polycarp, Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Ridley, Latimer, Bunyan, Baxter, Whitefield, Venn, Chalmers, Bickersteth, M'Cheyne? What were they all, but sinners who knew and felt their sins, and trusted only in Christ? What were they, but men who accepted the invitation I bring you this day, and came to Christ by faith? By this faith they lived: in this faith they died. In themselves and their doings they saw nothing worth mentioning; but in Christ they saw all that their souls required.

Reader, the invitation of Christ is now before you. If you never listened to it before, listen to it today. Broad, full, free, wide, simple, tender, kind,—that invitation will leave you without excuse if you refuse to accept it. There are some invitations, perhaps, which it is wiser and better to decline. There is one which ought always to be accepted: that one is before you today. Jesus Christ is saying, "Come: come unto Me."

IV. I will now show you, in the last Place, what the Lord Jesus Christ promises to give. He does not ask the labouring and heavy-laden to come to Him for nothing. He holds out gracious inducements: He allures them by sweet offers. "Come unto Me," He says, "and I will give you rest."

Rest is a pleasant thing. Few are the men and women in this weary world who do not know the sweetness of it. The man who has been labouring hard with his hands all the week, working in iron, or brass, or stone, or wood, or clay,—digging, lifting, hammering, cutting,—he knows the comfort of going home on Saturday night, and having one day of rest. The man who has been toiling hard with his head all day,—writing, copying, calculating, composing, sketching, planning,—he knows the comfort of laying aside his papers and having a little rest. Yes: rest is a pleasant thing.

And rest is one of the principal offers which —"Come to me," says the world, "and I will give you riches and pleasure." —"Come with me," says the devil, "and I will give you greatest, power, and wisdom."— "Come unto Me," says the Lord Jesus Christ, "and I will give you rest."

But what is the nature of that rest which the Lord Jesus promises to give? It is no mere repose of body. A man may have that and yet be miserable. You may place him in a palace, and surround him with every possible comfort; you may give him money in abundance, and everything that money can buy; you may free him from all care about tomorrow's bodily wants,—and take away the need of labouring for a single hour: all this you may do to a man, and yet not give him true rest. Thousands know this too well by bitter experience. Their hearts are starving in the midst of worldly plenty; their inward man is sick and weary, while their outward man is clothed in purple and fine

linen, and fares sumptuously every day! Yes: a man may have houses, and lands, and money, and horses, and carriages, and soft beds, and good fare, and attentive servants, and yet not have true rest.

The rest that Christ gives is an inward thing. It is rest of heart, rest of conscience, rest of mind, rest of affection, rest of will. It is rest from a comfortable sense of sins being all forgiven and guilt all put away; it is rest from a solid hope of good things to come, laid up beyond the reach of disease, and death, and the grave; it is rest from the well-grounded feeling, that the great business of life is settled, its great end provided for, that in time all is well done, and in eternity heaven will be our home.

Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by showing them His own finished work on the cross, by clothing them in His own perfect righteousness, and washing them in His own precious blood. When a man begins to see that the Son of God actually died for his sins, his soul begins to taste something of inward quiet and peace.

Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by revealing Himself as their ever-living High Priest in heaven, and God reconciled to them through Him. When a man begins to see that the Son of God actually lives to intercede for him, he will begin to feel something of inward quiet and peace.

Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by implanting His Spirit in their hearts, witnessing with their spirits that they are God's children, find that old things are passed away, and all things are become new. When a man begins to feel an inward drawing towards God as a father, and a sense of being an adopted and forgiven child, his soul begins to feel something of quiet and peace.

Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him, by dwelling in their hearts as King, by putting all things within in order, and giving to each faculty its place and work. When a man begins to find order in his heart in place of rebellion and confusion, his soul begins to understand something of quiet and peace. There is no true inward happiness until the true King is on the throne.

Rest such as this is the privilege of all believers in Christ. Some know more of it and some less; some feel it only at distant intervals, and some feel it almost always; few enjoy the sense of it without many a battle with unbelief; and many a conflict with fear: but all who truly come to Christ, know something of this rest. Ask them, with all their complaints and doubts, whether they would give up Christ and go back to the world. You will get only one answer. Weak as their sense of rest may be, they have got hold of something which does them good, and that something they cannot let go.

Rest such as this is within reach of all who are willing to seek it and receive it. The poor man is not so poor but he may have it; the ignorant man is not so ignorant but he may know it; the sick man is not so weak and helpless but he may get hold of it Faith, simple faith, is the one thing needful in order to possess Christ's rest. Faith in Christ is the grand secret of happiness. Neither poverty, nor ignorance, nor tribulation, nor distress can prevent men and women feeling rest of soul, if they will only come to Christ and believe.

Rest such as this is the possession which makes men independent. Banks may break, and money make itself wings and flee away; war, pestilence, and famine may break in and land, and the foundations of the earth be out of course; health and vigour may depart, and the body be crushed down by loathsome disease; death may cut down wife, and children, and friends, until he who once enjoyed them stands entirely alone: but the man who has come to Christ by faith will still possess something which can never he taken from him. Like Paul and Silas, he will sing in prison; like Job, bereaved of children and property, he will bless the name of the Lord. He is the truly independent man who possesses that which nothing can take away.

Rest such as this is the possession which makes men truly rich. It lasts; it wears; it endures; it lightens the solitary home; it smooths down the dying pillow; it goes with men when they are placed in their coffins; it abides with them when they are laid in their graves. When friends can no longer help us, and money is no longer of use,—when doctors can no longer relieve our pain, and nurses can no longer minister to our wants,—when sense begins to fail, and eye and ear can no longer do their duty,—then, even then, the "rest" which Christ gives will be shed abroad in the heart of the believer. The words "rich" and "poor" will change their meaning entirely one day. He is the only rich man who has come to Christ by faith, and from Christ has received rest.

Reader, this is the rest which Christ offers to give to all who are labouring and heavy-laden; this is the rest for which He invites them to come to Him; this is the rest which I want you to enjoy, and to which I bring you an invitation this day. May God grant that the invitation may not be brought to you in vain!

1. Reader, do you know anything of the "rest" of which I have been speaking? If not what have you got from your religion? You live in a Christian land; you profess and call yourself a Christian; you have probably attended a Christian place of worship many years: you would not like to be called an infidel or a heathen. Yet all this time what benefit have you received from your Christianity? What solid advantage have you obtained from it? For anything one can see, you might just as well have been a Turk or a Jew.

Take advice this day, and resolve to possess the realities of Christianity, as well as the name, and the substance, as well as the form. Do not be content until you know something of the peace, and hope, and joy, and consolation which Christians enjoyed in former times. Ask yourself what is the reason that you are a stranger to the feelings which men and women experienced in the days of the Apostles: ask yourself why you do not "joy in the Lord," and feel "peace with God," like the Romans and Philippians, to whom St. Paul wrote. Religious feelings, no doubt, are often deceptive; but surely the religion which produces no feelings at all is not the religion of the New Testament. The religion which gives a man no inward comfort can never be a religion from God. Reader, take heed to yourself. Never be satisfied until you know something of the "rest that is in Christ."

2. Reader, do you desire rest of soul, and yet know not where to turn for it? Remember this day, that there is only one place where it can be found. Governments cannot give it; education will not impart it; wordly amusements cannot supply it; money will not purchase it. It can only be found in the hand of Jesus Christ; and to His hand you must turn, if you would find peace within.

There is no royal road to rest of soul. Let that never be forgotten. There is only one way to the Father,—Jesus Christ; one door into heaven,—Jesus Christ; and one path to heart-peace,—Jesus Christ. By that way all labouring and heavy-laden ones must go, whate'er be their rank or condition. Kings in their palaces, and paupers in the workhouse, are all on a level in this matter. All alike must come to Christ, if they feel soul-weary and tired; all must drink of the same fountain, if they would have their thirst relieved.

You may not believe what I am now writing. Time will show who is right and who is wrong. Go on, if you will, imagining that true happiness is to be found in the good things of this world. Seek it, if you will, in revelling and banqueting, in dancing and merry making. In races and theatres, in field-sports and cards. Seek it, if you will, in reading and scientific pursuits, in music and painting, in politics and business. Seek it: but you will never overtake it, unless you change your plan. Real heart-rest is never to be found except in heart-union with Jesus Christ.

The Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I, lies buried in Newport Church, in the Isle of Wight. A marble monument, erected by our gracious Queen Victoria, records in a touching way the manner of her death. They languished in Carnsbrook Castle during the unhappy Commonwealth wars, a prisoner, alone, and separate from all the companions of her youth, until death set her free. She was found dead one day with her head leaning on her Bible, and the Bible open at the words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." The monument in Newport Church records this fact. It consists of a female figure reclining her head on a marble book, with the text already quoted engraved on the book. Think, reader, what a sermon in stone that monument preaches. Think what a standing memorial it affords of the utter inability of rank and high birth to confer certain happiness! Think what a testimony it becomes to the lesson before you this day,—the mighty lesson that there is no true rest for any one excepting in Christ! Happy will it be for your soul if that lesson is never forgotten!

3. Reader, do you desire to possess the rest that Christ alone can give, and yet feel afraid to seek it? I beseech you, as a friend to your soul, to cast this needless fear away. For what did Christ die on the cross, if not to save sinners? For what does He sit at the right hand of God, if not to receive and intercede for sinners? When Christ invites you so plainly, and promises so freely, why should you rob your own soul, and refuse to come to Him?

Who, among all the readers of this tract, desires to be saved by Christ, and yet is not saved at present? Come, I beseech: you come to Christ without delay. Though you have been a great sinner, COME.—Though you have long resisted warnings, counsels, sermons, COME.—Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against a father's advice and a mother's tears, COME.—Though you have plunged into every excess of wickedness, and lived without a Sabbath and without prayer, yet COME.—The door is not shut, the fountain is not yet closed. Jesus Christ invites you. It is enough that you feel labouring and heavy-laden, and desire to be saved. COME: COME TO CHRIST WITHOUT DELAY!

Come to Him by faith, and pour out your heart before Him in prayer. Tell Him the whole story of your life, and ask Him to receive you. Cry to Him as the penitent thief did, when he saw Him on the cross. Say to Him, "Lord, save me also! Lord, remember me!" COME: COME TO CHRIST!

Reader, if you have never come to this point yet, you must come to it at last, if you mean to be saved. You must apply to Christ as a sinner; you must have personal dealings with the great Physician, and apply to Him for a cure. Why not do it at once? Why not this very day accept the great invitation? Once more, I repeat my exhortation. COME: COME TO CHRIST WITHOUT DELAY!

4. Reader, have you found the rest which Christ gives? Have you tasted true peace by coming to him and casting your soul on him? Then go on to the end of your days as you have begun, looking to Jesus and living on Him. Go on drawing daily full supplies of rest, peace, mercy, and grace from the great fountain of rest and peace. Remember that, if you live to the age of Methuselah, you will never be anything but a poor empty sinner, owing all you have and hope for to Christ alone.

Never be ashamed of living the life of faith in Christ. Men may ridicule and mock you, and even silence you in argument; but they can never take from you the feelings which faith in Christ gives. They can never prevent you feeling, "I was weary till I found Christ, but now I have rest of conscience. I was blind, but now I see. I was dead, but I am alive again. I was lost, but I am found."

Invite all around you to come to Christ. Use every lawful effort to bring father, mother, husband, wife, children, brothers, sisters, friends, relatives, companions, fellow-workmen, servants,—to bring all and every one to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Spare no pains. Speak to them about Christ: speak to Christ about them. Be instant in season, out of season. Say to them, as Moses did to Hobab, "Come with us and we will do you good." The more you work for the souls of others, the more blessing will you get for your own soul.

Last, but not least, look forward with confidence to a better rest in a world to come. Yet a little time, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry: he will gather together all who have believed in Him, and take His people to a home where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary shall be at perfect rest; he shall give them a glorious body, in which they shall serve Him without distraction, and praise Him without weariness. He shall wipe away tears from all faces, and make all things new. (Isaiah 25:8)

There is a good time coming for all who have come to Christ and committed their souls into His keeping. They shall remember all the ways by which they have been led, and see the wisdom of every step in the way; they all wonder that they ever doubted the kindness and love of their Shepherd: above all, they shall wonder that they could live so long without Him, and that when they heard of Him they could hesitate about coming to Him.

There is a pass in Scotland called Glencoe, which supplies a beautiful illustration of what heaven will be to the man who comes to Christ. The road through Glencoe carries the traveller up a long and steep ascent, with many a little winding and many a little turn in its course. But when the top of the pass is reached, a stone is seen by the wayside, with these simple words engraven on it, "Rest, and be thankful." Reader, those words describe the feelings with which every one who comes to Christ will at length enter heaven. The summit of the narrow way will be won: we shall cease from our weary journeying, and sit down in the kingdom of God; we shall look back over all the way of life with thankfulness, and see the perfect wisdom of every little winding and turn in the steep ascent by which we were led; we shall forget the toils of the upward journey in the glorious rest. Here in this world our sense of rest in Christ at best is feeble and partial; but, "when that

which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." Thanks be unto God, a day is coming when believers shall rest perfectly, and be thankful.

Reader, the invitation is now before you. Will you accept it?

Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest;

Far did I rove, and found no certain home;

At last I sought them in His sheltering breast

Who opens His arms and bids the weary come.

In Christ I found a home, a rest Divine,

And I since then am His, and He is mine.

Yes: He is mine! and naught of earthly things,—

Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,

The fame of heroes or the pomp of kings,

Could tempt me to forego His love an hour.

"Go, worthless world," I cry, "with all that's thine!"

"Go: I my Saviour's am, and He is mine." The good I have is from His stores supplied,

The ill is only what He deems the best;

He for my Friend, I'm rich with naught beside,

And poor without Him, though of all possest.

Changes may come: I take, or I resign,—

Content while I am His, and He is mine.

Whatever may change, in Him no change is seen,—

A glorious sun that wanes not, nor declines:

Above the clouds and storms He walks unseen,

And sweetly on His people's darkness shines.

All may depart: I fret not nor repine,

While I my Saviour's am, and He is mine.

Just as I am: without one plea,

But that Thy blood was shed for me,

And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,—

O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am: and waiting not

To rid my soul of one dark blot,

To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,—

O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am: though tossed about

With many a conflict, many a doubt,

With fears within, and wars without,—

O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am,—poor, wretched, blind:

Sight, riches, healing of the mind,

Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,—

O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am: Thou wilt receive,

Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,

Because Thy promise I believe,—

O Lamb of Cod, I come!

Just as I am: Thy love unknown

Has broken every barrier down;

Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,—

O Lamb of God, I come!

———————

Chapter 22

Come out, and Be Ye Separate!

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are “pure gold.” Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond’s Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

“COME OUT, AND BE YE SEPARATE.”

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Corinthians 6:17). THE words that head this page touch a subject of vast importance in religion. That subject is the great duty of separation from the world. This is the point which St. Paul had in view when he wrote to the Corinthians, “Come out—be separate.”

The subject is one that demands the best attention of all who profess and call themselves Christians. In every age of the Church separation from the world has always been one of the grand evidences of a work of grace in the heart. He that has been really born of the Spirit, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, has always endeavoured to “come out from the world,” and live a separate life. They who have only had the name of Christian without the reality, have always refused to “come out and be separate” from the world.

The subject perhaps was never more important than it is, at the present day. There is a widely-spread desire to make things pleasant in religion—to saw off the corners and edges of the cross, and to avoid, as far as possible, self-denial. On every side we hear professing Christians declaring loudly that we must not be “narrow and exclusive,” and that there is no harm in many things which the holiest saints of old thought bad for their souls. That we may go anywhere, and do anything, and spend our time in anything, and read anything, and keep any company, and plunge into anything, and all the while may be very good Christians—this, this is the maxim of thousands. In a day like this I think it good to raise a warning voice, and invite attention to the teaching of God’s Word. It is written in that Word, “Come out, and be separate.”

There are four points which I shall try to show my readers in examining this mighty subject.

I. First, I shall try to show that the world is a source of great danger to the soul.

II. Secondly, I shall try to show what is not meant by separation from the world.

III. Thirdly, I shall try to show in what real separation from the world consists.

IV. Fourthly, I shall try to show the secret of victory over the world.

And now, before I go a single step further, let me warn every reader of this paper that he will never understand this subject unless he first understands what a true Christian is. If you are one of those unhappy people who think everybody is a Christian who goes to a place of worship, no matter how

he lives, or what he believes, I fear you will care little about separation from the world. But if you read your Bible, and are in earnest about your soul, you will know that there are two classes of Christians—converted and unconverted. You will know that what the Jews were among the nations under the Old Testament, the true Christian is meant to be under the New. You will understand what I mean when I say that true Christians are meant, in like manner, to be a "peculiar people" under the Gospel, and that there must be a difference between believers and unbelievers. To you, therefore, I make a special appeal this day. While many avoid the subject of separation from the world, and many positively hate it, and many are puzzled by it, give me your attention while I try to show you the thing as it is.

I. First of all, let me show that the world is a source of great danger to the soul.

By the world, be it remembered, I do not mean the material world on the face of which we are living and moving. He that pretends to say that anything which God has created in the heavens above, or the earth beneath, is in itself harmful to man's soul, says that which is unreasonable and absurd. On the contrary, the sun, moon, and stars,—the mountains, the valleys, and the plains,—the seas, lakes, and rivers,—the animal and vegetable creation,—all are in themselves very good. All are full of lessons of God's wisdom and power, and all proclaim daily, "The hand that made us is divine." The idea that "matter" is in itself sinful and corrupt is a foolish heresy.

When I speak of "the world" in this paper, I mean those people who think only, or chiefly, of this world's things, and neglect the world to come,—the people who are always thinking more of earth than of heaven, more of time than of eternity, more of the body than of the soul, more of pleasing man than of pleasing God. It is of them and their ways, habits, customs, opinions, practices, tastes, aims, spirit, and tone, that I am speaking when I speak of "the world." This is the world from which St. Paul tells us to "Come out and be separate."

Now that the world, in this sense, is an enemy to the soul, the well-known Church Catechism teaches us at its very beginning. It tells us that there are three things which a baptized Christian is bound to renounce and give up, and three enemies which he ought to fight with and resiSt. These three are the flesh, the devil, and the world. All three are terrible foes, and all three must be overcome, if we would be saved.

But, whatever men please to think about the Catechism, we shall do well to turn to the testimony of Holy Scripture. If the texts I am about to quote do not prove that the world is a source of danger to the soul, there is no meaning in words.

(a) Let us hear what St. Paul says :— "Be not conformed to this world : but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4).

"In time past ye walked according to the course of this world" (Ephesians 2:2).

"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10).

(b) Let us hear what St. James says:—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

“Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

(c) Let us hear what St. John says:— “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17),

“The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not” (1 John 3:1).

“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them” (1 John 4:5).

“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4).

“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

(d) Let us hear lastly what the Lord Jesus Christ says:—“The care of this world. . . choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22).

“Ye are of this world: I am not of this world” (John 8:28).

“The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him” (John 14:17).

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hated you” (John 15:19).

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16).

I make no comment on these twenty-two texts. They speak for themselves. If any one can read them carefully, and fail to see that the world is an enemy to the Christian, and that there is an utter opposition between the friendship of the world and the friendship of Christ, he is past the reach of argument, and it is waste of time to reason with him.

To my eyes they contain a lesson as clear as the sun at noonday.

I turn from Scripture to matters of fact and experience. I appeal to any old Christian who keeps his eyes open, and knows what is going on in the churches. I ask him whether it be not true that nothing damages the cause of religion so much as “the world!” It is not open sin, or open unbelief, which robs Christ of His professing servants, so much as the love of the world, the fear of the world, the cares of the world, the business of the world, the money of the world, the pleasures of the world, and the desire to keep in with the world. This is the great rock on which thousands of

young people are continually making shipwreck. They do not object to any article of the Christian faith. They do not deliberately choose evil, and openly rebel against God. They hope somehow to get to heaven at last; and they think it proper to have some religion. But they cannot give up their idol: they must have the world. And so, after running well and bidding fair for heaven while boys and girls, they turn aside when they become men and women, and go down the broad way which leads to destruction. They begin with Abraham and Moses, and end with Demas and Lot's wife.

The last day alone will prove how many souls the world has slain. Hundreds will be found to have been trained in religious families, and to have known the Gospel from their very childhood, and yet missed heaven. They left the harbour of home with bright prospects, and launched forth on the ocean of life with a father's blessing and a mother's prayers, and then got out of the right course through the seductions of the world, and ended their voyage in shallows and in misery. It is a sorrowful story to tell; but, alas, it is only too common! I cannot wonder that St. Paul says, "Come out and be separate."

II. Let me now try to show what does not constitute separation from the world.

The point is one which requires clearing up. There are many mistakes made about it. You will sometimes see sincere and well-meaning Christians doing things which God never intended them to do, in the matter of separation from the world, and honestly believing that they are in the path of duty. Their mistakes often do great harm. They give occasion to the wicked to ridicule all religion and supply them with an excuse for having none. They cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and add to the offence of the cross. I think it a plain duty to make a few remarks on the subject. We must never forget that it is possible to be very much in earnest, and to think we are "doing God service," when in reality we are making some great mistake. There is such a thing as "zeal not according to knowledge." There are few things on which it is so important to pray for a right judgment and Christian common sense, as about separation from the world.

(a) When St. Paul said, "Come out and be separate," he did not mean that Christians ought to give up all callings, trades, professions, and worldly business. He did not forbid men to be soldiers, sailors, lawyers, doctors, merchants, bankers, shopkeepers, or tradesmen. There is not a word in the New Testament to justify such a line of conduct. Cornelius the centurion, Luke the physician, Zenas the lawyer, are examples to the contrary. Idleness is in itself a sin. A lawful calling is a remedy against temptation. "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). To give up any business of life, which is not necessarily sinful, to the wicked and the devil, from fear of getting harm from it, is lazy cowardly conduct. The right plan is to carry our religion into our business, and not to give up business under the specious pretence that it interferes with our religion.

(b) When St. Paul said, "Come out and be separate;' he did not mean that Christians ought to decline all intercourse with unconverted people, and refuse to go into their society. There is no warrant for such conduct in the New Testament. Our Lord and His disciples did not refuse to go to a marriage feast, or to sit at meat at a Pharisee's table. St. Paul does not say, "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast," you must not go, but only tells us how to behave if we do go (1 Corinthians 10:27). Moreover, it is a dangerous thing to begin judging people too closely, and settling who are converted and who are not, and what society is godly and what ungodly. We are sure to make mistakes. Above all, such a course of life would cut us off from many opportunities of

doing good. If we carry our Master with us wherever we go, who can tell but we may save some, and get no harm?

(c) When St. Paul says, “Come out and be separate” he does not mean that Christians ought to take no interest in anything on earth except religion. To neglect science, art, literature, and politics,—to read nothing which is not directly spiritual,—to know nothing about what is going on among mankind, and never to look at a newspaper,—to care nothing about the government of one’s country, and to be utterly indifferent as to the persons who guide its counsels and make its laws,—all this may seem very right and proper in the eyes of some people. But I take leave to think that it is an idle, selfish neglect of duty. St. Paul knew the value of good government, as one of the main helps to our “living a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty “(1 Timothy 2:2). St. Paul was not ashamed to read heathen writers, and to quote their words in his speeches and writing. St. Paul did not think it beneath him to show an acquaintance with the laws and customs and callings of the world, in the illustrations he gave from them. Christians who plume themselves on their ignorance of secular things are precisely the Christians who bring religion into contempt. I knew the case of a blacksmith who would not come to hear his clergyman preach the Gospel, until he found out that he knew the properties of iron. Then he came.

(d) When St. Paul said, “Come out and be separate,” he did not mean that Christians should be singular, eccentric, and peculiar in their dress, manners, demeanour and voice. Anything which attracts notice in these matters is most objectionable, and ought to be carefully avoided. To wear clothes of such a colour, or made in such a fashion, that when you go into company every eye is fixed on you, and you are the object of general observation, is an enormous mistake. It gives occasion to the wicked to ridicule religion, and looks self-righteous and affected. There is not the slightest proof that our Lord and His apostles, and Priscilla, and Persis, and their companions, did not dress and behave just like others in their own ranks of life. On the other hand, one of the many charges our Lord brings against the Pharisees was that of making broad their phylacteries, and enlarging the borders of their garments, so as to be “seen of men” (Matthew 23:5). True sanctity and sanctimoniousness are entirely different things. Those who try to show their unworldliness by wearing conspicuously ugly clothes, or by speaking in a whining, snuffling voice, or by affecting an unnatural slavishness, humility, and gravity of manner, miss their mark altogether, and only give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

(e) When St. Paul said “Come out and be separate,” he did not mean that Christians ought to retire from the company of mankind, and shut themselves up in solitude. It is one of the crying errors of the Church of Rome to suppose that eminent holiness is to be attained by such practices. It is the unhappy delusion of the whole army of monks, nuns, and hermits. Separation of this kind is not according to the mind of ChriSt. He says distinctly in His last prayer, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). There is not a word in the Acts or Epistles to recommend such a separation. True believers are always represented as mixing in the world, doing their duty in it, and glorifying God by patience, meekness, purity, and courage in their several positions, and not by cowardly desertion of them. Moreover, it is foolish to suppose that we can keep the world and the devil out of our hearts by going into holes and corners. True religion and unworldliness are best seen, not in timidly forsaking the post which God has allotted to us, but in manfully standing our ground, and showing the power of grace to overcome evil.

(f) Last, but not least, when St. Paul said, “Come out and be separate,” he did not mean that Christians ought to withdraw from every Church in which there are unconverted members, or to refuse to worship in company with any who are not believers, or to keep away from the Lord’s table if any ungodly people go up to it. This is a very common but a very grievous mistake. There is not a text in the New Testament to justify it, and it ought to be condemned as a pure invention of man. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself deliberately allowed Judas Iscariot to be an apostle for three years, and gave him the Lord’s Supper. He has taught us in the parable of the wheat and tares that converted and unconverted will be together till the harvest, and cannot be divided. In his Epistles to the Seven Churches, and in all St. Paul’s Epistles, we often see faults and corruptions mentioned and reproved, but we are never told that they justify desertion of the assembly, or neglect of ordinances. In short, we must not look for a perfect Church, a perfect congregation, and a perfect company of communicants until the marriage supper of the Lamb. If others are unworthy Churchmen, or unworthy partakers of the Lord’s Supper, the sin is theirs and not ours: we are not their judges. But to separate ourselves from Church assemblies, and deprive ourselves of Christian ordinances, because others use them unworthily, is to take up a foolish, unreasonable, and unscriptural position. It is not the mind of Christ, and it certainly is not St. Paul’s idea of separation from the world.

I commend these six points to the calm consideration of all who wish to understand the subject of separation from the world. About each and all of them far more might be said than I have space to say in this paper. About each and all of them I have seen so many mistakes made, and so much misery and unhappiness caused by those mistakes, that I want to put Christians on their guard. I want them not to take up positions hastily, in the zeal of their first love, which they will afterwards be obliged to give up.

I leave this part of my subject with two pieces of advice, which I offer especially to young Christians.

I advise them, for one thing, if they really desire to come out from the world, to remember that the shortest path is not always the path of duty. To quarrel with all our unconverted relatives, to cut all our old friends, to withdraw entirely from mixed society, to live an exclusive life, to give up every act of courtesy and civility for the direct work of Christ—all this may seem very right, and may satisfy our consciences and save us trouble. But I venture a doubt whether it is not often a selfish, lazy, self-pleasing line of conduct, and whether the true cross and the true line of duty may not be to deny ourselves, and adopt a very different course of action. I advise them, for another thing, if they want to come out from the world, to watch against a sour, morose, ungenial, gloomy, unpleasant, bearish demeanour, and never to forget that there is such a thing as “winning without the Word” (1 Peter 3:1). Let them strive to show unconverted people that their principles, whatever may be thought of them, make them cheerful, amiable, good-tempered, unselfish, considerate for others, and ready to take an interest in everything that is innocent and of good report. In short, let there be no needless separation between us and the world. In many things, as I shall soon show, we must be separate; but let us take care that it is separation of the right sort. If the world is offended by such separation we cannot help it. But let us never give the world occasion to say that our separation is foolish, senseless, ridiculous, unreasonable, uncharitable, and unscriptural.

III. In the third place I shall try to show what true separation from the world really is.

I take up this branch of my subject with a very deep sense of its difficulty, That there is a certain line of conduct which all true Christians ought to pursue with respect to “the world, and the things of the world,” is very evident. The texts already quoted make that plain. The key to the solution of that question lies in the word “separation.” But in what separation consists it is not easy to show. On some points it is not hard to lay down particular rules; on others it is impossible to do more than state general principles, and leave every one to apply them according to his position in life. This is what I shall now attempt to do.

(a) First and foremost, he that desires to “come out from the world, and be separate,” must steadily and habitually refuse to be guided by the world’s standard of right and wrong.

The rule of the bulk of mankind is to go with the stream, to do as others, to follow the fashion, to keep in with the common opinion, and to set your watch by the town clock. The true Christian will never be content with such a rule as that. He will simply ask, What saith the Scripture? What is written in the Word of God? He will maintain firmly that nothing can be right which God says is wrong, and that the custom and opinion of his neighbours can never make that to be a trifle which God calls serious, or that to be no sin which God calls sin. He will never think lightly of such sins as drinking, swearing, gambling, lying, cheating, swindling, or breach of the seventh commandment, because they are common, and many say, Where is the mighty harm? That miserable argument—“Everybody thinks so, everybody says so, everybody does it, everybody will be there,” goes for nothing with him. Is it condemned or approved by the Bible? That is his only question. If he stands alone in the parish, or town, or congregation, he will not go against the Bible. If he has to come out from the crowd, and take a position by himself, he will not flinch from it rather than disobey the Bible. This is genuine Scriptural separation.

(b) He that desires to “come out from the world, and be separate,” must be very careful how he spends his leisure time.

This is a point which at first sight appears of little importance. But the longer I live the more I am persuaded that it deserves most serious attention. Honourable occupation and lawful business are a great safeguard to the soul, and the time that is spent upon them is comparatively the time of our least danger. The devil finds it hard to get a hearing from a busy man. But when the day’s work is over, and the time of leisure arrives, then comes the hour of temptation.

I do not hesitate to warn every man who wants to live a Christian life, to be very careful how he spends his evenings. Evening is the time when we are naturally disposed to unbend after the labours of the day; and evening is the time when the Christian is too often tempted to lay aside his armour, and consequently gets trouble on his soul. “Then cometh the devil,” and with the devil the world. Evening is the time when the poor man is tempted to go to the public-house, and fall into sin. Evening is the time when the tradesman too often goes to the inn parlour, and sits for hours hearing and seeing things which do him no good. Evening is the time which the higher classes choose for dancing, card playing, and the like; and consequently never get to bed till late at night. If we love our souls, and would not become worldly, let us mind how we spend our evenings. Tell me how a man spends his evenings, and I can generally tell what his character is.

The true Christian will do well to make it a settled rule never to waste his evenings. Whatever others may do, let him resolve always to make time for quiet, calm thought—for Bible-reading and

prayer. The rule will prove a hard one to keep. It may bring on him the charge of being unsocial and over-strict. Let him not mind this. Anything of this kind is better than habitual late hours in company, hurried prayers, slovenly Bible-reading, and a bad conscience. Even if he stands alone in his parish or town, let him not depart from his rule. He will find himself in a minority, and be thought a peculiar man. But this is genuine Scriptural separation.

(c) He that desires to “come out from the world, and be separate,” must steadily and habitually determine not to be swallowed up and absorbed in the business of the world.

A true Christian will strive to do his duty in whatever station or position he finds himself, and to do it well. Whether statesman, or merchant, or banker, or lawyer, or doctor, or tradesman, or farmer, he will try to do his work so that no one can find occasion for fault in him. But he will not allow it to get between him and ChriSt. If he finds his business beginning to eat up his Sundays, his Bible-reading, his private prayer, and to bring clouds between him and heaven, he will say, “Stand back! There is a limit. Hitherto thou mayest go, but no further. I cannot sell my soul for place, fame, or gold.” Like Daniel, he will make time for his communion with God, whatever the cost may be. Like Havelock, he will deny himself anything rather than lose his Bible-reading and his prayers. In all this he will find he stands almost alone. Many will laugh at him, and tell him they get on well enough without being so strict and particular. He will heed it not. He will resolutely hold the world at arm’s length, whatever present loss or sacrifice it may seen to entail. He will choose rather to be less rich and prosperous in this world, than not to prosper about his soul. To stand alone in this way, to run counter to the ways of others, requires immense self-denial. But this is genuine Scriptural separation.

(d) He that desires to “come out from the world, and be separate” must steadily abstain from all amusements and recreations which are inseparably connected with sin.

This is a hard subject to handle, and I approach it with pain. But I do not think I should be faithful to Christ, and faithful to my office as a minister, if I did not speak very plainly about it, in considering such a matter as separation from the world.

Let me, then, say honestly, that I cannot understand how any one who makes any pretence to real vital religion, can allow himself to attend races and theatres. Conscience, no doubt, is a strange thing, and every man must judge for himself and use his liberty. One man sees no harm in things which another regards with abhorrence as evil. I can only give my own opinion for what it is worth, and entreat my readers to consider seriously what I say.

That to look at horses running at full speed is in itself perfectly harmless, no sensible man will pretend to deny. That many plays, such as Shakespeare’s, are among the finest productions of the human intellect, is equally undeniable. But all this is beside the question. The question is whether horse-racing and theatres in England are not inseparably bound up with things that are downright wicked. I assert without hesitation that they are so bound up. I assert that the breach of God’s commandments so invariably accompanies the race and the play, that you cannot go to the amusement without helping sin.

I entreat all professing Christians to remember this, and to take heed what they do. I warn them plainly that they have no right to shut their eyes to facts which every intelligent person knows, for the mere. pleasure of seeing a horse-race, or listening to good actors or actresses. I warn them

that they must not talk of separation from the world, if they can lend their sanction to amusements which are invariably connected with gambling, betting, drunkenness, and fornication. These are the things which God will judge. The end of these things is death.

Hard words these, no doubt! But are they not true? It may seem to your relatives and friends very strait-laced, strict, and narrow, if you tell them you cannot go to the races or the theatre with them. But we must fall back on first principles. Is the world a danger to the soul or is it not? Are we to come out from the world or are we not? These are questions which can only be answered in one way.

If we love our souls we must have nothing to do with amusements which are bound up with sin. Nothing short of this can be called genuine Scriptural separation from the world.

(e) He that desires to “come out from the world, and be separate,” must be moderate in the use of lawful and innocent recreations.

No sensible Christian will ever think of condemning all recreations. In a world of wear and tear like that we live in, occasional unbending and relaxation are good. For the body and mind alike require seasons of lighter occupation, and opportunities of letting off high spirits, and especially when they are young. Exercise itself is a positive necessity for the preservation of mental and bodily health. I see no harm in cricket, rowing, running, and other manly athletic recreations. I find no fault with those who play at chess and such like games of skill. We are all fearfully and wonderfully made. No wonder the poet says—

“Strange that a harp of thousand strings

Should keep in tune so long.”

Anything which strengthens nerves, and brain, and digestion, and lungs, and muscles, and makes us more fit for Christ’s work, so long as it is not in itself sinful, is a blessing, and ought to be thankfully used. Any thing which will occasionally divert our thoughts from their usual grinding channel in a healthy manner, is a good and not an evil.

But it is the excess of these innocent things which a true Christian must watch against, if he wants to be separate from the world. He must not devote his whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and time to them, as many do, if he wishes to serve ChriSt. There are hundreds of lawful things which are good in moderation, but bad when taken in excess: healthful medicine in small quantities—downright poison when swallowed down in huge doses. In nothing is this so true as it is in the matter of recreations. The use of them is one thing, and the abuse of them is another. The Christian who uses them must know when to stop, and how to say Hold! enough! Do they interfere with his private religion? Do they take up too much of his thoughts and attention? Have they a secularizing effect on his soul? Have they a tendency to pull him down to earth? Then let him hold hard and take care. All this will require courage, self-denial, and firmness. It is a line of conduct which will often bring on us the ridicule and contempt of those who know not what moderation is, and who spend their lives in making trifles serious things and serious things trifles. But if we mean to come out from the world we must not mind this. We must be “temperate” even in lawful things, whatever others may think of us. This is genuine Scriptural separation.

(f) Last, but not least, he that desires to “come out from the world, and be separate” must be careful how he allows himself in friendships, intimacies, and close relationships with worldly people.

We cannot help meeting many unconverted people as long as we live. We cannot avoid having intercourse with them, and doing business with them, unless “we go out of the world” (1 Cor. v. 10). To treat them with the utmost courtesy, kindness, and charity, whenever we do meet them, is a positive duty. But acquaintance is one thing, and intimate friendship is quite another. To seek their society without cause, to choose their company, to cultivate intimacy with them, is very dangerous to the soul. Human nature is so constituted that we cannot be much with other people without effect on our own character. The old proverb will never fail to prove true: “Tell me with whom a man chooses to live, and I will tell you what he is.”

The Scripture says expressly, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). If, then, a Christian, who desires to live consistently, chooses as his friends those who either do not care for their souls, or the Bible, or God, or Christ, or holiness, or regard them as of secondary importance¾it seems to me impossible for him to prosper in his religion. He will soon find that their ways are not his ways, nor their thoughts his thoughts, nor their tastes his tastes; and that, unless they change, he must give up intimacy with them. In short, there must be separation. Of course such separation will be painful. But if we have to choose between the loss of a friend and the injury of our souls, there ought to be no doubt in our minds. If friends will not walk in the narrow way with us, we must not walk in the broad way to please them. But let us distinctly understand that to attempt to keep up close intimacy between a converted and an unconverted person, if both are consistent with their natures, is to attempt an impossibility.

The principle here laid down ought to be carefully remembered by all unmarried Christians in the choice of a husband or wife. I fear it is too often entirely forgotten. Too many seem to think of everything except religion in choosing a partner for life, or to suppose that it will come somehow as a matter of course. Yet when a praying, Bible-reading, God-fearing, Christ-loving, Sabbath-keeping Christian marries a person who takes no interest whatever in serious religion, what can the result be but injury to the Christian, or immense unhappiness? Health is not infectious, but disease is. As a general rule in such cases, the good go down to the level of the bad, and the bad do not come up to the level of the good. The subject is a delicate one, and I do not care to dwell upon it. But this I say confidently to every unmarried Christian man or woman—if you love your soul, if you do not want to fall away and backslide, if you do not want to destroy your own peace and comfort for life, resolve never to marry any person who is not a thorough Christian, whatever the resolution may cost you. You had better die than marry an unbeliever. Stand to this resolution, and let no one ever persuade you out of it. Depart from this resolution, and you will find it almost impossible to “come out and be separate.” You will find you have tied a mill-stone round your own neck in running the race towards heaven; and if saved at last it will be “so as by fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:15)

I offer these six general hints to all who wish to follow St. Paul’s advice, and to come out from the world and be separate. In giving them, I lay no claim to infallibility; but I believe they deserve consideration and attention. I do not forget that the subject is full of difficulties, and that scores of

doubtful cases are continually arising in a Christian's course, in which it is very hard to say what is the path of duty, and how to behave. Perhaps the following bits of advice may be found useful.—In all doubtful cases we should first pray for wisdom and sound judgment. If prayer is worth anything, it must be specially valuable when we desire to do right, but do not see our way. In all doubtful cases let us often try ourselves by recollecting the eye of God. Should I go to such and such a place, or do such and such a thing, if I really thought God was looking at me? In all doubtful cases let us never forget the second advent of Christ and the day of judgment. Should I like to be found in such and such company, or employed in such and such ways? Finally, in all doubtful cases let us find out what the conduct of the holiest and best Christians has been under similar circumstances. If we do not clearly see our own way, we need not be ashamed to follow good examples. I throw out these suggestions for the use of all who are in difficulties about disputable points, in the matter of separation from the world. I cannot help thinking that they may help to untie many knots, and solve many problems.

IV. I shall now conclude the whole subject by trying to show the secrets of real victory over the world.

To come out from the world of course is not an easy thing. It cannot be easy so long as human nature is what it is, and a busy devil is always near us. It requires a constant struggle and exertion; it entails incessant conflict and self-denial; it often places us in exact opposition to members of our own families, to relations and neighbours; it sometimes obliges us to do things which give great offence, and bring on us ridicule and petty persecution. It is precisely this which makes many hang back and shrink from decided religion. They know they are not right ; they know that they are not so "thorough" in Christ's service as they ought to be, and they feel uncomfortable and ill at ease. But the fear of man keeps them back. And so they linger on through life with aching, dissatisfied hearts—with too much religion to be happy in the world, and too much of the world to be happy in their religion. I fear this is a very common case, if the truth were known.

Yet there are some in every age who seem to get the victory over the world. They come out decidedly from its ways, and are unmistakably separate. They are independent of its opinions, and unshaken by its opposition. They move on like planets in an orbit of their own, and seem to rise equally above the world's smiles and frowns. And what are the secrets of their victory? I will set them down.

(a) The first secret of victory over the world is a right heart. By that I mean a heart renewed, changed, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost—a heart in which Christ dwells, a heart in which old things have passed away, and all things become new. The grand mark of such a heart is the bias of its tastes and affections. The owner of such a heart no longer likes the world, and the things of the world, and therefore finds it no trial or sacrifice to give them up. He has no longer any appetite for the company, the conversation, the amusements, the occupations, the books which he once loved, and to "come out" from them seems natural to him. Great indeed is the expulsive power of a new principle! Just as the new spring-buds in a beech hedge push off the old leaves, and make them quietly fall to the ground, so does the new heart of a believer invariably effect his tastes and likings, and make him drop many things which he once loved and lived in, because he now likes them no more. Let him that wants to "come out from the world, and be separate," make sure first and foremost that he has got a new heart. If the heart is really right, everything else will be right in

time. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matt. vi. 22.) If the affections are not right, there never will be right action.

(b) The second secret of victory over the world is a lively practical faith in unseen things. What saith the Scripture : “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”? (1 John 5:4). To attain and keep up the habit of looking steadily at invisible things, as if they were visible—to set before our minds every day, as grand realities, our souls, God, Christ, heaven, hell, judgment, eternity—to cherish an abiding conviction that what we do not see is just as real as what we do see, and ten thousand times more important—this, this is one way to be conquerors over the world. This was the faith which made the noble army of saints, described in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, obtain such a glorious testimony from the Holy GhoSt. They all acted under a firm persuasion that they had a real God, a real Saviour, and a real home in heaven, though unseen by mortal eyes. Armed with this faith a man regards this world as a shadow compared to the world to come, and cares little for its praise or blame, its enmity or its rewards. Let him that wants to come out from the world and be separate, but shrinks and hangs back for fear of the things seen, pray and strive to have this faith. “All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23). Like Moses, he will find it possible to forsake Egypt, seeing Him that is invisible. Like Moses, he will not care what he loses and who is displeased, because he sees afar off, like one looking though a telescope, a substantial recompense of reward. (Heb. i. 26).

(c) The third and last secret of victory over the world, is to attain and cultivate the habit of boldly confessing Christ on all proper occasions. In saying this I would not be mistaken. I want no one to blow a trumpet before him, and thrust his religion on others at all seasons. But I do wish to encourage all who strive to come out from the world to show their colours, and to act and speak out like men who are not ashamed to serve ChriSt. A steady, quiet assertion of our own principles, as Christians—an habitual readiness to let the children of the world see that we are guided by other rules than they are, and do not mean to swerve from them—a calm, firm, courteous maintenance of our own standard of things in every company—all this will insensibly form a habit within us, and make it comparatively easy to be a separate man. It will be hard at first, no doubt, and cost us many a struggle; but the longer we go on, the easier will it be. Repeated acts of confessing Christ will produce habits. Habits once formed will produce a settled character. Our characters once known, we shall be saved much trouble. Men will know what to expect from us, and will count it no strange thing if they see us living the lives of separate peculiar people. He that grasps the nettle most firmly will always be less hurt than the man who touches it with a trembling hand. It as a great thing to be able to say “No” decidedly, but courteously, when asked to do anything which conscience says is wrong. He that shows his colours boldly from the first, and is never ashamed to let men see “whose he is and whom he serves,” will soon find that he has overcome the world, and will be let alone. Bold confession is a long step towards victory.

It only remains for me now to conclude the whole subject with a few short words of application. The danger of the world ruining the soul, the nature of true separation from the world, the secrets of victory over the world, are all before the reader of this paper. I now ask him to give me his attention for the last time, while I try to say something directly for his personal benefit.

(1) My first word shall be a question. Reader, are you overcoming the world, or are you overcome by it? Do you know what it is to come out from the world and be separate, or are you yet entangled

by it, and conform to it? If you have any desire to be saved, I entreat you to answer this question.

If you know nothing of “separation,” I warn you affectionately that your soul is in great danger. The world passeth away; and they who cling to the world, and think only of the world, will pass away with it to everlasting ruin. Awake to know your peril before it be too late. Awake and flee from the wrath to come. The time is short. The end of all things is at hand. The shadows are lengthening. The sun is going down, The night cometh when no man can work. The great white throne will soon be set. The judgment will begin. The books will be opened. Awake, and come out from the world while it is called to-day.

Yet a little while, and there will be no more worldly occupations and worldly amusements—no more getting money and spending money—no more eating, and drinking, and feasting, and dressing, and ball-going, and theatres, and races, and cards, and gambling. Reader, what will you do when all these things have passed away for ever? How can you possibly be happy in an eternal heaven, where holiness is all in all, and worldliness has no place? Oh, consider these things, and be wise! Awake, and break the chains which the world has thrown around you. Awake and flee from the wrath to come.

(2) My second word shall be a counsel. Reader, if you want to come out from the world, but know not what to do, take the advice which I give you this day. Begin by applying direct, as a penitent sinner, to our Lord Jesus Christ, and put your case in his hands. Pour out your heart before Him. Tell Him your whole story, and keep nothing back. Tell Him that you are a sinner wanting to be saved from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and entreat Him to save you.

That blessed Saviour “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world” (Galatians 1:2). He knows what the world is, for He lived in it thirty and three years. He knows what the difficulties of a man are, for He was made man for our sakes, and dwelt among men. High in heaven, at the right hand of God, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him—able to keep us from the evil of the world while we are still living in it—able to give us power to become the Sons of God—able to keep us from falling—able to make us more than conquerors. Reader, once more I say, Go direct to Christ with the prayer of faith, and put yourself wholly and unreservedly in His hands. Hard as it may seem to you now to come out from the world and be separate, you shall find that with Jesus nothing is impossible. You, even you, shall overcome the world.

(3) My third and last word shall be encouragement. Reader, if you have learned by experience what it is to come out from the world, I can only say to you, Take comfort, and persevere. You are in the right road; you have no cause to be afraid. The everlasting hills are in sight. Your salvation is nearer than when you believed. Take comfort and press on.

No doubt you have had many a battle, and made many a false step. You have sometimes felt ready to faint, and been half disposed to go back to Egypt. But your Master has never entirely left you, and He will never suffer you to be tempted above that you are able to bear. Then persevere steadily in your separation from the world, and never be ashamed of standing alone. Settle it firmly in your mind that the most decided Christians are always the happiest, and remember that no one ever said at the end of his course that he had been too holy, and lived too near to God.

Hear, last of all, what is written in the Scriptures of truth:

“Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8).

“There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s,

“But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers; and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30).

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

“For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Hebrews 10:33-37).

Christian reader, those words were written and spoken for your sake. Lay hold on them, and never forget them. Persevere to the end, and never be ashamed of coming out from the world, and being separate. Be sure it brings its own reward.

Chapter 23

Conversion

[Taken from “Old Paths” as first published in 1878AD]

CONVERSION.

BY

JOHN CHARLES RYLE D.D.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted”- Acts 3:19. THE subject which forms the title of this paper is one which touches all mankind. It ought to come home to all ranks and classes, high or low, rich or poor, old or young, gentle or simple. Any one may get to heaven without money, rank, or learning. No one, however wise, wealthy, noble, or beautiful, will ever get to heaven without CONVERSION.

There are six points of view in which I wish to consider the subject of this paper. I will try to show that Conversion is-

I. A Scriptural thing,

II. A real thing,

III. A necessary thing,

IV. A possible thing,

V. A happy thing,

VI. A thing that may be seen.

I. Let me show, in the first place, that conversion is a Scriptural thing.

I mean by this, that conversion is a thing plainly mentioned in the Bible. This is the first point we have to ascertain about anything in religion. It matters nothing who says a thing, and declares it to be religious truth; it matters nothing whether we like or dislike a doctrine. Is it in the Bible? That is the only question. If it is, we have no right to refuse it. If we reject a Bible truth because we do not like it, we do so at the peril of our souls, and might as well become infidels at once. This is a principle which ought never to be forgotten.

Let us turn to the Bible. Hear what David says: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”-“Sinners shall be converted unto Thee.” (Psalms 19:7; Psalms 51:13) Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,” (Matthew 8:3) Hear what St. Peter says: “Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” (Acts iii. 19.) Hear what St. James says: “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” (James 5:20)

I could easily add to this Scriptural evidence. I could quote many passages in which the idea of conversion is contained, though the word itself is not used. To be renewed,-to be transformed,-to be created anew,-to be raised from the dead,-to be illuminated,-to pass from death to life,-to be born again,-to put off the old man and put on the new man,-all these are Scriptural expressions, which mean the same thing as conversion. They are all the same thing, seen from a different point of view. But enough is as good as a feast, in these matters. There can be no doubt of the truth of my first position,-that conversion is a Scriptural thing. It is not a mere device of man's invention: it is in the Bible.

You may tell me, perhaps, that you do not care for “texts.” You may say that you are not accustomed to make single texts decide questions in your religion. If this is your case, I am sorry for you. Our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles used to quote single texts frequently, and to make everything in their arguments hinge upon them. One plain text with them was sufficient to settle a point. Is it not a serious matter, that while the Lord Jesus and His apostles made such use of single texts, you do not care for them?

I entreat every reader of these pages to beware of ignorant prejudices on religious subjects. I have known people to find fault with doctrines and opinions as enthusiastic, fanatical, and absurd, in perfect ignorance that they were finding fault with Scripture itself! They have given sad proof that they spoke of things which they did not understand, and that they knew nothing, comparatively, of the contents of the Bible. It is recorded that, in Somersetshire, one hundred years ago, a great preacher was summoned before the magistrates for swearing in the pulpit. He had used in his sermon the well-known text, “He that believeth not shall be damned “(Mark 16:16); and the constable who laid the information was so ignorant that he did not know the preacher was quoting God's Word!-I myself remember a lady of rank being very indignant, because a speaker at a Missionary meeting described the heathen as “having no hope.” And yet the speaker had only used the very expression used by St. Paul, in describing the state of the Ephesians before the Gospel came to them! (Ephesians 2:12) Beware of making a like mistake. Take care that you do not expose your own ignorance by talking against conversion. Search the Scriptures. CONVERSION IS A SCRIPTURAL THING.

II. Let me show, in the second place, that conversion is a real thing.

I feel it very needful to say something about this point. We live in an age of shams, cheats, deceptions, and impositions. It is an age of white-wash, varnish, lacquer, and veneer. It is an age of plaster, compo, plating, gilding, and electrotyping. It is an age of adulterated food, paste diamonds, false weights and measures, unsound timber, and shoddy clothing. It is an age of wind-bags, and whitened sepulchres, and cymbals in religion. I can hardly wonder that many regard all Christian professors as suspicious characters, if not hypocrites, and deny the reality of any such thing as conversion.

Still, notwithstanding all that such people may say, I assert confidently, that there is such a thing as conversion. There are to be seen among men, every here and there, unmistakable cases of a complete turning round of heart, character, tastes, and life,-cases which deserve no other name than that of conversion. I say that when a man turns right round from sin to God,-from worldliness to holiness,-from self-righteousness to self-distrust, from carelessness about religion to deep repentance,-from unbelief to faith,-from indifference to Christ to strong love to Christ,-from neglect

of prayer, the Bible, and the Sabbath, to a diligent use of all means of grace,-I say boldly, that such a man is a converted man. When a man's heart is turned upside down in the way I have described, so that he loves what he once hated, and hates what he once loved, I say boldly, that it is a case of conversion. To deny it, is mere obstinacy and affectation. Such a change can be described in no other way. By far the most suitable name that can be given to it is the Scriptural name,-conversion.

Of such changes the Bible gives many unmistakable patterns. Let any one read attentively the histories of Manasseh king of Judah, of Matthew the apostle, of the woman of Samaria, of Zacchaeus the publican, of Mary Magdalene, of Saul of Tarsus, of the Philippian jailer, of Lydia the purple seller, of the Jews to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, of the Corinthians to whom St. Paul preached. (2 Chronicles 33:1-19. Matthew 9:9. John 4:1-29. Luke 19:1-10; Luke 8:2. Acts 9:1-22; Acts 16:14-34; Acts 2:37-41. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) In every one of these cases there was a mighty change. What can that change be called but conversion?

Of such changes the history of the Church in every age can supply many well-known examples. Let any one study the life of Augustine, of Martin Luther, of Hugh Latimer, of John Bunyan, of Colonel Gardiner, of John Newton, of Thomas Scott. In every one of these lives he will find a description of a mighty turning of heart, opinion, and conduct, towards God. What can that turning be called better than conversion?

Of such changes every man's own neighbourhood and circle of acquaintances will furnish many specimens. Let any honest-minded person of observation look around him, and consider what I assert. Let him deny, if he can, that he can put his finger on men and women of his own age and standing, who are now utterly unlike what they once were in the matter of religion. About their own souls, and the importance of being saved,-about sin, and God, and Christ, and repentance, and faith, and holiness,-about Bible-reading, and praying, and Sabbath-keeping-about all these things they are completely changed. I challenge any sensible man to deny that he knows such persons. They are to be met with here and there in every part of the kingdom. Once more I ask, what can such changes be called but conversions?

I feel almost ashamed to dwell so long on this point. It seems like spending time in proving that two and two make four, or that the sun rises in the east. But, alas, there are too many people who will allow nothing, and will dispute everything, in religion! They know that they are not yet converted themselves, and they therefore try hard to make out that nobody was ever converted at all! I trust I have given a sufficient answer to all such persons. I have shown you that CONVERSION IS A REAL TRUE THING.

III. Let me show, in the third place, that conversion is a necessary thing.

This is a point of great importance. Some worthy people are ready enough to admit that conversion is a Scriptural truth and a reality, but not a thing which needs to be pressed on most English people. The heathen, they grant, need conversion. Even the thieves, and fallen characters, and inmates of jails, they allow, may require conversion. But to talk of conversion being necessary for Church-going people, is to talk of things which they cannot see at all. “Such people may, in some cases, need a little stirring up and amendment. They may not be quite as good as they ought to be: it would be better if they attended more to religion; but you have no right to say they need conversion! It is uncharitable, harsh, narrow-minded, bitter, wrong, to tell them

they require conversion!”

This sadly common notion is a complete delusion. It is a pure invention of man's, without a scrap of foundation in God's Word. The Bible teaches expressly that the change of heart, called conversion, is a thing absolutely needed by every one. It is needed because of the total corruption of human nature. It is needed because of the condition of every man's natural heart. All people born into the world, of every rank and nation, must have their hearts changed between the cradle and the grave, before they can go to heaven. All, all men, without exception, must be converted.

Without conversion of heart we cannot serve God on earth. We have naturally neither faith, nor fear, nor love, toward God and His Son Jesus Christ. We have no delight in His Word. We take no pleasure in prayer or communion with Him. We have no enjoyment in His ordinances, His house, His people, or His day. We may have a form of Christianity, and keep up a round of ceremonies and religious performances. But without conversion we have no more heart in our religion than a brick or a stone. Can a dead corpse serve God? We know it cannot. Well, without conversion we are dead toward God.

Look round the congregation with which you worship every Sunday. Mark how little interest the great majority of them take in what is going on. Observe how listless, and apathetic, and indifferent, they evidently are about the whole affair. It is clear their hearts are not there! They are thinking of something else, and not of religion. They are thinking of business, or money, or pleasure, or worldly plans, or bonnets, or gowns, or new dresses, or amusements. Their bodies are there, but not their hearts.-And what is the reason? What is it they all need? They need conversion. Without it they only come to church for fashion and form's sake, and go away from church to serve the world or their sins.

But this is not all. Without conversion of heart we could not enjoy heaven, if we got there. Heaven is a place where holiness reigns supreme, and sin and the world have no place at all. The company will all be holy; the employments will all be holy; it will be an eternal Sabbath-day. Surely if we go to heaven, we must have a heart in tune and able to enjoy it, or else we shall not be happy. We must have a nature in harmony with the element we live in, and the place where we dwell. Can a fish be happy out of water? We know it cannot. Well, without conversion of heart we could not be happy in heaven.

Look round the neighbourhood in which you live, and the persons with whom you are acquainted. Think what many of them would do if they were cut off for ever from money, and business, and newspapers, and cards, and balls, and races, and hunting, and shooting, and worldly amusements! Would they like it?-Think what they would feel if they were shut up for ever with Jesus Christ, and saints, and angels! Would they be happy?-Would the eternal company of Moses, and David, and St. Paul, be pleasant to those who never take the trouble to read what those holy men wrote? Would heaven's everlasting praise suit the taste of those who can hardly spare a few minutes in a week for private religion, even for prayer? There is but one answer to be given to all these questions. We must be converted before we can enjoy heaven. Heaven would be no heaven to any child of Adam without conversion.

Let no man deceive us. There are two things which are of absolute necessity to the salvation of every man and woman on earth. One of them is the mediatorial work of Christ for us,-His

atonement, satisfaction, and intercession. The other is the converting work of the Spirit in us,-His guiding, renewing, and sanctifying grace.-We must have both a title and a heart for heaven. Sacraments are only generally necessary to salvation: a man may be saved without them, like the penitent thief. An interest in Christ and conversion are absolutely necessary: without them no one can possibly be saved.-All, all alike, high or low, rich or poor, old or young, gentle or simple, churchmen or dissenters, baptized or unbaptized, all must be converted or perish. There is no salvation without conversion. IT IS A NECESSARY THING.

IV. Let me now show, in the fourth place, that conversion is a possible thing.

I think I know the feelings which come across many people's minds, when they read the things which I am writing in this paper. They take refuge in the idea that such a change as conversion is quite impossible, except for a favoured few. “It is all very well,” they argue, “for parsons to talk of conversion; but the thing cannot be done; we have work to mind, families to provide for, business to attend to. It is no use expecting miracles now. We cannot be converted.” Such thoughts are very common. The devil loves to put them before us, and our own lazy hearts are only too ready to receive them: but they will not stand examination. I am not afraid to lay it down that conversion is a possible thing. If it were not so I would not say another word.

In saying this, however, I should be sorry to be mistaken. I do not for a moment mean that any one can convert himself, change his own heart, take away his own corrupt nature, put in himself a new spirit. I mean nothing of the kind. I should as soon expect the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision to give themselves life. (Ezekiel 37:3) I only mean that there is nothing in Scripture, nothing in God, nothing in man's condition, which warrants any one in saying, “I can never be converted.” There lives not the man or woman on earth of whom it could be said, “their conversion is an impossibility.”-Any one, however sinful and hardened, any one may be converted.

Why do I speak so confidently? How is it that I can look round the world, and see the desperate wickedness that is in it, and yet despair of no living man's soul? How is it that I can say to any one, however hard, fallen, and bad, “Your case is not hopeless: you, even you, may be converted?”-I can do it because of the things contained in Christ's Gospel. It is the glory of that Gospel that under it nothing is impossible.

Conversion is a possible thing, because of the almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him is life. In His hand are the keys of death and hell. He has all power in heaven and earth. He quickeneth whom He will. (John 1:4; Revelation 1:18; Matthew 28:18; John 5:21) It is as easy to Him to create new hearts out of nothing, as it was to create the world out of nothing. It is as easy to Him to breathe spiritual life into a stony, dead heart, as it was to breathe natural life into the clay of which Adam was formed, and make him a living man. There was nothing He could not do on earth. Wind, sea, disease, death, the devil,-all were obedient to His word. There is nothing that He cannot do in heaven at God's right hand. His hand is as strong as ever: His love is as great as ever. The Lord Jesus Christ lives, and therefore conversion is not impossible.

But beside this, conversion is a possible thing, because of the almighty power of the Holy Ghost, whom Christ sends into the hearts of all whom He undertakes to save. The same divine Spirit who co-operated with the Father and Son in the work of creation, co-operates specially in the work of conversion. It is He who conveys life from Christ, the great Fountain of Life, into the hearts of

sinners. He who moved on the face of the waters before those wonderful words were spoken, “Let there be light,” is He who moves over sinners' souls, and takes their natural darkness away. Great indeed is the invisible power of the Holy Ghost! He can soften that which is hard. He can bend that which is stiff and stubborn. He can give eyes to the spiritually blind, ears to the spiritually deaf, tongues to the spiritually dumb, feet to the spiritually lame, warmth to the spiritually cold, knowledge to the spiritually ignorant, and life to the spiritually dead. “None teacheth like Him! “(Job 36:22) He has taught thousands of ignorant sinners, and never failed to make them “wise unto salvation.” The Holy Ghost lives, and therefore conversion is never impossible.

What can you say to these things? Away with the idea for ever that conversion is not possible. Cast it behind you: it is a temptation of the devil. Look not at yourself, and your own weak heart;-for then you may well despair. Look upward at Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and learn that with them nothing is impossible. Yes! the age of spiritual miracles is not yet past! Dead souls in our congregations can yet be raised; blind eyes can yet be made to see; dumb prayerless tongues can yet be taught to pray. No one ought ever to despair. When Christ has left heaven, and laid down His office as the Saviour of sinners,-when the Holy Ghost has ceased to dwell in hearts, and is no longer God,-then, and not till then, men and women may say, “We cannot be converted.” Till then, I say boldly, conversion is a possible thing. If men are not converted, it is because they will not come to Christ for life.” (John 5:40) CONVERSION IS POSSIBLE.

V. Let me show, in the fifth place, that conversion is a happy thing.

I shall have written in vain if I leave this point untouched. There are thousands, I firmly believe, who are ready to admit the truth of all I have said hitherto. Scriptural, real, necessary, possible,-all this they willingly allow conversion to be. “Of course,” they say, “we know it is all true. People ought to be converted.” But will it increase a man's happiness to be converted? Will it add to a man's joys, and lessen his sorrows, to be converted? Here alas, is a point at which many stick fast. They have a secret, lurking fear, that if they are converted they must become melancholy, miserable, and low-spirited. Conversion and a sour face,-conversion and a gloomy brow,-conversion and an ill-natured readiness to snub young people, and put down all mirth,-conversion and a sorrowful countenance,-conversion and sighing and groaning,-all these are things which they seem to think must go together! No wonder that such people shrink from the idea of conversion!

The notion I have just described is very common and very mischievous. I desire to protest against it with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. I assert without hesitation, that the conversion described in Scripture is a happy thing and not a miserable one, and that if converted persons are not happy, the fault must be in themselves. The happiness of a true Christian, no doubt, is not quite of the same sort as that of a worldly man. It is a calm, solid, deep flowing, substantial joy. It is not made up of excitement, levity, and boisterous spasmodic mirth. It is the sober, quiet joy of one who does not forget death, judgment, eternity, and a world to come, even in his chief mirth. But in the main I am confident the converted man is the happiest man.

What says the Scripture? How does it describe the feelings and experience of persons who have been converted? Does it give any countenance to the idea that conversion is a sorrowful and melancholy thing? Let us hear what Levi felt, when he had left the receipt of custom to follow Christ. We read that “he made a great feast in his own house,” as if it was an occasion of

gladness. (Luke 5:29) Let us hear what Zacchaeus the publican felt, when Jesus offered to come to his house. We read that “he received Him joyfully.” (Luke 19:6) Let us hear what the Samaritans felt, when they were converted through Philip's preaching. We read that “there was great joy in that city.” (Acts 8:8) Let us hear what the Ethiopian eunuch felt in the day of his conversion. We read that “he went on his way rejoicing.” (Acts 8:39) Let us hear what the Philippian jailer felt in the hour of his conversion. We read that “he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” (Acts 16:34) In fact the testimony of Scripture on this subject is always one and the same. Conversion is always described as the cause of joy and not of sorrow, of happiness and not of misery.

The plain truth is that people speak ill of conversion because they know nothing really about it. They run down converted men and women as unhappy, because they judge them by their outward appearance of calmness, gravity, and quietness, and know nothing of their inward peace. They forget that it is not those who boast most of their own performances who do most, and it is not those who talk most of their happiness who are in reality the happiest people.

A converted man is happy, because he has peace with God. His sins are forgiven; his conscience is free from the sense of guilt: he can look forward to death, judgment, and eternity, and not feel afraid. What an immense blessing to feel forgiven and free!-He is happy because he finds order in his heart. His passions are controlled, his affections are rightly directed. Everything in his inner man, however weak and feeble, is in its right place, and not in confusion. What an immense blessing order is!-He is happy, because he feels independent of circumstances. Come what will, he is provided for: sickness, and losses, and death, can never touch his treasure in heaven, or rob him of Christ. What a blessing to feel independent! He is happy, because he feels ready. Whatever happens he is somewhat prepared: the great business is settled; the great concern of life is arranged. What a blessing to feel ready!-These are indeed true springs of happiness. They are springs which are utterly shut up and sealed to an unconverted man.-Without forgiveness of sins, without hope for the world to come, dependent on this world for comfort, unprepared to meet God, he cannot be really happy. Conversion is an essential part of true happiness.

Settle it in your mind today that the friend who labours for your conversion to God is the best friend that you have. He is a friend not merely for the life to come, but for the life that now is. He is a friend to your present comfort as well as to your future deliverance from hell. He is a friend for time as well as for eternity. CONVERSION IS A HAPPY THING.

VI. Let me now show you, in the last place, that conversion is a thing that may be seen.

This is a part of my subject which ought never to be overlooked. Well would it be for the Church and the world, if in every age it had received more attention. Thousands have turned away in disgust from religion, because of the wickedness of many who profess it. Hundreds have caused the very name of conversion to stink, by the lives they have lived after declaring themselves converted. They have fancied that a few spasmodic sensations and convictions were the true grace of God. They have imagined themselves converted, because their animal feelings were excited. They have called themselves “converts” without the slightest right or title to that honoured name. All this has done immense harm, and it is doing peculiar harm in the present day. The times demand a very clear assertion of the great principle, that true conversion is a thing that can always be seen.

I admit fully that the manner of the Spirit's working is invisible. It is like the wind. It is like the attractive power of the magnet. It is like the influence of the moon upon the tides. There is something about it far beyond the reach of man's eyes or understanding.-But while I admit this decidedly, I maintain no less decidedly that the effects of the Spirit's work in conversion will always be seen. Those effects may be weak and feeble at first: to the natural man they may hardly be visible, and not understood. But effects there always will be: some fruit will always be seen where there is true conversion. Where no effect can be seen, there you may be sure there is no grace. Where no visible fruit can be found, there you may be sure is no conversion.

Does any one ask me what we may expect to see in a true conversion? I reply, There will always be something seen in a converted man's character, and feelings, and conduct, and opinions, and daily life. You will not see in him perfection; but you will see in him something peculiar, distinct, and different from other people. You will see him hating sin, loving Christ, following after holiness, taking pleasure in his Bible, persevering in prayer. You will see him penitent, humble, believing, temperate, charitable, truthful, good-tempered, patient, upright, honourable, kind. These, at any rate, will be his aims: these are the things which he will follow after, however short he may come of perfection. In some converted persons you will see these things more distinctly, in others less. This only I say, wherever there is conversion, something of this kind will be seen.

I care nothing for a conversion which has neither marks nor evidences to show. I shall always say, “Give me some marks if I am to think you are converted. Show me thy conversion without any marks, if thou canst I do not believe in it. It is worth nothing at all.” You may call such doctrine legal if you please. It is far better to be called legal than to be an Antinomian. Never, never, will I allow that the blessed Spirit can be in a man's heart, when no fruit of the Spirit can be seen in his life. A conversion which allows a man to live in sin, to lie, and get drunk, and swear, is not the conversion of the Bible. It is a counterfeit conversion, which can only please the devil, and will lead the man who is satisfied with it, not to heaven, but to hell.

Let this last point sink down into your heart and never be forgotten. Conversion is not only a Scriptural thing, a real thing, a necessary thing, a possible thing, and a happy thing: there remains one more grand characteristic about it, it is A THING THAT WILL ALWAYS BE SEEN. And now let me wind up this paper by a few plain appeals to the consciences of all who read it. I have tried to the best of my power to unfold and explain the nature of conversion. I have endeavoured to set it forth in every point of view. Nothing remains but to try to bring it home to the heart of every one into whose hands this book may fall

(1) First of all, I urge every reader of this paper to find out whether he is converted. I am not asking about other people. The heathen no doubt need conversion. The unhappy inmates of jails and reformatories need conversion. There may be people living near your own house who are open sinners and unbelievers, and need conversion. But all this is beside the question. I ask, Are you converted yourself?

Are you converted? It is no reply to tell me that many people are hypocrites and false professors. It is no argument to say that there are many sham revivals, and mock conversions. All this may be very true: but the abuse of a thing does not destroy the use of it. The circulation of bad money is no reason why there should not be good coin. Whatever others may be, Are you converted yourself?

Are you converted? It is no answer to tell me that you go to church or chapel, and have been baptized and admitted to the Table of the Lord. All this proves little: I could say as much for Judas Iscariot, Demas, Simon Magus, Ananias, and Sapphira. The question is still not answered. Is your heart changed? Are you really converted to God?

(2) In the next place, I urge every reader of this book who is not converted, never to rest till he is. Make haste: awake to know your danger. Escape for your life: flee from the wrath to come. Time is short: eternity is near. Life is uncertain: judgment is sure. Arise and call upon God. The throne of grace is yet standing: the Lord Jesus Christ is yet waiting to be gracious. The promises of the Gospel are wide, broad, full, and free: lay hold upon them this day. Repent, and believe the Gospel: repent, and be converted. Rest not, rest not, rest not, till you know and feel that you are a converted man.

(3) In the last place, I offer a word of exhortation to every reader who has reason to think that he has gone through that blessed change of which I have been speaking in this paper. You can remember the time when you were not what you are now. You can remember a time in your life when old things passed away, and all things became new. To you also I have something to say. Suffer the word of friendly counsel, and lay it to heart.

(a) Do you think that you are converted? Then give all diligence to make your calling and conversion sure. Leave nothing uncertain that concerns your immortal soul. Labour to have the witness of the Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God. Assurance is to be had in this world, and assurance is worth the seeking. It is good to have hope: it is far better to feel sure.

(b) Do you think that you are converted? Then do not expect impossibilities in this world. Do not suppose the day will ever come when you will find no weak point in your heart, no wanderings in private prayer, no distraction in Bible-reading, no cold desires in the public worship of God, no flesh to mortify, no devil to tempt, no worldly snares to make you fall. Expect nothing of the kind. Conversion is not perfection! Conversion is not heaven! The old man within you is yet alive; the world around you is yet full of danger; the devil is not dead. Remember at your best, that a converted sinner is still a poor weak sinner, needing Christ every day. Remember this, and you will not be disappointed.

(c) Do you think that you are converted? Then labour and desire to grow in grace every year that you live. Look not to the things behind; be not content with old experience, old grace, old attainments in religion. Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby. (1 Peter 2:2) Entreat the Lord to carry on the work of conversion more and more in your soul, and to deepen spiritual impressions within you. Read your Bible more carefully every year: watch over your prayers more jealously every year. Beware of becoming sleepy and lazy in your religion. There is a vast difference between the lowest and the highest forms in the school of Christ. Strive to get on in knowledge, faith, hope, charity, and patience. Let your yearly motto be, “Onward, Forward, Upward!” to the last hour of your life.

(d) Do you think you are converted? Then show the value you place on conversion by your diligence in trying to do good to others.-Do you really believe it is an awful thing to be an unconverted man? Do you really think that conversion is an unspeakable blessing? Then prove it, prove it, prove it, by constant zealous efforts to promote the conversion of others. Look round the

neighbourhood in which you live: have compassion on the multitudes who are yet unconverted. Be not content with getting them to come to your church or chapel; aim at nothing less than their entire conversion to God. Speak to them, read to them, pray for them, stir up others to help them. But never, never, if you are a converted man, never be content to go to heaven alone!

Chapter 24

Cross

J. C. Ryle Tracts

A 19th century tract published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. THE CROSS

“God forbid that I should glory, save the cross of our lord Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 6:14)

READER,

What do you think and feel about the cross of Christ? You live in a Christian land. You probably attend the worship of a Christian church. You have perhaps been baptised in the name of Christ. You profess and call yourself a Christian. All this is well: it is more than can be said of millions in the world. But all this is no answer to my question, “What do you think and feel about the cross of Christ?”

I want to tell you what the greatest Christian that ever lived thought of the cross of Christ. He has written down his opinion: he has given his judgment in words that cannot be mistaken. The man I mean is the Apostle Paul. The place where you will find his opinion, is in the letter which the Holy Ghost inspired him to write to the Galatians; and the words in which his judgement is set down, are these : “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now what did Paul mean by saying this? He meant to declare strongly, that he trusted in nothing but Jesus Christ crucified for the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul. Let others, if they would, look elsewhere for salvation; let others, if they were so disposed, trust in other things for pardon and peace: for his part the apostle was determined to rest on nothing, lean on nothing, build his hope on nothing, place confidence in nothing, glory in nothing, except “the cross of Jesus Christ.”

Reader, let me talk to you about this subject: Believe me, it is one of the deepest importance. This is no mere question of controversy; this is not one of those points on which men may agree to differ, and feel that differences will not shut them out of heaven. A man must be right on this subject, or he is lost for ever. Heaven or hell, happiness or misery, life or death, blessing or cursing in the last day,-all hinges on the answer to this question: “What do you think about the cross of Christ?”

I. Let me show you what the apostle Paul did not glory in.

II. Let me explain to you what he did glory in.

III. Let me show to you why all Christians should think and feel about the cross like Paul.

I. What did the Apostle Paul not glory in?

There are many things that Paul might have gloried in, if he had thought as some do in this day. If ever there was one on earth who had something to boast of in himself, that man was the great

apostle of the Gentiles. Now if he did not dare to glory, who shall?

He never gloried in his national privileges. He was a Jew by birth, and, as he tells us himself,- “An Hebrew of the Hebrews.” He might have said, like many of his brethren, “I have Abraham for my forefather. I am not a dark, unenlightened heathen; I am one of the favoured people of God: I have been admitted into covenant with God by circumcision. I am a far better man than the ignorant Gentiles.” But he never said so. He never gloried in anything of this kind. Never for one moment!

He never gloried in his own works. None ever worked so hard for God as he did. He was more abundant in labours than any of the apostles. No living man ever preached so much, travelled so much, and endured so many hardships for Christ's cause. None ever converted so many souls, did so much good to the world, and made himself so useful to mankind. No father of the early Church, no Reformer, no Puritan, no Missionary, no minister, no layman,-no one man could ever be named, who did so many good works as the Apostle Paul. But did he ever glory in them, as if they were in the least meritorious, and could save his soul? Never! Never for one moment!

He never gloried in his Knowledge. He was a man of great gifts naturally, and after he was converted, the Holy Spirit gave him greater gifts still. He was a mighty preacher, and a mighty speaker, and a mighty writer. He was as great with his pen as he was with his tongue. He could reason equally well with Jews and Gentiles. He could argue with infidels at Corinth, or Pharisees at Jerusalem, or self-righteous people in Galatia. He knew many deep things. He had been in the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words. He had received the spirit of prophecy, and could foretell things yet to come. But did he ever glory in his knowledge, as if it could justify him before God? Never! never for one moment!

He never gloried in his graces. If ever there was one who abounded in graces, that man was Paul. He was full of love. How tenderly and affectionately he used to write. He could feel for souls like a mother or a nurse feeling for her child. He was a bold man. He cared not whom he opposed when truth was at stake. He cared not what risks he ran when souls were to be won. He was a self-denying man,-in hunger and thirst often; in cold and nakedness, in watchings and fastings. He was a humble man. He thought himself less than the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners. He was a prayerful man. See how it comes out at the beginning of his Epistles. He was a thankful man. His thanksgivings and his prayers walked side by side. But he never gloried in all this, never valued himself on it,-never rested his soul's hopes on it. Oh, no! never for a moment!

He never gloried in his Churchmanship. If ever there was a good Churchman, that man was Paul. He was himself a chosen apostle. He was a founder of Churches, and an ordainer of ministers: Timothy and Titus, and many elders, received their first commission from his hands. He was the beginner of services and sacraments in many a dark place. Many a one did he baptise; in many a one did he receive to the Lord's table; many a meeting for prayer, and praise, and preaching, did he begin and carry on. He was the setter up of discipline in many a young Church. Whatever ordinances, and rules, and ceremonies were observed in them, were first recommended by him. But did he ever glory in his office and Church standing? Does he ever speak as if his Churchmanship would save him, justify him, put away his sins and make him acceptable before God? Oh, no! Never: Never for a moment!

And now, reader, mark what I say. If the Apostle Paul never gloried in any of these things, who in all the world, from one end to the other,-who has any right to glory in them in our day? If Paul said, God forbid that I should glory in anything whatever except the cross, who shall dare to say, “I have something to glory of: I am a better man than Paul”?

Who is there among the readers of this tract, that trusts in any goodness of his own? Who is there that is resting on his own amendments,-his own morality,-his own performances of any kind whatever? Who is there that is leaning the weight of his soul on anything whatever of his own, in the smallest possible degree? Learn, I say, that you are very unlike the apostle Paul. Learn that your religion is not an apostolic religion.

Who is there among the readers of this tract that trusts in his Churchmanship for salvation? Who is there that is valuing himself on his baptism, or his attendance at the Lord's table,-his church-going on Sundays, or his daily services during the week,-and saying to himself, “What lack I yet?” Learn, I say, this day, that you are very unlike Paul. Your Christianity is not the Christianity of the New Testament. Paul would not glory in anything but the cross. Neither ought you.

Oh, reader, beware of self-righteousness Open sin kills its thousands of souls. Self-righteousness kills its tens of thousands. Go and study humility with the great apostle of the Gentiles. Go and sit with Paul at the foot of the cross. Give up your secret pride. Cast away your vain ideas of your own goodness. Be thankful if you have grace, but never glory in it for a moment. Work for God and Christ with heart and soul and mind and strength, but never dream for a second of placing confidence in any work of your own.

Think, you who take comfort in some fancied ideas of your own goodness,-think, you who wrap up yourselves in the notion, “all must be right, if I keep to my Church,”-think for a moment what a sandy foundation you are building upon! Think for a moment how miserably defective your hopes and pleas will look in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment! Whatever men may say of their own goodness while they are strong and healthy, they will find but little to say of it when they are sick and dying. Whatever merit they may see in their own works here in this world, they discover none in them when they stand before the bar of Christ. The light of that great day of assize will make a wonderful difference in the appearance of all their doings. It will strip off the tinsel, shrivel up the complexion, expose the rottenness, of many a deed that is now called good. Their wheat will prove nothing but chaff: their gold will be found nothing but dross. Millions of so-called Christian actions will turn out to have been utterly defective and graceless. They passed current, and were valued among men: they will prove light and worthless in the balance of God. They will be found to have been like the whitened sepulchres of old, fair and beautiful without, but full of corruption within. Alas, for the man who can look forward to the day of judgment, and lean his soul in the smallest degree on anything of his own!1

Reader, once more I say, beware of self-righteousness in every possible shape and form. Some people get as much harm from their fancied virtues as others do from their sins. Take heed, lest you be one. Rest not, till your heart beats in tune with St. Paul's. Rest not till you can say with him, “God forbid that I should glory in anything but the cross”

II. Let me explain in the second place, what you are to understand by the cross of Christ.

The cross is an expression that is used in more than one meaning in the Bible. What did St. Paul mean when he said, “I glory in the cross of Christ,” in the Epistle to the Galatians? This is the point I now wish to make clear.

The cross sometimes means that wooden cross, on which the Lord Jesus was nailed and put to death on Mount Calvary. This is what St. Paul had in his mind's eye, when he told the Philippians that Christ “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Php_2:8) This is not the cross in which St. Paul gloried. He would have shrunk with horror from the idea of glorying in a mere piece of wood. I have no doubt he would have denounced the Roman Catholic adoration of the crucifix, as profane, blasphemous, and idolatrous.

The cross sometimes means the afflictions and trials which believers in Christ have to go through if they follow Christ faithfully, for their religion's sake. This is the sense in which our Lord uses the word when He says, “He that take not his cross and followeth after Me, cannot be my disciple.” (Matthew 10:38) This also is not the sense in which Paul uses the word when he writes to the Galatians. He knew that cross well: he carried it patiently. But he is not speaking of it here.

But the cross also means, in some places, the doctrine that Christ died for sinners upon the cross,-the atonement that He made for sinners, by His suffering for them on the cross,-the complete and perfect sacrifice for sin which He offered up, when He gave His own body to be crucified. In short, this one word, “the cross,” stands for Christ crucified, the only Saviour. This is the meaning in which Paul uses the expression, when he tells the Corinthians, “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.” (1 Corinthians 1:18) This is the meaning in which he wrote to the Galatians, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.” He simply meant, “I glory in nothing but Christ crucified, as the salvation of my soul.2

Reader, Jesus Christ crucified was the joy and delight, the comfort and the peace, the hope and the confidence, the foundation and the resting-place, the ark and the refuge, the food and the medicine of Paul's soul. He did not think of what he had done himself, and suffered himself. He did not meditate on his own goodness, and his own righteousness. He loved to think of what Christ had done, and Christ had suffered,-of the death of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the blood of Christ, the finished work of Christ. In this he did glory. This was the sun of his soul.

This is the subject he loved to preach about. He was a man who went to and fro on the earth, proclaiming to sinners that the Son of God had shed his own heart's blood to save their souls. He walked up and down the world to tell people that Jesus Christ had loved them, and died for their sins upon the cross. Mark how he says to the Corinthians, “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins.” (1 Corinthians 15:3) “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:2) He, a blaspheming, persecuting Pharisee, had been washed in Christ's blood. He could not hold his peace about it. He was never weary of telling the story of the cross.

This is the subject he loved to dwell upon when he wrote to believers. It is wonderful to observe how full his epistles generally are of the sufferings and death of Christ,-how they run over with “thoughts that breathe and words that burn,” about Christ's dying love and power. His heart seems full of the subject. He enlarges on it constantly: he returns to it continually. It is the golden thread

that runs through all his doctrinal teaching and practical exhortations. He seems to think that the most advanced Christian can never hear too much about the cross.3

This is what he lived all his life, from the time of his conversion. He tells the Galatians, “The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20) What made him so strong to labour? What made him so willing to work? What made him so unwearied in endeavouring to save some? What made him so persevering and patient? I will tell you the secret of it all. He was always feeding by faith on Christ's body and Christ's blood. Jesus crucified was the meat and drink of his soul.

And, reader, you may rest assured that Paul was right. Depend upon it, the cross of Christ,-the death of Christ on the cross to make atonement for sinners,-is the centre truth in the whole Bible. This is the truth we begin with when we open Genesis. The seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head is nothing else but a prophecy of Christ crucified. This is the truth that shines out, though veiled, all through the law of Moses, and the history of the Jews. The daily sacrifice, the passover lamb, the continual shedding of blood in the tabernacle and temple,-all these were emblems of Christ crucified. This is the truth that we see honoured in the vision of heaven before we close the book of Revelation. “In the midst of the throne and of the four beasts,” we are told, “and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.” (Revelation 5:6) Even in the midst of heavenly glory we get a view of Christ crucified. Take away the cross of Christ, and the Bible is a dark book. It is like the Egyptian hieroglyphics without the key that interprets their meaning,-curious and wonderful, but of no real use.

Reader, mark what I say. You may know a good deal about the Bible; you may know the outlines of the histories it contains, and the dates of the events described, just as a man knows the history of England; you may know the names of the men and women mentioned in it, just as a man knows Caesar, Alexander the Great, or Napoleon; you may know the several precepts of the Bible, and admire them, just as a man admires Plato, Aristotle, or Seneca: but if you have not yet found out that Christ crucified is the foundation of the whole volume, you have read your Bible hitherto to very little profit. Your religion is a heaven without a sun, an arch without a key-stone, a compass without a needle, a clock without spring or weights, a lamp without oil It will not comfort you. It will not deliver your soul from hell.

Reader, mark what I say again. You may know a good deal about Christ, by a kind of head knowledge. You may know who He was, and where He was born, and what He did; you may know His miracles, His sayings, His prophecies, and His ordinances; you may know how He lived, and how He suffered, and how He died: but unless you know the power of Christ's cross by experience,-unless you know and feel within that the blood shed on that cross has washed away your own particular sins,-unless you are willing to confess that your salvation depends entirely on the work that Christ did upon the cross,-unless this be the case, Christ will profit you nothing. The mere knowing Christ's name will never save you. You must know His cross, and His blood, or else you will die in your sins.4

Reader, as long as you live, beware of a religion in which there are not much of the cross. You live in times when the warning is sadly needful. Beware, I say again, of a religion without the cross.

There are hundreds of places of worship, in this day, in which there is everything almost except the cross. There is carved oak, and sculptured stone: there is stained glass, and brilliant painting: there are solemn services, and a constant round of ordinances: but the real cross of Christ is not there. Jesus crucified is not proclaimed in the pulpit. The Lamb of God is not lifted up, and salvation by faith in Him is not freely proclaimed. And hence all is wrong. Reader, beware of such places of worship. They are not apostolical. They would not have satisfied St. Paul.5

There are thousands of religious books published in our times, in which there is everything except the cross. They are full of directions about sacraments, and praises of the church; they abound in exhortations about holy living, and rules for the attainment of perfection; they have plenty of fonts and crosses both inside and outside: but the real cross of Christ is left out. The Saviour, and His dying love, are either not mentioned, or mentioned in an unscriptural way. And hence they are worse than useless. Reader, beware of such books. They are not apostolic. They would never have satisfied St. Paul.

Reader, St Paul gloried in nothing but the cross. Strive to be like him. Set Jesus crucified fully before the eyes of your soul. Listen not to any teaching which would interpose anything between you and Him. Do not fall into the old Galatian error: think not that any one in this day is a better guide than the apostles. Do not be ashamed of the old paths, in which men walked who were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Let not the vague talk of men, who speak great swelling words about catholicity, and the church, and the ministry, disturb your peace, and make you loose your hands from the cross. Churches, ministers, and sacraments, are all useful in their way, but they are not Christ crucified. Do not give Christ's honour to another. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

III. Let me show you why all Christians ought to glory in the cross of Christ.

I feel that I must say something on this point, because of the ignorance that prevails about it. I suspect that many see no peculiar glory and beauty in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, they think it painful, humbling, and degrading. They do not see much profit in the story of His death and sufferings. They rather turn from it as an unpleasant thing.

Now I believe that such persons are quite wrong. I cannot hold with them. I believe it is an excellent thing for us all to be continually dwelling on the cross of Christ. It is a good thing to be often reminded how Jesus was betrayed into the hands of wicked men,-how they condemned Him with most unjust judgment,-how they spit on Him, scourged Him, beat Him, and crowned Him with thorns,-now they led Him forth as a lamb to the slaughter, without His murmuring or resisting,-how they drove the nails through His hands and feet, and set Him up on Calvary between two thieves,-how they pierced His side with a spear, mocked Him in His suffering, and let Him hang there naked and bleeding till He died. Of all these things, I say, it is good to be reminded. It is not for nothing that the crucifixion is described four times over in the New Testament. There are very few things that all the four writers of the Gospel describe. Generally speaking, if Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell a thing in our Lord's history, John does not tell it. But there is one thing that all the four give us most fully, and that one thing is the story of the cross. This is a telling fact, and not to be overlooked.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings on the cross were fore-ordained. They did not come on Him by chance or accident: they were all planned, counselled, and determined from

all eternity. The cross was foreseen in all the provisions of the everlasting Trinity, for the salvation of sinners. In the purposes of God the cross was set up from everlasting. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did Jesus shed, which had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that redemption should be by the cross. Infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings on the cross were only necessary for man's salvation. He had to bear our sins, if ever they were to be borne at all. With His stripes alone could we be healed. This was the one payment of our debt that God would accept: this was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depended. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us. There would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed.6

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings were endured voluntarily, and of His own free will. He was under no compulsion. Of His own choice He laid down His life: of His own choice He went to the cross to finish the work He came to do. He might easily have summoned legions of angels with a word, and scattered Pilate and Herod, and all their armies, like chaff before the wind. But He was a willing sufferer. His heart was set on the salvation of sinners. He was resolved to open a fountain for all sin and uncleanness, by shedding His own blood.

Reader, when I think of all this, I see nothing painful or disagreeable in the subject of Christ's cross. On the contrary, I see in it wisdom and power, peace and hope, joy and gladness, comfort and consolation. The more I keep the cross in my mind's eye, the more fulness I seem to discern in it. The longer I dwell on the cross in my thoughts, the more I am satisfied that there is more to be learned at the foot of the cross than anywhere else in the world.7

Would I know the length and breadth of God the Father's love towards a sinful world? Where shall I see it most displayed? Shall I look at His glorious sun, shining down daily on the unthankful and evil? Shall I look at seed-time and harvest, returning in regular yearly succession? Oh, no! I can find a stronger proof of love than anything of this sort. I look at the cross of Christ. I see in it not the cause of the Father's love, but the effect. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son,-gave Him to suffer and die,-that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. I know that the Father loves us, because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son. Ah, reader, I might sometimes fancy that God the Father is too high and holy to care for such miserable, corrupt creatures as we are! But I cannot, must not, dare not think it, when I look at the cross of Christ.8 Would I know how exceedingly sinful and abominable sin is in the sight of God? Where shall I see that most fully brought out? Shall I turn to the history of the flood, and read how sin drowned the world? Shall I go to the shore of the Dead Sea, and mark what sin brought on Sodom and Gomorrah? Shall I turn to the wandering Jews, and observe how sin has scattered them over the face of the earth? No: I can find a clearer proof still! I look at the cross of Christ. There I see that sin is so black and damnable, that nothing but the blood of God's own Son can wash it away. There I see that sin has so separated me from my holy Maker, that all the angels in heaven could never have made peace between us. Nothing could reconcile us, short of the death of Christ. Ah, if I listened to the wretched talk of proud men, I might sometimes fancy sin was not so very sinful! But I cannot think little of sin, when I look at the cross of Christ.9

Would I know the fulness and completeness of the salvation God has provided for sinners? Where shall I see it most distinctly? Shall I go to the general declarations in the Bible about God's mercy? Shall I rest in the general truth that God is a God of love? Oh, no! I will look at the cross of Christ. I find no evidence like that. I find no balm for a sore conscience, and a troubled heart, like the sight of Jesus dying for me on the accursed tree. There I see that a full payment has been made for all my enormous debts. The curse of that law which I have broken has come down on One who there suffered in my stead. The demands of that law are all satisfied. Payment has been made for me, even to the uttermost farthing. It will not be required twice over. Ah, I might sometimes imagine I was too bad to be forgiven! My own heart sometimes whispers that I am too wicked to be saved. But I know in my better moments this is all my foolish unbelief. I read an answer to my doubts in the blood shed on Calvary. I feel sure that there is a way to heaven for the very vilest of men, when I look at the cross.

Would I find strong reasons for being a holy man? Whither shall I turn for them? Shall I listen to the ten commandments merely? Shall I study the examples given me in the Bible of what grace can do? Shall I meditate on the rewards of heaven, and the punishments of hell? Is there no stronger motive still? Yes! I will look at the cross of Christ. There I see the love of Christ constraining me to live not unto myself, but unto Him; there I see that I am not my own now: I am bought with a price. I am bound by the most solemn obligations to glorify Jesus with body and spirit, which are His. There I see that Jesus gave Himself for me, not only to redeem me from all iniquity, but also to purify me and make me one of a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He bore my sins in His own body on the tree, that I being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness. Ah, reader, there is nothing so sanctifying as a clear view of the cross of Christ! It crucifies the world unto us, and us unto the world. How can we love sin, when we remember that because of our sins Jesus died? Surely none ought to be so holy as the disciples of a crucified Lord.

Would I learn how to be contented and cheerful under all the cares and anxieties of life? What school shall I go to? How shall I attain this state of mind most easily? Shall I look at the sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God, the providence of God, the love of God? It is well to do so. But I have a better argument still. I will look at the cross of Christ. I feel that He who spared not His only begotten Son, but delivered Him up to die for me, will surely with Him give me all things that I really need. He that endured that pain for my soul, will surely not withhold from me anything that is really good. He that has done the greater things for me, will doubtless do the lesser things also. He that gave His own blood to procure me a home, will unquestionably supply me with all that is really profitable for me by the way. Ah, reader, there is no school for learning contentment than can be compared with the foot of the cross.

Would I gather arguments for hoping that I shall never be cast away? Where shall I go to find them? Shall I look at my own graces and gifts? Shall I take comfort in my own faith, and love, and penitence, and zeal, and prayer? Shall I turn to my own heart, and say, “this same heart will never be false and cold?” Oh, no! God forbid! I will look at the cross of Christ. This is my grand argument. This is my mainstay. I cannot think that He who went through such sufferings to redeem my soul, will let that soul perish after all, when it has once cast itself on Him. Oh, no! what Jesus paid for, Jesus will surely keep. He paid dearly for it. He will not let it easily be lost. He died for me when I was yet a dark sinner: He will never forsake me after I have believed. Ah, reader, when Satan tempts you to doubt whether Christ's people will be kept from falling, you should tell Satan to look

at the cross.10

And now, reader, will you marvel that I said all Christians ought to glory in the cross? Will you not rather wonder that any can hear of the cross and remain unmoved? I declare I know no greater proof of man's depravity, than the fact that thousands of so-called Christians see nothing in the cross. Well may our hearts be called stony,-well may the eyes of our mind be called blind,-well may our whole nature be called diseased,-well may we all be called dead, when the cross of Christ is heard of and yet neglected. Surely we may take up the words of the prophet, and say, Hear, on heavens, and be astonished on earth ; a wonderful and a horrible thing is done,”-Christ was crucified for sinners, and yet many Christians live as if He was never crucified at all!

Reader, the cross is the grand peculiarity of the Christian religion. Other religions have laws and moral precepts,-forms and ceremonies,-rewards and punishments. But other religions cannot tell us of a dying Saviour. They cannot show us the cross This is the crown and glory of the Gospel. This is that special comfort which belongs to it alone. Miserable indeed is that religious teaching which calls itself Christian, and yet contains nothing of the cross. A man who teaches in this way, might as well profess to explain the solar system, and yet tell his hearers nothing about the sun.

The cross is the strength of a minister. I for one would not be without it for all the world. I should feel like a soldier without arms,-like an artist without his pencil,-like a pilot without his compass,-like a labourer without his tools. Let others, if they will, preach the law and morality; let others hold forth the terrors of hell, and the joys of heaven; let others drench their congregations with teachings about the sacraments and the church; give me the cross of Christ! This is the only lever which has ever turned the world upside down hitherto, and made men forsake their sins. And if this will not, nothing will. A man may begin preaching with a perfect knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; but he will do little or no good among his hearers unless he knows something of the cross. Never was there a minister who did much for the conversion of souls who did not dwell much on Christ crucified. Luther, Rutherford, Whitefield, M'Cheyne, were all most eminently preachers of the cross. This is the preaching that the Holy Ghost delights to bless. He loves to honour those who honour the cross.

The cross is the secret of the missionary success. Nothing but this has ever moved the hearts of the heathen. Just according as this has been lifted up missions have prospered. This is the weapon that has won victories over hearts of every kind, in every quarter of the globe: Greenlanders, Africans, South-Sea Islanders, Hindoos, Chinese, all have alike felt its power. Just as that huge, iron tube which crosses the Menai Straits, is more affected and bent by half an hour's sunshine than by all the dead weight that can be placed in it, so in like manner the hearts of savages have melted before the cross, when every other argument seemed to move them no more than stones. “Brethren,” said a North-American Indian after his conversion, “I have been a heathen. I know how heathens think. Once a preacher came and began to explain to us that there was a God; but we told him to return to the place from whence he came. Another preacher came and told us not to lie, nor steal, nor drink; but we did not heed him. At last another came into my hut one day and said, 'I am come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He sends to let you know that He will make you happy, and deliver you from misery. For this end He became a man, gave His life a ransom, and shed His blood for sinners.' I could not forget his words. I told them to the other Indians, and an awakening begun among us. I say, therefore, preach the

sufferings and death of Christ, our Saviour, if you wish your words to gain entrance among the heathen.” Never indeed did the devil triumph so thoroughly, as when he persuaded the Jesuit missionaries in China to keep back the story of the cross.

The cross is the foundation of a Church's prosperity. No Church will ever be honoured in which Christ crucified is not continually lifted up : nothing whatever can make up for the want of the cross. Without it all things may be done decently and in order; without it there may he splendid ceremonies, beautiful music, gorgeous churches, learned ministers, crowded communion tables, huge collections for the poor but without the cross no good will be done; dark hearts will not be enlightened, proud hearts will not be humbled, mourning hearts will not be comforted, fainting hearts will not be cheered. Sermons about the Catholic Church and an apostolic ministry,-sermons about baptism and the Lord's supper,-sermons about unity and schism,-sermons about fasts and communion,-sermons about fathers and saints,-such sermons will never make up for the absence of sermons about the cross of Christ. They may amuse some: they will feed none. A gorgeous banqueting room, and splendid gold plate on the table, will never make up to a hungry man for the want of food. Christ crucified is God's grand ordinance for good to men. Whenever a Church keeps back Christ crucified, or puts anything whatever in that foremost place which Christ crucified should always have, from that moment a Church ceases to be useful. Without Christ crucified in her pulpits, a Church is little better than a cumberer of the ground, a dead carcase, a well without water, a barren fig tree, a sleeping watchman, a silent trumpet, a dumb witness, an ambassador without terms of peace, a messenger without tidings, a lighthouse without fire, a stumbling-block to weak believers, a comfort to infidels, a hot-bed for formalism, a joy to the devil, and an offence to God.

The cross is the grand centre of union among true Christians. Our outward differences are many, without doubt. One man is an Episcopalian, another is a Presbyterian,-one is an Independent, another a Baptist,-one is a Calvinist, another an Arminian,-one is a Lutheran, another a Plymouth Brother,-one is a friend to establishments, another a friend to the voluntary system,-one is a friend to liturgies, another a friend to extempore prayer. But, after all, what shall we hear about most of these differences in heaven? Nothing, most probably: nothing at all. Does a man really and sincerely glory in the cross of Christ? That is the grand question. If he does, he is my brother: we are travelling on the same road; we are journeying towards a home where Christ is all, and everything outward in religion will be forgotten. But if he does not glory in the cross of Christ, I cannot feel comfort about him. Union on outward points only is union only for a time: union about the cross is union for eternity. Error on outward points is only a skin-deep disease: error about the cross is disease at the heart. Union about outward points is a mere man-made union : union about the cross of Christ can only be produced by the Holy Ghost.

Reader, I know not what you think of all this. I feel as if I had said nothing compared to what might be said. I feel as if the half of what I desire to tell you about the cross were left untold. But I do hope that I have given you something to think about. I do trust that I have shown you that I have reason for the question with which I began this tract: “What do you think and feel about the cross of Christ?” Listen to me now for a few moments, while I say something to apply the whole subject to your conscience.

Are you living in any kind of sin? Are you following the course of this world, and neglecting your soul? Hear, I beseech you, what I say to you this day: “Behold the cross of Christ.” See there how Jesus loved you! See there what Jesus suffered to prepare for you a way of salvation! Yes: careless men and women, for you that blood was shed! For you those hands and feet were pierced with nails. For you that body hung in agony on the cross! You are those whom Jesus loved, and for whom He died! Surely that love ought to melt you. Surely the thought of the cross should draw you to repentance. Oh, that it might be so this very day! Oh, that you would come at once to that Saviour who died for you, and is willing to save! Come, and cry to Him with the prayer of faith, and I know that He will listen. Come, and lay hold upon the cross, and I know that He will not cast you out. Come, and believe on Him who died on the cross, and this very day you shall have eternal life. How will you ever escape if you neglect so great salvation? None surely will be so deep in hell as those who despise the cross.

Are you inquiring the way toward heaven. “Are you seeking salvation, but doubtful whether you can find it? Are you desiring to have an interest in Christ, but doubting whether Christ will receive you? To you also I say this day, “Behold the cross of Christ.” Here is encouragement if you really want it. Draw near to the Lord Jesus with boldness, for nothing need keep you back. His arms are open to receive you: His heart is full of love towards you. He has made a way by which you may approach Him with confidence. Think of the cross. Draw near, and fear not.

Are you an unlearned man? Are you desirous to get to heaven, and perplexed and brought to a stand-still by difficulties in the Bible which you cannot explain? To you also I say this day, “Behold the cross of Christ.” Read there the Father's love and the Son's compassion. Surely they are written in great plain letters, which none can well mistake. What though you are now perplexed by the doctrine of election? What though at present you cannot reconcile your own utter corruption and your own responsibility? Look, I say, at the cross. Does not that cross tell you that Jesus is a mighty, loving, ready Saviour? Does it not make one thing plain, and that is that if not saved it is all your own fault? Oh, get hold of that truth, and hold it fast!

Are you a distressed believer? Is your heart pressed down with sickness, tried with disappointments, over-burdened with cares? To you also I say this day, “behold the cross of Christ.” Think whose hand it is that chastens you: think whose hand is measuring to you the cup of bitterness which you are now drinking. It is the hand of Him that was crucified. It is the same hand that in love to your soul was nailed to the accursed tree. Surely that thought should comfort and hearten you. Surely you should say to yourself, “A crucified Saviour will never lay upon me anything that is not good for me. There is a needs be. It must be well!”

Are you a believer that longs to be more holy? Are you one that finds his heart too ready to love earthly things? To you also I say, “Behold the cross of Christ.” Look at the cross; think of the cross; meditate on the cross, and then go and set your affections on the world if you can. I believe that holiness is nowhere learned so well as on Calvary; I believe you cannot look much at the cross without feeling your will sanctified, and your tastes made more spiritual. As the sun gazed upon makes everything else look dark and dim, so does the cross darken the false splendour of this world. As honey tasted makes all other things seem to have no taste at all, so does the cross seen by faith take all the sweetness out of the pleasures of the world. Keep on every day steadily looking at the cross of Christ, and you will soon say of the world, as the poet does,- Its pleasures

now no longer please,

No more content afford;

Far from my heart be joys like these,

Now I have seen the Lord. As by the light of opening day

The stars are concealed,

So earthly pleasures fade away

When Jesus is revealed. Are you a dying believer? Have you gone to that bed from which something within tells you you will never come down alive? Are you drawing near to that solemn hour, when soul and body must part for a season, and you must launch into a world unknown? Oh, look steadily at the cross of Christ, and you shall be kept in peace! Fix the eyes of your mind firmly on Jesus crucified, and He shall deliver you from all your fears. Though you walk through dark places He will be with you. He will never leave you,-never forsake you. Sit under the shadow of the cross to the very last, and its fruit shall be sweet to your taste. “Ah,” said a dying missionary, “there is but one thing needful on a death-bed, and that is to feel one's arms around the cross!”

Reader, I lay these thoughts before your mind. What you think now about the cross of Christ, I cannot tell; but I can wish you nothing better than this,-that you may be able to say with the apostle Paul, before you die or meet the Lord, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

FOOTNOTES

1 “Howsoever men when they sit at ease, do vainly tickle their own hearts with the wanton conceit of I know not what proportionable correspondence between their merits and their rewards, which in the trance of their high speculations, they dream that God hath measured and laid up as it were in bundles for them;-we see notwithstanding by daily experience in a number even of them, that when the hour of death approacheth, when they secretly hear themselves summoned to appear and stand at the bar of that Judge, whose brightness causeth the eyes of angels themselves to dazzle, all those idle imaginations do then begin to hide their faces. To name merits then is to lay their Souls upon the rack. The memory of their own deeds is loathsome unto them. They forsake all things wherein they have put any trust and confidence. No staff to lean upon, no rest, no ease, no comfort then, but only in Christ Jesus”-Richard Hooker. 1585.

2 “By the cross of Christ the apostle understandeth the all-sufficient, expiatory, and satisfactory sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, with the whole work of our redemption; in the saving knowledge of whereof, he professeth he will glory and boasts.”-Cudworth on Galatians. 1613.

“Touching these words, I do not find that any expositor, either ancient or modern, Popish or Protestant, writing on this place, doth expound the cross here mentioned of the sign of the cross, but of the profession of faith in Him that was hanged on the cross.”-Mayer's Commentary. 1631.

“This is rather to be understood of the cross which Christ suffered for us, than of that we suffer for Him”-Leigh's Annotations. 1650.

3 “Christ crucified is the sum of the Gospel, and contains all the riches of it. Paul was so much taken with Christ, that nothing sweeter than Jesus could drop from his pen and lips. It is observed that he hath the word “Jesus” five hundred times in his Epistles.”-Charnock. 1684.

4 “If our faith stop in Christ's life, and do not fasten upon His blood, it will not be justifying faith. His miracles, which prepared the world for His doctrines; His holiness, which fitted Himself for His sufferings, had been inefficient for us without fitted addition of the cross.” -Charnock. 1684.

5 “Paul determined to know nothing else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But many manage the ministry as if they had taken up a contrary determination,-even to know any thing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”-Traill. 1690.

6 “In Christ's humiliation stands our exaltation; in His weakness stands our strength; in His ignominy our glory; in His death our life.”-Cudworth. 1618.

7 “The eye of faith regards Christ sitting on the summit of the cross, as in a triumphal chariot; the devil bound to the lowest part of the same cross, and trodden under the feet of Christ.” -Bishop Davenant on Colossians. 1627.

8 “The world we live in had fallen upon our heads, had it not been upheld by the pillar of the cross; had not Christ stepped in and promised a satisfaction for the sin of man. By this all things consist; not a blessing we enjoy but may put us in mind of it; they were ill forfeited by sin, but merited by His blood. If we study it well we shall be sensible how God hated sin end loved a world.”-Charnock.

9 If God hateth sin so much that He would allow neither man nor angel for the redemption thereof, but only the death of His only and well-beloved Son, who will not stand in fear thereof?” -Church of England Homily for Good Friday. 1560.

10 “The believer is so freed from eternal wrath, that if Satan and conscience say, 'Thou art a sinner, and under the curse of the law,' he can say, It is true, I am a sinner; but I was hanged on a tree and died, and was made a curse in my Head and Lawgiver Christ, and his payment and suffering is my payment and suffering.” -Rutherford's Christ Dying. 1647.

Chapter 25

Do you Believe?

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. DO YOU BELIEVE?

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."— John 3:16.

READER,

Look at the well-known text which heads this page. Its words are probably familiar to your ears. You have very likely heard them, or read them, or quoted them, a hundred times. But have you ever considered what a vast amount of divinity this text contains? No wonder that Luther called it "the Bible in miniature!" —and have you ever considered what an immensely solemn question arises out of this text? The Lord Jesus says, "Whosoever believeth shall not perish." Now, reader, DO YOU BELIEVE?

Questions about religion are seldom popular. They frighten people. They oblige them to look within and to think. The insolvent tradesman does not like his books to be searched. The faithless steward does not like his accounts to be examined. And the unconverted Christian does not like to be asked home-questions about his soul.

But questions about religion are very useful. The Lord Jesus Christ asked many questions during His ministry on earth. The servant of Christ ought not to be ashamed to do likewise. Questions about things necessary to salvation,—questions which probe the conscience, and bring men face to face with God,—such questions often bring life and health to souls. I know few questions more important than the one before you today. DO YOU BELIEVE?

Reader, the question before you is no easy one to answer. Think not to thrust it aside by the off-hand answer, "Of course I believe." I tell you this day that true belief is no such "matter of course" as you suppose. I tell you that myriads of Protestants and Roman Catholics are constantly saying on Sundays, "I believe," who know nothing whatever of believing. They cannot explain what they mean. They neither know what, nor in whom, they believe. They can give no account of their faith. Reader, a belief of this kind is utterly useless. It can neither satisfy, nor sanctify, nor save.

I invite you in all affection to consider the question which heads this tract. I ask you to give me your attention while I try to place it before you in its full proportions. In order to see clearly the importance of "believing," you should ponder well the words of Christ to which I have already referred. It is by the unfolding of these words, that I shall hope to make you feel the weight of the question, "Do you believe?"

There are four things which I wish to show you, and to impress upon your mind.

I. God's mind towards the world,—He "loved" it.

II. God's gift to the world,—"He gave His only begotten Son."

III. The only way to obtain the benefit of God's gift,—"Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish."

IV. The marks by which true belief may be known.

Reader, I invite you to follow me step by step through the four points I have just stated. Do not throw down this tract in anger or impatience, but read it to the end. One thing I desire in writing it, and that is YOUR SALVATION.

I. Let us consider, in the first place, God's mind towards the world,—He "loved" it.

The extent of the Father's love towards the world is a subject on which there is some difference of opinion. It is a subject on which I have long taken my side, and never hesitate to speak my mind. I believe that the Bible teaches us that God's love extends to all mankind. "His tender mercies are over all His works" (Psalms 145:9). He did not love the Jews only, but the Gentiles also. He does not love His own elect only. He loves all the world.

But what kind of love is this with which the Father regards all mankind? It cannot be a love of complacency, or else He would cease to be a perfect God. He is one who cannot bear that which is evil. Oh, no! The world-wide love of which Jesus speaks is a love of kindness, pity, and compassion. Fallen as man is, and provoking as man's ways are, the heart of God is full of kindness towards him. While as a righteous Judge He hates sin, He is yet able in a certain sense to love sinners! The length and breadth of His compassion are not to be measured by our feeble measures. We are not to suppose that He is such an one as ourselves. Righteous and holy and pure as God is, it is yet possible for God to love all mankind.

Think, reader, for a moment, how wonderful is this extent of God's love. Look at the state of mankind in every part of the earth, and mark the amazing quantity of wickedness and ungodliness by which earth is defiled. Look at the millions of heathen worshipping stocks and stones, and living in a spiritual darkness "that may be felt." Look at the millions of Roman Catholics, burying the truth under man-made traditions, and giving the honour due to Christ to the church, the saints, and the priest. Look at the millions of Protestants who are content with a mere formal Christianity, and know nothing of Christian believing or Christian living except the name. Look at the land in which we live at this very day, and mark the sins which abound even in a privileged nation like our own. Think how drunkenness, and Sabbath-breaking, and uncleanness, and lying, and swearing, and pride, and covetousness, and infidelity, are crying aloud to God from one end of Great Britain to the other. And then remember that God loves this world! No wonder that we find it written that He is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). His compassions fail not. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He "would have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." He "has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." (2 Peter 3:9: 1 Timothy 2:4: Ezekiel 33:11) There lives not the man or woman on earth whom God regards with absolute hatred or complete indifference. His mercy is like all His other attributes. It passes knowledge. God loves the world.

Reader, there are divers and strange doctrines abroad in the present day about the love of God. It is a precious truth which Satan labours hard to obscure by misrepresentation and perversion. Grasp it firmly, and stand on your guard.

Beware of the common idea that God the Father is only an angry Being, whom sinful man can only regard with fear, and from whom he must flee to Christ for safety. Cast it aside as a baseless and unscriptural notion. Contend earnestly for all the attributes of God,—for His holiness and His justice, as well as for His love. But never allow for one moment that there is any want of love towards sinners in any Person in the Blessed Trinity. Oh, no! Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father loves, and the Son loves, and the Holy Ghost loves. When Christ came on earth, the kindness and love of God toward man appeared. (Titus 3:4) The cross is the effect of the Father's love, and not the cause. Redemption is the result of the compassion of all three Persons in the Trinity. To place the Father and the Son in opposition one to another, is weak and crude theology. Christ died, not because God the Father hated, but because He loved the world.

Beware, again, of the common doctrine that God's love is limited and confined to His own elect, and that all the rest of mankind are passed by, neglected, and let alone. This also is a notion that will not bear examination by the light of Scripture. The father of a prodigal son can surely love and pity him, even when he is walking after his own lusts, and refusing to return home. The Maker of all things may surely love the work of His own hands with a love of compassion, even when rebellious against Him. Let us resist to the death the unscriptural doctrine of universal salvation. It is not true that all mankind will be finally saved. But let us not fly into the extreme of denying God's universal compassion. It is true that God "loves the world." Let us maintain jealously the privileges of God's elect. It is true that they are loved with a special love, and will be loved to all eternity. But let us not exclude any man or woman from the pale of God's kindness and compassion. We have no right to pare down the meaning of words when Jesus says, "God loved the world." The heart of God is far wider than that of man. There is a sense in which the Father loves all mankind.[1]

Reader, if you never took up the service of Christ in real earnest, and have the least desire to begin, take comfort in the truth now before you. Take comfort in the thought that God the Father is a God of infinite love and compassion. Do not hang back and hesitate, under the idea that God is an angry Being, who is unwilling to receive sinners, and slow to pardon. Remember this day that love is the Father's darling attribute. In Him there is perfect justice, perfect purity, perfect wisdom, perfect knowledge, infinite power. But, above all, never forget there is in the Father a perfect love and compassion. Draw near to Him with boldness, because Jesus has made a way for you. But draw nigh to Him also with boldness, because it is written that "He loved the world."

Reader, if you have taken up the service of God already, never be ashamed of imitating Him whom you serve. Be full of love and kindness to all men, and full of special love to them that believe. Let there be nothing narrow, limited, contracted, stingy, or sectarian in your love. Do not only love your family and your friends;—love all mankind. Love your neighbours and your fellow countrymen. Love strangers and foreigners. Love heathen and Mahometans. Love the worst of men with a love of pity. Love all the world. Lay aside all envy and malice,—all selfishness and unkindness. To keep up such a spirit is to be no better than an infidel. Let all your things be done with charity. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and be

not weary of doing them good to your life's end. The world may sneer at such conduct and call it mean and low-spirited. But this is the mind of Christ. This is the way to be like God. GOD LOVED THE WORLD.

II. The next thing I want you to consider is God's gift to the world. "He gave His only begotten Son."

The manner in which the truth before us is stated by our Lord Jesus Christ, demands special attention. It would be well for many who talk big swelling words about "the love of God" in the present day, if they would mark the way in which the Lord Jesus sets it before us.

The love of God towards the world is not a vague, abstract idea of mercy, which we are obliged to take on trust without any proof that it is true. It is a love which has been manifested by a mighty gift. It is a love which has been put before us in a plain, unmistakeable, tangible form. God the Father was not content to sit in heaven, idly pitying and loving His fallen creatures on earth. He has given the mightiest evidence of His love towards us by a gift of unspeakable value. He has "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). He has so loved us that He has given us Christ! A higher proof of the Father's love could not have been given.

Again, it is not written that God so loved the world that He resolved to save it, but that He so loved it that He gave Christ. His love is not displayed at the expense of His holiness and justice. It flows down from heaven to earth through one particular channel. It is set before men in one special way. It is only through Christ, by Christ, on account of Christ, and in inseparable connection with the work of Christ. Let us glory in God's love by all means. Let us proclaim to all the world that God is love. But let us carefully remember that we know little or nothing of God's love which can give us comfort, excepting in Jesus Christ. It is not written that God so loved the world that He will take all the world to heaven, but that He so loved it, that He has given His only begotten Son. He that ventures on God's love without reference to Christ, is building on a foundation of sand.

Who can estimate the value of God's gift, when He gave to the world His only begotten Son? It is something unspeakable, incomprehensible. It passes man's understanding. Two things there are which man has no arithmetic to reckon, and no line to measure. One of these things is the extent of that man's loss who loses his own soul. The other is the extent of God's gift when He gave Christ to sinners. He gave no created thing for our redemption, though all the treasures of earth, and all the stars of heaven were at His disposal. He gave no created being to be our Redeemer, though angels, principalities and powers in heavenly places, were ready to do His will. Oh! no! He gave us One who was nothing less than His own fellow, very God of very God, His only begotten Son. He that thinks lightly of man's need and man's sin, would do well to consider man's Saviour. Sin must indeed be exceeding sinful, when the Father must needs give His only Son to be the sinner's Friend!

Reader, have you ever considered to what the Father gave His only begotten Son? Was it to be received with gratitude and thankfulness by a lost and bankrupt world? Was it to reign in royal majesty on a restored earth, and put down every enemy under His feet? Was it to enter the world as a king, and to give laws to a willing and obedient people? No! The Father gave His Son to be despised and rejected of men, to be born of a poor woman, and live a life of poverty,—to be hated, per-secuted, slandered, and blasphemed,—to be counted a malefactor, condemned as a transgressor, and die the death of a felon. Never was there such love as this! Never such

condescension! The man among ourselves who cannot stoop much and suffer much in order to do good, knows nothing of the mind of Christ.

For what end and purpose did the Father give His only begotten Son? Was it only to supply an example of self-denial and self-sacrifice? No! It was for a far higher end and purpose than this. He gave Him to be a sacrifice for man's sin, and an atonement for man's transgression. He gave Him to be delivered for our offences, and to die for the ungodly. He gave Him to bear our iniquities, and to suffer for our sins, the just for the unjust. He gave Him to be made a curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the curse of the law. He gave Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He gave Him to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. He gave Him to be a ransom for all, and to make satisfaction for our heavy debt to God by His own precious blood. He gave Him to be the Almighty Friend of all sinners of mankind,—to be their Surety and Substitute,—to do for them what they never could have done for themselves,—suffer what they could never have suffered,—and pay what they could never have paid. All that Jesus did and suffered on earth was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The chief end for which He lived and died was to provide eternal redemption for mankind.

Reader, beware of ever losing sight of the great purpose for which Christ was given by God the Father. Let not the false teaching of modern divinity, however plausible it may sound, tempt you to forsake the old paths. Hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints, that the special object for which Christ was given was to die for sinners, and to make atonement for them by His sacrifice on the cross. Once give up this great doctrine, and there is little worth contending for in Christianity. If Christ did not really bear our sins on the tree as our Substitute, there is an end of all solid peace.

Beware, again, of holding narrow and confined views of the extent of Christ's redemption. Regard Him as given by God the Father to be the common Saviour for all the world. See in Him the fountain for all sin and uncleanness, to which every sinner may come boldly, drink and live. See in Him the brazen serpent set up in the midst of the camp, to which every sin-bitten soul may look and be healed. See in Him a medicine of matchless value, sufficient for the wants of all the world, and offered freely to all mankind. The way to heaven is narrow enough already, by reason of man's pride, hardness, sloth, listlessness, and unbelief. But take heed that you do not make that way more narrow than it really is.

I confess, boldly, that I hold the doctrine of particular redemption, in a certain sense, as strongly as any one. I believe that none are effectually redeemed but God's elect. They and they only are set free from the guilt, and power, and consequences of sin. But I hold no less strongly, that Christ's work of atonement is sufficient for all mankind. There is a sense in which He has tasted death for every man, and has taken upon Him the sin of the world. I dare not pare down, and fine away, what appear to me the plain statements of Scripture. I dare not shut a door which God seems, to my eyes, to have left open. I dare not tell any man on earth that Christ has done nothing for him, and that he has no warrant to apply boldly to Christ for salvation. I must abide by the statements of the Bible. Christ is God's gift to the whole world.

Reader, I ask you to observe what a giving religion true Christianity is. Gift, love, and free grace are the grand characteristics of the pure gospel. The Father loves the world and gives His only begotten Son. The Son loves us and gives Himself for us. The Father and the Son together give

the Holy Spirit to all that ask. All Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity give grace upon grace to them that believe. Never be ashamed of being a giving Christian, if you profess to have any hope in Christ. Give freely, liberally, and self-denyingly, according as you have power and opportunity. Let not your love consist in nothing more than vague expressions of kindness and compassion. Make proof of it by actions. Help forward the cause of Christ on earth, by money, influence, pains, and prayer. If God so loved you as to give His Son for your soul, you should count it a privilege, and not a burden, to give what you can to do good to men.

Reader, if God has given you His only begotten Son, beware of doubting His kindness and love in any painful providence of your daily life. Never allow yourself to think hard thoughts of God. Never suppose that He can give you anything that is not really for your good. Remember the words of St. Paul: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32) See in every sorrow and trouble of your earthly pilgrimage, the hand of Him who gave Christ to die for your sins. That hand can never smite you except in love. He who gave you His only begotten Son, will never withhold anything from you that is really for your good. Lean back on this thought and be content. Say to yourself in the darkest hour of trial,"This also is ordered by Him who gave Christ to die for my sins. It cannot be wrong. It is done in love. It must be well."

III. The third thing I propose to consider, is the way in which man obtains the benefit of God's love and Christ's salvation. It is written that "whosoever believeth shall not perish."

Reader, the point before you is of the deepest importance. To bring it out clearly before your eyes is one great object of the tract you are now reading. God has loved the world. God has given His Son "to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). And yet we learn from Scripture that many persons in the world never reach heaven! Here at any rate is limitation. Here the gate is strait and the way narrow. Some and some only out of mankind obtain eternal benefit from Christ. Who then, and what, are they?

Christ and His benefits are only available to those who believe. This is a doctrine repeatedly laid down in Scripture, in plain and unmistakeable language. Those who will not believe in Him have no part in Him. Without believing there is no salvation. It is vain to suppose that any will be saved, merely because Christ was incarnate,—or because Christ is in heaven,—or because they belong to Christ's church,—or because they are baptized,—or because they have received the Lord's supper. All this is entirely useless to any man except he believes. Without faith on his part, all these things together will not save his soul. We must have personal faith in Christ, personal dealings with Christ, personal transactions with Christ, or we are lost for evermore. It is utterly false and unscriptural to say that Christ is in every man. Christ no doubt is for everyone, but Christ is not in everyone. He dwells only in those hearts which have faith, and all, unhappily, have not faith. He that believeth not in the Son of God is yet in his sins, the wrath of God abideth on him. "He that believeth not," says our Lord Jesus Christ in words of fearful distinctness,—"He that believeth not shall be damned "* (Mark 6:16; John 3:36).

But Christ and all His benefits are the property of anyone of mankind that believes. Everyone that believes on the Son of God is at once pardoned, forgiven, justified, counted righteous, reckoned innocent, and freed from all liability to condemnation. His sins, however many, are at once cleansed away by Christ's precious blood. His soul, however guilty, is at once clothed with Christ's

perfect righteousness. It matters not what he may have been in time past. His sins may have been of the worst kind. His former character may be of the blackest description. But does he believe on the Son of God? This is the one question. If he does believe, he is justified from all things in the sight of God.—It matters nothing that he can bring to Christ nothing to recommend him, no good works, no long-proved amendments, no unmistakeable repentance and change of life. But does he this day, believe in Jesus Christ? This is the grand question. If he does he is at once accepted. He is accounted righteous for Christ's sake.

But what is this believing, which is of such matchless importance? What is the nature of this faith which gives a man such amazing privileges? This is an important question. I ask your attention to the answer. Here is a rock on which many make shipwreck. And yet there is nothing really mysterious and hard to understand about saving belief. The whole difficulty arises from man's pride and self-righteousness. It is the very simplicity of justifying faith, at which thousands stumble. They cannot understand it because they will not stoop.

Believing on Christ is no mere intellectual assent, or belief of the head. This is no more than the faith of devils. We may believe that there was a divine Person called Jesus Christ, who lived and died and rose again, eighteen hundred years ago, and yet never believe so as to be saved. Doubtless there must be some knowledge before we can believe. There is no true religion in ignorance. But knowledge alone is not saving faith.

Believing on Christ again is not mere feeling something about Christ. This is often no more than temporary excitement, which, like the early dew, soon passes away. We may be pricked in conscience, and feel drawings toward the Gospel like Herod and Felix. We may even tremble and weep, and show much affection for the truth and those that profess it. And yet all this time our hearts and wills may remain utterly unchanged and secretly chained down to the world. Doubtless there is no saving faith where there is no feeling. But feeling alone is not faith.

True belief in Christ is the unreserved trust of a heart convinced of sin, in Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour. It is the combined act of the whole man's head, conscience, heart, and will. It is often so weak and feeble at first, that he who has it cannot be persuaded that he has it. And yet, like life in the new born infant, his belief may be real, genuine, saving, and true. The moment that the conscience is convinced of sin, and the head sees Christ to be the only One who can save, and the heart and will lay hold on the hand that Christ holds out, that moment there is saving faith. In that moment a man believes.

True belief in Christ is so immensely important, that the Holy Ghost has graciously used many figures in the Bible in describing it. The Lord God knows the slowness of man to comprehend spiritual things. He has therefore multiplied forms of expression, in order to set faith fully before us. The man who cannot understand "believing" in one form of words, will perhaps understand it in another.

1. Believing is the soul's coming to Christ. The Lord Jesus says, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (John 6:35; Matthew 11:28). Christ is that Almighty Friend, Advocate, and Physician, to whom all sinners, needing help, are commanded to apply. The believer comes to Him by faith, and is relieved.

2. Believing is the soul's receiving Christ. St. Paul says, "Ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord" (Colossians 2:6). Christ offers to come into man's heart with pardon, mercy, and grace, and to dwell there as its Peacemaker and King. He says, "I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3:20). The believer hears His voice, opens the door, and admits Christ as his Master, Priest, and King.

3. Believing is the soul's building on Christ. St. Paul says, ye are "built up in Him."—"Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Colossians 2:7; Ephesians 2:20). Christ is that sure cornerstone, that strong foundation, which alone can bear the weight of a sinful soul. The believer places his hopes for eternity on Him, and is safe. The earth may be shaken and dissolved, but he is built upon a rock, and will never be confounded.

4. Believing is the soul's putting on Christ. St. Paul says, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Christ is that pure white robe, which God has provided for all sinners who would enter heaven. The believer puts on this robe by faith, and is at once perfect, and free from any spot in God's sight.

5. Believing is the soul's laying hold on Christ. St. Paul says, "We have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18). Christ is that true city refuge, to which the man fleeing from the avenger of blood runs, and in which he is safe. Christ is that altar which provided a sanctuary to him who laid hold on its horns. Christ is that almighty hand of mercy, which God holds out from heaven to lost and drowning sinners. The believer lays hold on this hand by faith, and is delivered from the pit of hell.

6. Believing is the soul's eating Christ. The Lord Jesus says, "My flesh is meat indeed. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:55, John 6:58). Christ is that divine food which God has provided for starving sinners. He is that divine bread which is at the same time, life, nourishment, and medicine. The believer feeds on this bread of life by faith. His hunger is relieved. His soul is delivered from death.

7. Believing is the soul's drinking Christ. The Lord Jesus says, "My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:55). Christ is that fountain of living water which God has opened for the use of all thirsty and sin-defiled sinners, proclaiming, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). The believer drinks of this living water, and his thirst is quenched.

8. Believing is the soul's committal of itself to Christ. St. Paul says, "He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). Christ is the appointed keeper and guardian of souls. It is His office to preserve from sin, death, hell, and the devil, anything committed to His charge. The believer places his soul in the hands of the Almighty treasure-keeper, and is insured against loss to all eternity. He trusts himself to Him and is safe.

9. Last, but not least, believing is the soul's look to Christ. St. Paul describes the saints as "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2). The invitation of the Gospel is, "look unto Me and be ye saved" (Isaiah 45:22). Christ is that brazen serpent which God has set up in the world, for the healing of all sin-bitten souls who desire to be cured. The believer looks to Him by faith, and has life, health, and spiritual strength.

One common remark applies to all the nine expressions which I have just gone through. They all give us the simplest idea of faith or believing that man can desire. No one of them implies the notion of anything mysterious, great, or meritorious in the act of belief. All represent it as something within reach of the weakest and feeblest sinner, and within the comprehension of the most ignorant and unlearned. Grant for a moment that a man says he cannot understand what faith in Christ is. Let him look at the nine expressions under which faith is described in Scripture, and tell me, if he can, that he cannot understand them. Surely he must allow that coming to Christ, looking to Christ, committing our souls to Christ, laying hold on Christ, are simple ideas. Then let him remember that coming, looking, and committing our souls to Christ, are, in other words, believing.

And now, reader, if you love peace of conscience in your religion, I entreat you to grasp firmly the great doctrine which I have tried to set before you, and never let it go. Hold fast the grand truth, that saving faith is nothing but simple trust in Christ, that faith alone justifies, and that the one thing needful in order to obtain an interest in Christ is to believe. No doubt repentance, holiness, and charity are excellent things. They will always accompany true faith. But in the matter of justification, they have nothing to do. In that matter, the one thing needful is to believe. No doubt belief is not the only grace to be found in the heart of a true Christian. But only belief gives him an interest in Christ. Prize that doctrine as the peculiar treasure of Christianity. Once let it go, or add anything to it, and there is an end of inward peace.

Prize the doctrine for its suitableness to the wants of fallen man. It places salvation within reach of the lowest and vilest sinner, if he has but heart and will to receive it. It asks him not for works, righteousness, merit, goodness, worthiness. It requires nothing of him. It strips him of all excuses. It deprives him of all pretext for despair. His sins may have been as scarlet. But will he believe? Then there is hope.

Prize the doctrine for its glorious simplicity. It brings eternal life near to the poor, and ignorant, and unlearned. It does not ask a man for a long confession of doctrinal orthodoxy. It does not require a store of head knowledge, and an acquaintance with articles and creeds. Does the man, with all his ignorance, come to Christ as a sinner, and commit himself entirely to Him for salvation? Will he believe? If he will, there is hope.

Above all, prize the doctrine for the glorious breadth and fulness of its terms. It does not say "the elect" who believe, or "the rich" who believe, or "the moral" people who believe, or "the Churchman" who believes, or "the Dissenter" who believes,—these, and these only shall be saved. Oh! no, it uses a word of far wider signification: —It says, "Whosoever believeth, shall not perish." Whosoever,—whatever his past life, conduct, or character,—whatever his name, rank, people, or country, —whatever his denomination, and whatever place of worship he may have attended; whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish.

Reader, this is the Gospel. I marvel not that St. Paul wrote those words, "if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

IV. The fourth and last thing which I propose to consider, is a point of great practical importance. I wish to show you the marks by which true belief in Christ may be discerned and known.

The faith or believing of which I have spoken, is a grace of such importance, that we may naturally expect to hear of many counterfeits of it. There is a dead faith as well as a living one,—a faith of devils as well as a faith of God's elect,—a faith which is vain and useless, as well as a faith that justifies and saves. How shall a man know whether he has true faith? How shall he find out whether he believes to the saving of his soul? The thing may be found out. The Ethopian may be known by his skin, and the leopard by his spots. True faith may always be known by certain marks. These marks are laid down unmistakeably in Scripture. Reader, let me endeavour to set these marks plainly before you. Look at them carefully, and try your own soul by what I am going to say.

1. He that believeth in Christ has inward peace and hope. It is written, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We which have believed do enter into rest" (Romans 5:1; Hebrews 4:3). The believer's sins are pardoned, and his iniquities taken away. His conscience is no longer burdened with the load of unpardoned transgressions. He is reconciled to God, and is one of His friends. He can look forward to death, judgment, and eternity without fear. The sting of death is taken away. When the great assize of the last day is held, and the books are opened, there will be nothing laid to his charge. When eternity begins, he is provided for. He has a hope laid up in heaven, and a city which cannot be moved. He may not be fully sensible of all these privileges. His sense and view of them may vary greatly at different times, and be often obscured by doubts and fears. Like a child who is yet under age, though heir to a great fortune, he may not be fully aware of the value of his possessions. But with all his doubts and fears, he has a real, solid, true hope which will bear examination, and at his best moments, he will be able to say, "I feel a hope which makes me not ashamed." (Romans 5:5)

2. He that believes in Christ has a new heart. It is written, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." "To as many as received Christ, He gave power to become sons of God, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God" (2 Corinthians 5:17: John 1:12, John 1:18: 1 John 5:1) A believer has no longer the same nature with which he was born. He is changed, renewed, and transformed after the image of his Lord and Saviour. He that minds first the things of the flesh, has no saving faith. True faith, and spiritual regeneration, are inseparable companions. An unconverted person is not a believer!

3. He that believes in Christ is a holy person in heart and life. It is written that God "purifies the heart by faith," and that Christians are "sanctified by faith." "Whoso hath this hope in him, purifieth himself." (Acts 15:9; Acts 26:18; 1 John 3:3). A believer loves what God loves, and hates what God hates. His heart's desire is to walk in the way of God's commandments, and to abstain from all manner of evil. His wish is to follow after the things which are just, and pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report, and to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. He falls far short of his aim in many things. He finds his daily life a constant fight with indwelling corruption. But he fights on, and resolutely refuses to serve sin. Where there is no holiness, we may be sure there is no saving faith. An unholy man is not a believer!

4. He that believes on Christ works godly works. It is written, that "faith worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). True belief will never make a man idle, or allow him to sit still, contented with his own religion. It will stir him to do acts of love, kindness, and charity, according as he sees opportunity. It will constrain him to walk in the steps of his Master, who "went about doing good." In one way or

another, it will make him work. The works that he does may attract no notice from the world. They may seem trifling and insignificant to many persons. But they are not forgotten by Him who notices a cup of cold water given for His sake. Where there is no working love, there is no faith. A lazy, selfish Christian, has no right to regard himself as a believer!

5. He that believes on Christ overcomes the world. It is written, that "whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). A true believer is not ruled by the world's standard of right or wrong, of truth or error. He is independent of the world's opinion. He cares little for the world's praise. He is not moved by the world's blame. He does not seek for the world's pleasures. He is not ambitious of the world's rewards. He looks at things unseen. He sees an invisible Saviour, a coming judgment, a crown of glory that fadeth not away. The sight of these objects makes him think comparatively little of this world. Where the world reigns in the heart, there is no faith. A man that is habitually conformed to the world, has no title to the name of a believer!

6. He that believes on Christ, has an inward testimony of his belief. It is written, that "he that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). The mark before us requires very delicate handling. The witness of the Spirit is unquestionably a very difficult subject. But I cannot shrink from declaring my own firm persuasion, that a true believer always has inward feelings peculiar to himself,—feelings which are inseparably connected with his faith, and flow from it,—feelings of which unbelievers know nothing at all. He has the Spirit of adoption, by which he regards God as a reconciled Father, and looks up to Him without fear. He has the testimony of his conscience, sprinkled with Christ's blood, that, weak as he is, he rests on Christ. He has hopes, joys, fears, sorrows, consolations, expectations, of which he knew nothing before he believed. He has pocket evidences which the world cannot understand, but which are better to him than all the books of evidence in existence. Feelings are, no doubt, very deceitful. But where there are no inward religious feelings there is no faith. A man who knows nothing of an inward, spiritual, experimental religion, is not yet a believer!

7. Last, but not least, he that believes on Christ, has a special regard in all his religion to the person of Christ Himself. It is written, "Unto you that believe Christ is precious" (1 Peter 2:7). That text deserves especial notice. It does not say "Christianity" is precious, or the "Gospel" is precious, or "salvation" is precious, but Christ Himself. A believer's religion does not consist in mere intellectual assent to a certain set of propositions and doctrines. It is not a mere cold belief of a certain set of truths and facts concerning Christ. It consists in union, communion, and fellowship with an actual living Person, even Jesus the Son of God. It is a life of faith in Jesus, confidence in Jesus, leaning on Jesus, drawing out of the fulness of Jesus, speaking to Jesus, working for Jesus, loving Jesus, and looking for Jesus to come again. Such life may sound like enthusiasm to many. But where there is true faith, Christ will always be known and realized, as an actual living personal Friend. He that knows nothing of Christ as his own Priest, Physician, and Redeemer, knows nothing yet of believing!

Reader, I place these seven marks of believing before you, and I ask you to consider them well. I do not say, that all believers have them equally. I do not say, that no one will be saved, who cannot discover all these marks in himself. I concede, freely, that many believers are so weak in faith, that they go doubting all their days, and make others doubt about them too. I simply say, that

these are the marks to which a man should first direct his attention, if he would answer the mighty question, Do you believe?

Where the seven marks, of which I have just been speaking, are utterly wanting, I dare not tell a man that he is a true believer. He may be called a Christian, and attend on Christian ordinances. He may have been baptized with Christian baptism, and be a member of a Christian church. But if he knows nothing of peace with God, conversion of heart, newness of life, victory over the world, I dare not pronounce him a believer. He is yet dead in trespasses and sins. Except he awakes to newness of life, he will perish everlastingly.

Show me a man who has about him the seven marks which I have described, and I feel a strong confidence about the state of his soul. He may be poor and needy in this world, but he is rich in the sight of God. He may be despised and sneered at by man, but he is honourable in the sight of the King of kings. He is travelling towards heaven. He has a mansion ready for him in the Father's house. He is cared for by Christ, while on earth. He will be owned by Christ before assembled worlds, in the life which is to come.

1. And now, reader, in drawing this tract to a conclusion, I return to the question with which I began. I press that question on your conscience. I ask you, in my Master's name, whether you yet know anything of the subject of it? I ask you, while these pages are yet before your eyes, to look my inquiry in the face. I ask you, Do you believe?

DO YOU BELIEVE? I think it impossible to overrate the immense importance of the question before you. Life or death, heaven or hell, blessing or cursing, all hinge and turn upon it. He that believeth on Christ is not condemned. He that believeth not shall be damned. If you believe, you are pardoned, justified, accepted in God's sight, and have a title to everlasting life. If you do not believe, you are perishing daily. Your sins are all upon your head, sinking you down to perdition. Every hour you are so much nearer to hell.

DO YOU BELIEVE? It matters nothing what others are doing. The question concerns yourself. The folly of other men is no excuse for yours. The loss of heaven will not be less bitter, because you lose it in company. Look at home. Think of your own soul.

DO YOU BELIEVE? It is no answer to say, that "you sometimes hope Christ died for you." The Scriptures never tell us to spend our time in doubts and hesitation on that point. We never read of a single case of one who stood still on that ground. Salvation is never made to turn on the question, whether Christ died for a man or not. The turning-point is always set before us as believing.

DO YOU BELIEVE? This is the point to which all must come at last, if they would be saved. It will signify little, when we hang on the brink of the grave, what we have professed, and to what denomination we have belonged. All this will sink into nothing, in comparison with the question of this tract. All will be useless, if we have not believed.

DO YOU BELIEVE? This is the common mark of all saved souls. Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Baptists or Independents, Methodists or Plymouth Brethren, Churchmen or Dissenters, all meet on this common ground, if they are true men. On other matters they are often hopelessly disagreed. But in living by faith on Jesus Christ, they are all one.

DO YOU BELIEVE? What reason can you give for unbelief, that will bear examination? Life is short and uncertain. Death is sure. Judgment is inevitable. Sin is exceeding sinful. Hell is an awful reality. Christ alone can save you. There is no other name given under heaven, whereby you can be saved. If not saved, the blame will be on your own head. You will not believe! You will not come to Christ, that He may give you life!

Reader, take warning this day. You must either believe on Christ, or perish everlastingly. Rest not till you can give a satisfactory answer to the question before you. Never be satisfied, till you can say, By the grace of God I do believe.

2. I pass on from questions to counsel. I offer it to all who are convinced of sin, and dissatisfied with their own spiritual condition. I entreat you to come to Christ by faith without delay. I invite you this day to believe on Christ to the saving of your soul.

I will not let you put me off by the common objection, "We cannot believe,—we must wait till God gives us faith." I grant most fully that saving faith, like true repentance, is the gift of God. I grant that we have no natural power of our own to believe on Christ, receive Christ, come to Christ, lay hold on Christ, and commit our soul to Christ. But I see faith and repentance laid down clearly in Scripture as duties which God requires at any man's hands. He "commanded all men to repent." "This is His commandment, That we should believe" (Acts 17:30: 1 John 3:23). And I see it laid down with no less clearness, that unbelief and impenitence are sins for which man will be held accountable, and that he who does not repent and believe destroys his own soul. (Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3).

Will any one tell me that it is right for a man to sit still in sin? Will any one say that a sinner on the road to hell ought to wait idly for some power to take him up and put him in the way of heaven? Will any one say that it is right for a man to continue quietly serving the devil, in open rebellion against God, and that he is to make no effort, no struggle, no attempt to turn towards Christ?

Let others say these things, if they will. I cannot say them. I can find no warrant for them in Scripture. I will not waste time in trying to explain what cannot be explained, and unravel what cannot be unravelled. I will not attempt to show metaphysically in what way an unconverted man can look to Christ, or repent, or believe. But this I know, that it is my plain duty to bid every unbeliever to repent and believe. And this I know, that the man who will not take the invitation, will find at last that he has ruined his own soul!

Reader, trust Christ, look to Christ, cry to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you never yet believed, about your soul. If you have not the right feelings yet, ask Him to give you right feelings. If you dare not think that you have true faith yet, ask Him to give you faith. But in any case do not sit still. Do not idle away your soul into hell in ignorant, unscriptural sloth. Do not live on in senseless inactivity,—waiting for you know not what,—expecting what you cannot explain,—increasing your guilt every day,—offending God by continuing in lazy unbelief, —and hourly digging a grave for your own soul. Arise and call upon Christ! Awake and cry to Jesus about your soul! Whatever difficulties there may be about believing, one thing at least is abundantly clear,—no man ever perished and went to hell from the foot of the cross. If you can do nothing else, lie down at the foot of the cross.

3. I finish all by a word of exhortation to all believers into whose hands this tract may fall. I address them as fellow-pilgrims and companions in tribulation. I exhort them, if they love life, and have found any peace in believing, to pray daily for an increase of faith. Let your prayer be continually, "Lord, increase my faith."

True faith admits of many degrees. The weakest faith is enough to join the soul to Christ, and to secure salvation. A trembling hand may receive a healing medicine. The feeblest infant may be heir to the richest possessions. The least faith gives a sinner a title to heaven as surely as the strongest. But little faith can never give so much sensible comfort as strong faith. According to the degree of our faith will be the degree of our peace, our hope, our strength for duty, and our patience in trial. Surely we should pray continually, "Increase our faith."

Believing reader, would you have more faith? Do you find believing so pleasant that you would like to believe more? Then take heed that you are diligent in the use of every means of grace,—diligent in your private communion with God,—diligent in your daily watchfulness over time, temper, and tongue,—diligent in your private Bible reading,—diligent in your own private prayers. It is vain to expect spiritual prosperity, when we are careless about these things. Let those who will, call it over-precise and legal to be particular about these things. I only reply, that there never was an eminent saint who neglected them.

Reader, would you have more faith? Then seek to become more acquainted with Jesus Christ. Study your blessed Saviour more and more, and strive to know more of the length and breadth and height of His love. Study Him in all His offices, as the Priest, the Physician, the Redeemer, the Advocate, the Friend, the Teacher, the Shepherd of His believing people. Study Him as one who not only died for you, but is also living for you at the right hand of God,—as one who not only shed His blood for you, but daily intercedes for you at the right hand of God,—as one who is soon coming again for you, and will stand once more on this earth. The miner who is fully persuaded that the rope which draws him up from the pit will not break, is drawn up without anxiety and alarm. The believer who is thoroughly acquainted with the fulness of Jesus Christ, is the believer who travels from grace to glory with the greatest comfort and peace.

Reader, I commend these things to your attention.

FOOTNOTE

1 If any reader is stumbled by the statements I have made about God's love, I venture to request his attention to the notes on John 1:29, and John 3:16, in my "Expository Thoughts on St. John's Gospel." I hold firmly the doctrine of election, as set forth in the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England. I glory in that Article, as one of the sheet anchors of my Church. I delight in the blessed truth that God has loved His own elect with an everlasting love, before the foundation of the world. But all this is beside the question before us. That question is, "How does God regard all mankind?" I reply unhesitatingly, that God loves them. God loves all the world with a love of compassion.

Chapter 26

Do you Confess?

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are pure gold. Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. DO YOU CONFESS?

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

READER,

The question which forms the title of this tract is at all times deeply important. Among the foundation-stones of saving religion few deserve more serious attention than confession of sins.

But there are occasions when circumstances give a particular importance to particular doctrines in religion. The assaults of enemies sometimes make it needful to exhibit some special truth with special distinctness. The plausible assertion of some error sometimes requires to be met by more than ordinary carefulness in showing the thing as it is,' in the Word. A doctrine may perhaps be in the rear-rank to-day, and to-morrow may be thrust forward by the force of events into the very front of the battle. This is the case at the present time with the subject of confession. Many years have passed away since men thought and talked so much as they do now about the confession of sins.

Reader, I desire in this tract to lay down a few plain Scriptural principles about confession of sin. I would fain guide you to some clear and decided conclusions on this important subject. Let us beware, in the din of controversy and discussion, that we do not lose sight of the mind of the Spirit, and injure our own souls. There is a confession which is needful to

The highest are not too high to need confession. The lowest are not too low to be reached by God's requirement. Kings in their palaces, and poor men in their cottages ,—preachers and hearers,—teachers and scholars—landlords and tenants,—masters and servants,—all, all are alike summoned in the Bible to confession. None are so moral and respectable that they need not confess that they have sinned. All are sinners in thought, word, and deed, and all are commanded to acknowledge their transgressions. Every knee ought to bow, and every tongue ought to confess to God. Behold, saith the Lord, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned (Jeremiah 2:35). If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

Without confession there is no salvation. The love of God towards sinners is infinite. The readiness of Christ to receive sinners is unbounded. The blood of Christ can cleanse away all sin. But we must plead guilty before God can declare us innocent. We must acknowledge that we surrender at discretion before we can be pardoned and let go free. Sins that are known and not confessed, are

sins that are not forgiven. They are yet upon us, and daily sinking us nearer to hell. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy (Proverbs 28:13).

Without confession there is no inward peace. Con science will never be at rest so long as it feels the burden of unacknowledged transgression. It is a load of which man must get rid if he means to be really happy. It is a worm at the root of all comfort. It is a blight on joy and mirth. The heart of the little child is not salvation, and there is a confession which is not needful at all. There is a confessional to which all men and women ought to go, and there is a confessional which ought to be denounced, avoided, and abhorred. Let us endeavour to separate the wheat from the chaff, and the precious from the vile. We shall do well if we learn to hold decided and Scriptural opinions about the vexed question of confession.

There are two points to which I purpose to direct your attention, and two inquiries to which, by God's help, I will supply an answer.

I. In the first place, Who are they that ought to confess sin?

II. In the second place, To whom ought confession of sin to be made?

Once let a man have clear views on these two points, and he will never go far wrong on the subject of confession.

I. In the first place, Who are they that ought to confess sins?

I answer this question in one plain sentence. All men and women in the world. All are born in sin and children of wrath. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Before God all are guilty. There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not. There is not a child of Adam that ought not to confess sin. (Ephesians 2:3; Romans 3:23; Ecclesiastes 7:20).

There is no exception to this rule. It does not apply only to murderers, and felons, and the inmates of prisons. It applies to all ranks, and classes, and orders of mankind.

Some people are too proud to acknowledge themselves sinners. Like the Pharisee of old, they flatter themselves they are not as other men. They do not get drunk, like some; or swear, like others; or live profligate lives like others. They are moral and respectable! They perform the duties of their station! They attend church regularly! They are kind to the poor! What more would you have? If they are not good people and going to heaven, who can be saved? But as to habitual confession of sin, they do not see that they need it. It is all very well for wicked people, but not for them. Of course when sin is not really felt, sin will never be confessed.

Some people are too indolent and slothful to take any step in religion so decided as confession. Their Christianity consists in meaning, and hoping, and intending, and resolving. They do not positively object to anything that they hear upon spiritual subjects. They can even approve of the Gospel. They hope one day to repent, and believe, and be converted, and become thorough Christians, and go to heaven after death. But they never get beyond hoping. They never come to the point of making a business of religion. Of course they never confess sin.

In one or other of these ways thousands of persons on every side are ruining their souls. In one point they are all agreed. They may sometimes call themselves sinners in a vague, general way, but they have no real sense, or sight, or understanding of sin. Its guilt, and vileness, and wickedness, and consequences, are utterly hid from their eyes. And the result, in each case, is one and the same. They know nothing practically of confession of sins, easy when he stands in his parent's presence and knows that he has done something wrong. He is never easy until he has confessed. The heart of the grown-up man is never really easy until he has unburdened himself before God, and obtained pardon and absolution. When I kept silence, says David, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin (Psalms 32:3-5).

Reader, there is no gainsaying these things. They stand out plainly on the face of Scripture, as if they were written with a sunbeam. They are so clear that he who runs may read. Confession of sin is absolutely necessary to salvation. It is a habit which is an essential part of repentance unto life. Without it there is no going to heaven. Without it we have no part or lot in Christ. Without it we shall certainly go to hell. All this is undoubtedly true. And yet in the face of all this, it is a melancholy and appalling fact that few people confess their sins!

Some people have no thought or feeling about their sins. The subject is one which hardly crosses their minds. They rise in the morning and go to bed at night. They eat, and drink, and sleep, and work, and get money, and spend money, as if they had no souls at all. They live on as if this world was the only thing worth thinking of. They leave religion to parsons and old men and women. Their consciences seem asleep, if not dead. Of course they never confess.

Reader, shall I tell you the clearest proof that man is a fallen and corrupt creature? It is not open vice or unblushing profligacy. It is not the crowded public house, or the murderer's cell in a jail. It is not avowed infidelity, or gross and foul idolatry. All these are proofs, and convincing proofs indeed, that man is fallen;—but there is to my mind a stronger proof still. That proof is the wide-spread spirit of slumber in which the most of men lie chained and bound about their souls. When I see that multitudes of sensible men, and intelligent men, and decent-living men, can travel quietly towards the grave, and feel no concern about their sins, I want no more convincing evidence that man is born in sin, and that his heart is alienated from God. There is no avoiding the conclusion. Man is naturally asleep, and must be awakened. He is blind, and must be made to see. He is dead, and must be made alive. If this was not the ease, there would be no need for our pressing the duty of confession. Scripture commands it. Reason assents to it. Conscience, in its best moments, approves of it. And yet, notwithstanding this, the vast majority of men have no practical acquaintance with confession of sin. No disease of body is so desperate as mortification. No heart is in so bad a state as the heart that does not feel sin.

Reader, shall I tell you my first and foremost wish for your soul, if you are yet unconverted? I can wish you nothing better than thorough self-knowledge. I should like the veil to be taken from your heart. I should like you to see yourself as you really are in the sight of God. Ignorance of self and sin is the root of all mischief to the soul. There is hardly a religious error or a false doctrine that may not be traced up to it. For want of seeing sin, men do not value salvation. Once let a man get

a sight of his own heart, and be will begin to cry, God be merciful to me a sinner!

Reader, if you have learned to feel and acknowledge your sinfulness, you have great reason to thank God. It is a real symptom of health in the inward man. It is a mighty token for good. To know your spiritual disease is one step towards a cure. To feel bad and wicked and hell-deserving, is the first beginning of being really good. Once more I say, you have great reason to thank God.

What though you feel ashamed and confounded at the sight of your own transgressions! What though you are humbled to the dust, and cry, Lord, I am vile! Lord, I am the very chief of sinners! I tell you it is better a thousand times to have these feelings, and be miserable under them, than to have no feelings at all. I tell you that anything is better than a dead conscience, and a cold heart, and a prayerless tongue.

Reader, if you have learned to feel and confess sin, you may well thank God and take courage. Whence came those feelings that you find within? Who told you that you were a guilty sinner? What moved you to begin acknowledging your transgressions? How was it that you first found sin a burden, and longed to be set free from it? These feelings do not come from man's natural heart. The devil does not teach such lessons. The schools of this world have no power to impart them. Reader, these feelings come down from above. They are the precious gift of God the Holy Ghost. It is His special office to convince of sin. Rejoice, I say again, and be exceeding glad. The man who has really learned to feel and confess his sins, has learned that which millions never learn, and for want of which millions die in their sins, and are lost to all eternity.

II. I now turn to the second branch of my subject. To whom ought confession of sin to be made?

I enter on this branch of the subject with sorrowful feelings. I approach it as a sailor would approach some rock on which many gallant ships have made shipwreck. I cannot forget that I have arrived at a point on which millions of so-called Christians have erred greatly, and millions are erring at the present day. But I dare not keep back anything that is Scriptural, for fear of giving offence. The errors of millions must not prevent a minister of the Gospel speaking the truth. If multitudes are hewing out broken cisterns that can hold no water, it becomes the more needful to point out the true fountain. If countless souls are turning aside from the right way, it becomes the more important to show clearly to whom confession ought to be made.

Sin, to speak generally, ought to be confessed to God. He it is whom we have chiefly offended. His are the laws which we have broken. To him all men and women will one day give account. His displeasure is that which sinners have principally to fear. This is what David felt: Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight (Psalms 51:4). This is what David practised: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord (Psalms 32:5). This is what Joshua advised Achan to do: My son, give glory to God, and make confession to Him (Joshua 7:19). The Jews were right when they said, Who can forgive sins but God only? (Mark 2:7).

But must we leave the matter here? Can vile sinners like us ever dare to confess our sins to a holy God? Will not the thought of his infinite purity shut our mouths and make us afraid? Must not the remembrance of His holiness make us afraid? Is it not written of God, that He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity? (Habakkuk 1:13). Is it not said, that He hates all workers of iniquity? (Psalms 5:5). Did He not say to Moses, There shalt no man see My face and live? (Exodus 33:20). Did not Israel say of old, Let not God speak with us, lest we die? (Exodus

20:19). Did not Daniel say, How can the servant of this my Lord talk with this my Lord? (Daniel 10:17). Did not Job say, When I consider, I am afraid of Him? (Job 23:15). Did not Isaiah say, Woe is me, for I am undone; . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts? (Isaiah 6:5). Does not Elihu say, Shall it be told Him that I speak? If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up (Job 37:20).

Reader, these are serious questions. They are questions which must and will occur to thoughtful minds. There are many who know what Luther meant when he said. I dare not have anything to do with an absolute God. But I thank God, they are questions to which the Gospel supplies a full and satisfactory answer. The Gospel reveals One who is exactly suited to the wants of souls which desire to confess sin.

I say then that sin ought to be confessed to God in Christ. I say that sin ought specially to be confessed to God manifest in the flesh,—to Christ Jesus the Lord,—to that Jesus who came into the world to save sinners,—to that Jesus who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and now lives at the right hand of God to intercede for all who come to God by Him. He that desires to confess sin, should apply direct to Christ.

Christ is a great High Priest. Let that truth sink down into our hearts, and never be forgotten. He is sealed and appointed by God the Father for that very purpose. It is His peculiar office to receive and hear, and pardon and absolve sinners. It is His place to receive confessions and to grant plenary absolutions. It is written in Scripture, Thou art a priest for ever. We have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens. Having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 10:21-22).

Christ is a High Priest of Almighty power. There is no sin that He cannot pardon, and no sinner that He cannot absolve. He is very God of very God. He is over all, God blessed for ever. He says Himself, I and My Father are one. He has all power in heaven and in earth. He has power on earth to forgive sins. He has complete authority to say to the chief of sinners, Thy sins are forgiven. Go in Peace. He has the keys of death and hell. When He opens, no man can shut. (Romans 9:5; John 10:30; Matthew 28:18; Matthew 9:6; Luke 7:48-50; Revelation 1:18; Revelation 3:7).

Christ is a High Priest of infinite willingness to receive confession of sin. He invites all who feel their guilt to come to Him for relief. Come unto Me, He says, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. When the penitent thief cried to Him on the cross, He at once absolved him fully, and gave him an answer of peace (Matthew 11:28; John 7:37).

Christ is a High Priest of perfect knowledge. He knows exactly the whole history of all who confess to Him. From Him no secrets are hid. He never errs in judgment. He makes no mistakes. It is written that He is of quick understanding. He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears (Isaiah 11:3). He can discern the difference between the hypocritical professor who is full of words, and the broken-hearted sinner who can scarce stammer out his confession. People may deceive ministers by good words and fair speeches, but they will never deceive Christ.

Christ is a High Priest of matchless tenderness. He will not afflict willingly, or grieve any soul that comes to Him. He will handle delicately every wound that is exposed to Him. He will deal tenderly

even with the vilest sinners, as He did with the Samaritan woman. Confidence reposed in Him is never abused. Secrets confided to Him are completely safe. Of Him it is right. But when we ask a reason for the practice, we may ask long without getting an answer.

There is no need for such a confession. Christ has not given up His office, and ceased to be a Priest. The saints and angels cannot possibly do more for us than Christ can. They certainly have not more pity or compassion, or goodwill towards our souls.

There is no warrant of Scripture for such a confession. There is not a text in the Bible that bids us confess to dead saints and angels. There is not an instance in Scripture of any living believer taking his sins to them.

There is not the slightest proof that there is any use in such a confession. We do not even know that the saints in glory can hear what we say. Much less do we know that they could help us if they heard. They were all sinners, saved by grace themselves. Where is the likelihood that they could do anything to aid our souls

Reader, the man who turns away from Christ to confess to saints and angels is a deluded robber of his own soul. He is following a shadow, and forsaking the substance. He is rejecting the bread of life, and trying to satisfy his spiritual hunger with sand.

But why, again, should we confess our sins to living priests and ministers, while we have Christ for a High Priest? The Church of Rome commands her members to do so. A party within the Church of England approves the practice as useful, helpful, and almost needful to the soul. But, again, when we ask for Scripture and reason in support of the practice, we receive no satisfactory answer.1 written, that He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He is one that despiseth not any (Isaiah 42:3; Job 36:5).

Christ is a High Priest who can sympathise with all that confess to Him. He knows the heart of a man by experience, for He had a body like our own, and was made in the likeness of man. We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). To Him the words can most truly be applied, which Elihu applied to himself, Behold, I am according to thy wish in God’s stead; I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee (Job 33:6-7).

Reader, this great High Priest is the person whom you and I ought specially to employ in our confession of sin. It is only through Him and by Him that we should make all our approaches to God. In Him we may draw near to God with boldness, and have access with confidence (Ephesians 3:12). Laying our hand on Him and His atonement, we may come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). We need no other mediator or priest. We can find no better High Priest. To whom should the sick man disclose his ailment, but the physician? To whom should the prisoner tell his story, but to his legal advocate? To whom should the sinner open his heart and confess his sins, but to Christ?

Why should we confess our sins to angels and dead saints, while we have Christ for a High Priest? Why should we confess to the Virgin Mary, Michael the archangel. John the Baptist. St. Paul, or any other creature in the unseen world? The Church of Rome enjoins such confession as

this on her millions of members, and many members of the Church of England seem half disposed to think the Church of Rome is right. But when we ask a reason for the practice, we may ask long without getting an answer.

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Is there any need for confessing to priests or ministers There is none. There is nothing they can do for a sinner that Christ cannot do a thousand times better. When Christ has failed the soul that cries to Him it may be time to turn to ministers. But that time will never come.

Is there any Scriptural warrant for confessing to priests or ministers? There is none. There is not a passage in the New Testament which commands it. St. Paul writes three epistles to Timothy and Titus about ministerial duty. But he says nothing about receiving confessions. St. James bids us confess our faults to one another, but he says nothing about confessing to ministers. Above all, there is not a single example in the Bible of any one confessing to a minister and receiving absolution. We see the Apostles often declaring plainly the way of forgiveness, and pointing men to Christ. But we nowhere find them telling men to confess to them, and offering to absolve them after confession.

Finally, is any good likely to result from confessing to priests or ministers? I answer boldly, there is none. Ministers can never know that those who confess to them are telling the truth. Those who confess to them will never feel their consciences really satisfied, and will never feel certain that what they confess will not be improperly used. Above all, facts, stubborn facts abound, to show that the practice of confessing to ministers has often led to the grossest and most disgusting immorality. A living writer has truly said, There is no better school of wickedness on earth than the confessional. History testifies that for every offender whom the confessional has reclaimed, it has hardened thousands; for one it may have saved it has destroyed millions (Wylie on Popery, p.

329).

Reader, the man who turns away from Christ to confess his sins to ministers, is like a man who chooses to live in prison when he may walk at liberty; or to starve and go in rags in the midst of riches and plenty; or to cringe for favours at the feet of a servant, when he may go boldly to the Master and ask what he will. A mighty and sinless High Priest is provided for him, and yet he prefers to employ the aid of mere fellow sinners like himself! He is trying to fill his purse with rubbish when he may have fine gold for the asking. He is insisting on lighting a rushlight, when he may enjoy the noon-day light of God's sun!

Reader, if you love your soul, beware of giving to ministers the honour that belongs to Christ alone. He is the true High Priest of the Christian's profession. He ever lives to receive confessions, and to absolve sinners. Why should we turn away from Him to man Above all, beware of the whole system of the Romish confessional. Of all practices that were ever devised by man, in the name of religion, I firmly believe that none was ever devised so mischievous and objectionable as the confessional. It overthrows Christ's office, and places man in the seat which should only be occupied by the Son of God. It puts two sinners in a thoroughly wrong position. It exalts the confessor far too high. It places those who confess far too low, it gives the confessor a place which is not safe for any child of Adam to occupy. It imposes on those who confess a bondage to which it is not safe for any child of Adam to submit. It sinks one poor sinner into the degrading attitude of a serf. It raises another poor sinner into a dangerous mastery over his brother's soul. It makes the confessor little less than a God. It makes those who confess little better than slaves. If you love Christian liberty, if you value inward peace, remember the advice I give you this day. Beware, beware of the slightest approach to the Romish confessional!

Listen not to those who tell you that Christian ministers were intended to receive confessions, and that evangelical teaching makes light of the ministerial office, and strips it of all authority and power. Such assertions are more easily made than proved. We honour the minister's office highly, but we refuse to give it a hair's breadth more dignity than we find given in the Word of God. We honour ministers as Christ's ambassadors, Christ' s messengers, Christ's watchmen, helpers of believers' joy, preachers of the Word, and stewards of the mysteries of God. But we decline to regard them as priests, mediators, confessors, and rulers over men's faith, both for the sake of their souls and of our own.2

Listen not to those who tell you that evangelical teaching is opposed to the exercise of soul-discipline, or heart examination, or self-humiliation, or mortification of the flesh, or true contrition. Opposed to it! There never was a more baseless assertion. We are entirely favourable to it. This only we require, that it shall be carried on in the right way. We approve of a confessional; but it must be the only true one,— the throne of grace. We approve of going to a confessor; but it must be the true one,—Christ the Lord. We approve of submitting consciences to a priest; but it must be to the great High Priest,—Jesus the Son of God. We approve of unbecoming our secret sins, and seeking absolution; but it must be at the feet of the great Head of the Church, and not at the feet of one of His weak members. We approve of kneeling to receive ghostly counsel; but it must be at the feet of Christ, and not at the feet of man.

Reader, beware of ever losing sight of Christ's priestly office. Glory in His atoning death. Honour Him as your substitute and surety on the cross. Follow Him as your Shepherd. Hear His voice as

your Prophet. Obey Him as your King. But in all your thoughts about Christ, let it be often before your mind that He alone is your High Priest, and that He has deputed His priestly office to no order of men in the world.3 This is the office of Christ, which Satan labours above all to obscure. It is the neglect of this office which leads to every kind of error. It is the remembrance of this office which is the best safeguard against the plausible teaching of the Church of Rome. Once right about this office you will never greatly err in the matter of the confession of sin. You will know to whom confession ought to be made; and to know that rightly is no slight thing.

And now, reader, I shall conclude this subject with three words of practical application. You have seen who ought to confess sin. You have seen to whom confession ought to be made. Give me your attention a little longer while I try to bring the matter nearer to your heart and conscience. Our years are rolling fast away. Time flies very quickly. Writing and preaching,—reading and working,—doubting and speculating,—discussion and controversy,—all, all will soon be past and gone for ever. Yet a little while and there will remain nothing but certainties, realities, and eternity. Give me, I say again, your attention while I plead with you once more about your soul. I mean nothing but your good,—God is witness. Then take what I say in good part.

1. My first word of application shall be a question. That question is neither more nor less than the heading of the subject you are reading. I ask you, DO YOU CONFESS?

You know my meaning in asking this question. I trust the pages you have already read make that sufficiently plain. I do not ask you now what your opinion is about matters controverted in the present day. I ask you a plain practical question, Do you know anything of the daily habit of confessing sin to God?

You will not pretend to say you have no sins at all. Few, probably, are so blind and ignorant in the present day as to say that. But what do you do with your sins? What measures do you take about your sins Do you use any steps to get rid of your sins? Do you ever speak to any one about your sins? Answer these questions, I do beseech you, to your own conscience. Whether you are rich or poor, old or young, churchman or dissenter, matters little. But it does matter a great deal whether you can reply to the inquiry of this subject, —Do you confess your sins?

Reader, if you know nothing of the habit of confessing sin, I have only one remark to make,—YOUR SOUL IS IN IMMINENT DANGER! There is but a step between you and hell. If you die as you are, you will be lost for ever. The kingdom of God contains no silent subjects. The citizens of the heavenly city are a people who have all known, and felt, and confessed their sins.

I give you one simple warning. You will have to confess your sins one day, whether von will or no.

When the great white throne is set, and the books are opened, your sins will at last be exposed before the whole world. The secrets of all hearts will be revealed. You will have to acknowledge your transgressions before the eyes of an assembled world, and an innumerable company of angels. Your confession at last will be most public; and, worst of all, your confession will be too late

Where is the man who would not shrink from the idea of such an exposure? Where is the woman whose spirit would not fail at the very possibility of such a confession as this? Reader, this public confession will be the portion of millions. Take heed lest it be yours. Oh! think, think, think upon the

question before you. DO YOU CONFESS!

2. My second word of application shall be an invitation. I address it to all who have neglected confession of sin in time past, and are ashamed of their neglect. I invite you in my Master's name to BEGIN THE HABIT OF CONFESSING WITHOUT DELAY.

Go this very day to the throne of grace, and speak to the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, about your soul. Pour out your heart before Him. Keep nothing back from Him. Acknowledge your iniquities to Him, and entreat Him to cleanse them away. Say to Him, in David's words, For Thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity; for it is great. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Cry to Him as the publican did in the parable, God be merciful to me a sinner (Psalms 25:11; Psalms 51:9 Luke 18:13).

Reader, are you afraid to do this? Do you feel unworthy and unfit to begin? I do entreat you to resist such feelings, and to begin without delay. There are glorious Bible examples to encourage you. There are rich Bible promises to lure you on. In all the volume of Scripture there are no passages so encouraging as those which are about confession of sin. if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light (Job 33:27). Father, said the prodigal son, I have sinned against Heaven and in Thy sight, and am no mote worthy to be called Thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry (Luke 15:21-23). Arise, dear reader, and call upon God. If Christ had never died for sinners, there might be some excuse for doubting. But Christ having suffered for sin, there is nothing that need keep you back. Only acknowledge your iniquity, and cast yourself wholly at God's mercy in Christ, and life, eternal life, shall be your own. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow: thought they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isaiah 1:18). But O reader, begin, begin to confess without delay. This very day BEGIN TO CONFESS YOUR SIN.

3. My last word of application shall be an exhortation. I address it to all who have been taught by the Holy Ghost to confess their sins, and know the subject of this tract by inward experience. I exhort them TO KEEP UP THE HABIT OF CONFESSION to the last day of their lives.

My believing brethren, we shall never cease to be sinners as long as we are in the body. Every day we shall find something to deplore in our thoughts, or motives, or words, or deeds. Every day we shall find that we need the blood of sprinkling, and the intercession of Christ. Then let us keep up daily transactions with the throne of grace. Let us daily confess our infirmities at the feet of our merciful and faithful High Priest, and seek fresh absolution. Let us daily cast ourselves under the shadow of His wings, and cry, Surely in me dwelleth no good thing: Thou art my hiding-place, O Lamb of God!

May every year find us more humble and yet more hopeful,—more sensible of our own unworthiness, and yet more ready to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh! May our prayers become every year more fervent, and our confessions of sin more real;—our eye more single, and our walk with God more close;—our knowledge of Jesus more clear, and our love to Jesus more deep;—our citizenship in heaven more manifest, and our separation from the world

more distinct!

So living, we shall cross the waves of this troublesome world with comfort, and have an abundant en trance into God's kingdom. So living, we shall find that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Yet a few more years and our prayers and confessions shall cease for ever. We shall begin an endless life of praise. We shall exchange our daily confessions for eternal thanksgiving.4

FOOTNOTES

1 The only passages in the Prayer book of the Church of England which appear at first sight to favour the Romish view of confession and absolution are to be found in the Exhortation in the Communion Service, and in the Visitation of the Sick.

In both these cases I am entirely satisfied that the Reformers never intended to give any countenance to the Romish doctrine, and that the true and honest interpretation of the language used affords no help to those who hold that doctrine.

In the Exhortation in the Communion Service, the ease is supposed of some person who cannot quiet his conscience. The advice then follows, Let him come to me, or to some other discrete and learned minister of God's holy Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice.

If men are determined to twist this passage into a sanction of the Romish doctrine of confession and absolution, it is useless to reason with them, To my own eyes the exhortation seems nothing more than advice to people who are troubled with difficulties to go and speak to a minister in private about them, and to get them cleared up by texts from the Bible.

But I can see nothing in the passage like Romish auricular confession and priestly absolution.

In the Visitation of the Sick, the language used about absolving the sick man, If he humbly and heartily desire it, is undoubtedly very strong, and the direction to move the sick person to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any mighty matter, is unmistakable.

Yet, even here, it is hard to prove that this confession means more than any faithful minister of the Gospel would press on any sick and dying person, if he saw him troubled, or distressed about some mighty matter. It is only in this case, be it remembered, that he is to be moved to make it.

As to the absolution, the most that can be made of it is that it is declaratory. It is a very strong and authoritative declaration of the forgiveness of the Gospel, addressed to a dying person need of special comfort. It is the custom of the Prayer-book to call any ministerial declaration of God's willingness to pardon those who repent and believe, an absolution. We see this very plainly in the beginning of the morning and afternoon service. After the general confession the minister reads w hat is called an absolution.

The language of the absolution in the visitation of the sick is undoubtedly very strong. But still it must be observed that it only declares a person absolved who is already absolved by God. The very form itself says that the Church's absolution is to be given to all sinners who truly repent and

believe in Jesus Christ. Now all such are of course pardoned the very moment they repent and believe. When therefore the minister says, I absolve thee, he can only mean, I declare thee absolved.

When I add to this explanation the striking fact that the Homily of Repentance contains a long passage most strongly condemning auricular confession, I can see no fair ground for the charge that the Church of England sanctions auricular confession. At the same time I deeply regret that the formularies of the Church contain any expressions which are capable of being twisted into an argument in defence of the doctrine, and should rejoice to see them removed.

Those who wish to examine the subject further are referred to an extract from the Homily of Repentance, at the end of this subject.

2 It should always be remembered, that the word priest n the Prayer-book was not intended to mean a sacrificing priest, like the Old Testament priests. It signifies the same as presbyter or elder.

3 The passage, Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained (John 10:23), is often quoted in defence of the Romish view of priestly absolution, but I am firmly persuaded in entire contra diction to our Lord's intention.

I believe that our Lord conferred on His Apostles, in these words, the power of authoritatively declaring whose sins are forgiven, and whose sins are not forgiven, but nothing more. 1 believe moreover that from their peculiar gift of discerning spirits, the Apostles ware fitted and enabled to exercise this power of declaring, in a way that no minister, since the apostolic times, ever can or ever did.

But that the Apostles ever took on themselves to remit or retain sins, in the way that the Romish Church enjoins on her priests to do. is not to be traced out in any passage in the whole New Testament.

4 The attention of all members of the Church of England is particularly requested to the following passages from the HOMILY OF REPENTANCE:'' — Whereas the adversaries [Roman Catholics] wrest this place [in St. James—James v.], for to maintain their auricular confession withal, they are greatly deceived themselves, and do shamefully deceive others; for if this text ought to be understood of auricular confession, then the priests are as much bound to confess themselves unto the lay-people, as the lay-people are bound to confess themselves to them. And if to pray is to absolve, then the laity by this place hath as great authority to absolve priests, as the priests have to absolve the laity.

And where that they do allege this saying of our Saviour Jesus Christ unto the leper, to prove auricular confession to stand on God's Word, Go thy way, and show thyself unto the priest (Matt. viii. 4); do they not see that the leper was cleansed from his leprosy before he was by Christ sent unto the priest for to show himself unto him ? By the same reason we must be cleansed from our spiritual leprosy, I mean our sins must be forgiven us, before that we can come to confession. What need we then to tell forth our sins into the ear of the priest, that they be already taken away? Therefore holy Ambrose, in his second sermon upon the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, doth say full well, Go show thyself unto the priest. Who is the true priest, but he which is the Priest for ever,

after the order of Melchisedech? Whereby this holy Father doth understand that both the priesthood and the law being changed, we ought to acknowledge none other priest for deliverance from our sins but our Saviour Jesus Christ, who, being Sovereign Bishop, doth with the sacrifice of His body and blood, offered once for ever upon the altar of the cross, most effectually cleanse the spiritual leprosy, and wash away the sins of all those that with true confession of the same do flee unto Him.

It is most evident and plain, that this auricular confession bath not the warrant of God's Word, else it had not been lawful for Nectarios, bishop of Constantinople, upon a just occasion to have put it down. (Nectarius Sozomen. Eccies. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 16). For when anything ordained of God is by the lewdness of men abused, the abuse ought to be taken away, and the thing itself suffered to remain. Moreover these are St. Augustine's words (Lib. x. Confessionum, cap. 3); 'What have I to do with men, that they should hear my confession, as though they were able to heal my disease? A curious sort of men to know another man's life, and slothful to correct and amend their own. Why do they seek to hear of me what I am, which will not hear of thee what they are? And how can they tell, when they hear by me of myself, whether I tell the truth or not; hath no mortal man knoweth what is in man, but the spirit of man which is in him?' Augustine would not have written thus, if confession had been used in his time.

Being, therefore, not led with the conscience thereof let us with fear and trembling, and with a true contrite heart, use that kind of confession that God doth command in His Word; and then doubtless as He is faithful and righteous, He will forgive us our sins, and make us clean from all wickedness. I do not say, but that, if any do find themselves troubled in conscience, they may repair to their learned curate or pastor, or to some other godly learned man, and show the trouble and doubt of their conscience to them, that they may receive at their hand the comfortable salve of God's Word; but it is against the true Christian liberty, that any man should be bound to the numbering of his sins, as it has been used heretofore in the time of blindness and ignorance.

Duties of Parents

THE DUTIES OF PARENTS.

by

J. C. RYLE “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”— Proverbs 22:6.

I SUPPOSE that most professing Christians are acquainted with the text at the head of this page. The sound of it is probably familiar to your ears, like an old tune. It is likely you have heard it, or read it, talked of it, or quoted it, many a time. Is it not so?

But, after all, how little is the substance of this text regarded! The doctrine it contains appears scarcely known; the duty it puts before us seems fearfully seldom practised. Reader, do I not speak the truth?

It cannot be said that the subject is a new one. The world is old, and we have the experience of nearly six thousand years to help us. We live in days when there is a mighty zeal for education in every quarter. We hear of new schools rising on all sides. We are told of new systems and new books for the young, of every sort and description. And still for all this, the vast majority of children are manifestly not trained in the way they should go, for when they grow up to man’s estate, they do not walk with God.

Now how shall we account for this state of things? The plain truth is, the Lord’s commandment in our text is not regarded; and therefore the Lord’s promise in our text is not fulfilled.

Reader, these things may well give rise to great searchings of heart. Suffer then a word of exhortation from a minister, about the right training of children. Believe me, the subject is one that should come home to every conscience, and make every one ask himself the question, “Am I in this matter doing what I can?”

It is a subject that concerns almost all. There is hardly a household that it does not touch. Parents, nurses, teachers, godfathers, godmothers, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters,—all have an interest in it. Few can be found, I think, who might not influence some parent in the management of his family, or affect the training of some child by suggestion or advice. All of us, I suspect, can do something here, either directly or indirectly, and I wish to stir up all to bear this in remembrance.

It is a subject, too, on which all concerned are in great danger of coming short of their duty. This is pre-eminently a point in which men can see the faults of their neighbours more clearly than their own. They will often bring up their children in the very path which they have denounced to their friends as unsafe. They will see motes in other men’s families, and overlook beams in their own. They will be quicksighted as eagles in detecting mistakes abroad, and yet blind as bats to fatal errors which are daily going on at home. They will be wise about their brother’s house, but foolish about their own flesh and blood. Here, if anywhere, we have need to suspect our own judgment.

This, too, you will do well to bear in mind.1

Come now, and let me place before you a few hints about right training. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost bless them, and make them words in season to you all. Reject them not because they are blunt and simple; despise them not because they contain nothing new. Be very sure, if you would train children for heaven, they are hints that ought not to be lightly set aside.

I. First, then, if you would train your children rightly, train them in the way they should go, and not in the way that they would.

Remember children are born with a decided bias towards evil, and therefore if you let them choose for themselves, they are certain to choose wrong.

The mother cannot tell what her tender infant may grow up to be,—tall or short, weak or strong, wise or foolish: he may be any of these things or not,—it is all uncertain. But one thing the mother can say with certainty: he will have a corrupt and sinful heart. It is natural to us to do wrong. “Foolishness,” says Solomon, “is bound in the heart of a child” (Proverbs 22:15). “A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Proverbs 29:15). Our hearts are like the earth on which we tread; let it alone, and it is sure to bear weeds.

If, then, you would deal wisely with your child, you must not leave him to the guidance of his own will. Think for him, judge for him, act for him, just as you would for one weak and blind; but for pity’s sake, give him not up to his own wayward tastes and inclinations. It must not be his likings and wishes that are consulted. He knows not yet what is good for his mind and soul, any more than what is good for his body. You do not let him decide what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and how he shall be clothed. Be consistent, and deal with his mind in like manner. Train him in the way that is scriptural and right, and not in the way that he fancies.

If you cannot make up your mind to this first principle of Christian training, it is useless for you to read any further. Self-will is almost the first thing that appears in a child’s mind; and it must be your first step to resist it.

II. Train up your child with all tenderness, affection, and patience.

I do not mean that you are to spoil him, but I do mean that you should let him see that you love him.

Love should be the silver thread that runs through all your conduct. Kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearance, patience, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a readiness to take part in childish joys,—these are the cords by which a child may be led most easily,—these are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart.

Few are to be found, even among grown-up people, who are not more easy to draw than to drive. There is that in all our minds which rises in arms against compulsion; we set up our backs and stiffen our necks at the very idea of a forced obedience. We are like young horses in the hand of a breaker: handle them kindly, and make much of them, and by and by you may guide them with thread; use them roughly and violently, and it will be many a month before you get the mastery of them at all.

Now children's minds are cast in much the same mould as our own. Sternness and severity of manner chill them and throw them back. It shuts up their hearts, and you will weary yourself to find the door. But let them only see that you have an affectionate feeling towards them,—that you are really desirous to make them happy, and do them good,—that if you punish them, it is intended for their profit, and that, like the pelican, you would give your heart's blood to nourish their souls; let them see this, I say, and they will soon be all your own. But they must be wooed with kindness, if their attention is ever to be won.

And surely reason itself might teach us this lesson. Children are weak and tender creatures, and, as such, they need patient and considerate treatment. We must handle them delicately, like frail machines, lest by rough fingering we do more harm than good. They are like young plants, and need gentle watering,—often, but little at a time.

We must not expect all things at once. We must remember what children are, and teach them as they are able to bear. Their minds are like a lump of metal—not to be forged and made useful at once, but only by a succession of little blows. Their understandings are like narrow-necked vessels: we must pour in the wine of knowledge gradually, or much of it will be spilled and lost. "Line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," must be our rule. The whetstone does its work slowly, but frequent rubbing will bring the scythe to a fine edge. Truly there is need of patience in training a child, but without it nothing can be done.

Nothing will compensate for the absence of this tenderness and love. A minister may speak the truth as it is in Jesus, clearly, forcibly, unanswerably; but if he does not speak it in love, few souls will be won. Just so you must set before your children their duty,—command, threaten, punish, reason,—but if affection be wanting in your treatment, your labour will be all in vain.

Love is one grand secret of successful training. Anger and harshness may frighten, but they will not persuade the child that you are right; and if he sees you often out of temper, you will soon cease to have his respect. A father who speaks to his son as Saul did to Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:30), need not expect to retain his influence over that son's mind.

Try hard to keep up a hold on your child's affections. It is a dangerous thing to make your children afraid of you. Anything is almost better than reserve and constraint between your child and yourself; and this will come in with fear. Fear puts an end to openness of manner;—fear leads to concealment;—fear sows the seed of much hypocrisy, and leads to many a lie. There is a mine of truth in the Apostle's words to the Colossians: "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Colossians 3:21). Let not the advice it contains be overlooked.

III. Train your children with an abiding persuasion on your mind that much depends upon you.

Grace is the strongest of all principles. See what a revolution grace effects when it comes into the heart of an old sinner,—how it overturns the strongholds of Satan,—how it casts down mountains, fills up valleys,—makes crooked things straight,—and new creates the whole man. Truly nothing is impossible to grace.

Nature, too, is very strong. See how it struggles against the things of the kingdom of God,—how it fights against every attempt to be more holy,—how it keeps up an unceasing warfare within us to the last hour of life. Nature indeed is strong.

But after nature and grace, undoubtedly, there is nothing more powerful than education. Early habits (if I may so speak) are everything with us, under God. We are made what we are by training. Our character takes the form of that mould into which our first years are cast.2

We depend, in a vast measure, on those who bring us up. We get from them a colour, a taste, a bias which cling to us more or less all our lives. We catch the language of our nurses and mothers, and learn to speak it almost insensibly, and unquestionably we catch something of their manners, ways, and mind at the same time. Time only will show, I suspect, how much we all owe to early impressions, and how many things in us may be traced up to seeds sown in the days of our very infancy, by those who were about us. A very learned Englishman, Mr. Locke, has gone so far as to say: “That of all the men we meet with, nine parts out of ten are what they are, good or bad, useful or not, according to their education.”

And all this is one of God’s merciful arrangements. He gives your children a mind that will receive impressions like moist clay. He gives them a disposition at the starting-point of life to believe what you tell them, and to take for granted what you advise them, and to trust your word rather than a stranger’s. He gives you, in short, a golden opportunity of doing them good. See that the opportunity be not neglected, and thrown away. Once let slip, it is gone forever.

Beware of that miserable delusion into which some have fallen,—that parents can do nothing for their children, that you must leave them alone, wait for grace, and sit still. These persons have wishes for their children in Balaam’s fashion,—they would like them to die the death of the righteous man, but they do nothing to make them live his life. They desire much, and have nothing. And the devil rejoices to see such reasoning, just as he always does over anything which seems to excuse indolence, or to encourage neglect of means.

I know that you cannot convert your child. I know well that they who are born again are born, not of the will of man, but of God. But I know also that God says expressly, “Train up a child in the way he should go,” and that He never laid a command on man which He would not give man grace to perform. And I know, too, that our duty is not to stand still and dispute, but to go forward and obey. It is just in the going forward that God will meet us. The path of obedience is the way in which He gives the blessing. We have only to do as the servants were commanded at the marriage feast in Cana, to fill the water-pots with water, and we may safely leave it to the Lord to turn that water into wine.

IV. Train with this thought continually before your eyes—that the soul of your child is the first thing to be considered.

Precious, no doubt, are these little ones in your eyes; but if you love them, think often of their souls. No interest should weigh with you so much as their eternal interests. No part of them should be so dear to you as that part which will never die. The world, with all its glory, shall pass away; the hills shall melt; the heavens shall be wrapped together as a scroll; the sun shall cease to shine. But the spirit which dwells in those little creatures, whom you love so well, shall outlive them all, and whether in happiness or misery (to speak as a man) will depend on you.

This is the thought that should be uppermost on your mind in all you do for your children. In every step you take about them, in every plan, and scheme, and arrangement that concerns them, do not leave out that mighty question, “How will this affect their souls?”

Soul love is the soul of all love. To pet and pamper and indulge your child, as if this world was all he had to look to, and this life the only season for happiness—to do this is not true love, but cruelty. It is treating him like some beast of the earth, which has but one world to look to, and nothing after death. It is hiding from him that grand truth, which he ought to be made to learn from his very infancy,—that the chief end of his life is the salvation of his soul.

A true Christian must be no slave to fashion, if he would train his child for heaven. He must not be content to do things merely because they are the custom of the world; to teach them and instruct them in certain ways, merely because it is usual; to allow them to read books of a questionable sort, merely because everybody else reads them; to let them form habits of a doubtful tendency, merely because they are the habits of the day. He must train with an eye to his children's souls. He must not be ashamed to hear his training called singular and strange. What if it is? The time is short,—the fashion of this world passeth away. He that has trained his children for heaven, rather than for earth,—for God, rather than for man,——he is the parent that will be called wise at last.

V. Train your child to a knowledge of the Bible.

You cannot make your children love the Bible, I allow. None but the Holy Ghost can give us a heart to delight in the Word. But you can make your children acquainted with the Bible; and be sure they cannot be acquainted with that blessed book too soon, or too well.

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is the foundation of all clear views of religion. He that is well-grounded in it will not generally be found a waverer, and carried about by every wind of new doctrine. Any system of training which does not make a knowledge of Scripture the first thing is unsafe and unsound.

You have need to be careful on this point just now, for the devil is abroad, and error abounds. Some are to be found amongst us who give the Church the honour due to Jesus Christ. Some are to be found who make the sacraments saviours and passports to eternal life. And some are to be found in like manner who honour a catechism more than the Bible, or fill the minds of their children with miserable little story-books, instead of the Scripture of truth. But if you love your children, let the simple Bible be everything in the training of their souls; and let all other books go down and take the second place.

Care not so much for their being mighty in the catechism, as for their being mighty in the Scriptures. This is the training, believe me, that God will honour. The Psalmist says of Him, "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy name" (Psalms 138:2); and I think that He gives an especial blessing to all who try to magnify it among men.

See that your children read the Bible reverently. Train them to look on it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, written by the Holy Ghost Himself,—all true, all profitable, and able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

See that they read it regularly. Train them to regard it as their soul's daily food,—as a thing essential to their soul's daily health. I know well you cannot make this anything more than a form; but there is no telling the amount of sin which a mere form may indirectly restrain.

See that they read it all. You need not shrink from bringing any doctrine before them. You need not fancy that the leading doctrines of Christianity are things which children cannot understand.

Children understand far more of the Bible than we are apt to suppose.

Tell them of sin, its guilt, its consequences, its power, its vileness: you will find they can comprehend something of this.

Tell them of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His work for our salvation,—the atonement, the cross, the blood, the sacrifice, the intercession: you will discover there is something not beyond them in all this.

Tell them of the work of the Holy Spirit in man's heart, how He changes, and renews, and sanctifies, and purifies: you will soon see they can go along with you in some measure in this. In short, I suspect we have no idea how much a little child can take in of the length and breadth of the glorious gospel. They see far more of these things than we suppose.3

Fill their minds with Scripture. Let the Word dwell in them richly. Give them the Bible, the whole Bible, even while they are young.

VI. Train them to a habit of prayer.

Prayer is the very life-breath of true religion. It is one of the first evidences that a man is born again. "Behold," said the Lord of Saul, in the day he sent Ananias to him, "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). He had begun to pray, and that was proof enough.

Prayer was the distinguishing mark of the Lord's people in the day that there began to be a separation between them and the world. "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26).

Prayer is the peculiarity of all real Christians now. They pray,—for they tell God their wants, their feelings, their desires, their fears; and mean what they say. The nominal Christian may repeat prayers, and good prayers too, but he goes no further.

Prayer is the turning-point in a man's soul. Our ministry is unprofitable, and our labour is vain, till you are brought to your knees. Till then, we have no hope about you.

Prayer is one great secret of spiritual prosperity. When there is much private communion with God, your soul will grow like the grass after rain; when there is little, all will be at a standstill, you will barely keep your soul alive. Show me a growing Christian, a going forward Christian, a strong Christian, a flourishing Christian, and sure am I, he is one that speaks often with his Lord. He asks much, and he has much. He tells Jesus everything, and so he always knows how to act.

Prayer is the mightiest engine God has placed in our hands. It is the best weapon to use in every difficulty, and the surest remedy in every trouble. It is the key that unlocks the treasury of promises, and the hand that draws forth grace and help in time of need. It is the silver trumpet God commands us to sound in all our necessity, and it is the cry He has promised always to attend to, even as a loving mother to the voice of her child.

Prayer is the simplest means that man can use in coming to God. It is within reach of all,—the sick, the aged, the infirm, the paralytic, the blind, the poor, the unlearned, all can pray. It avails you nothing to plead want of memory, and want of learning, and want of books, and want of scholarship in this matter. So long as you have a tongue to tell your soul's state, you may and

ought to pray. Those words, “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2), will be a fearful condemnation to many in the day of judgment.

Parents, if you love your children, do all that lies in your power to train them up to a habit of prayer. Show them how to begin. Tell them what to say. Encourage them to persevere. Remind them if they become careless and slack about it. Let it not be your fault, at any rate, if they never call on the name of the Lord.

This, remember, is the first step in religion which a child is able to take. Long before he can read, you can teach him to kneel by his mother’s side, and repeat the simple words of prayer and praise which she puts in his mouth. And as the first steps in any undertaking are always the most important, so is the manner in which your children’s prayers are prayed, a point which deserves your closest attention. Few seem to know how much depends on this. You must beware lest they get into a way of saying them in a hasty, careless, and irreverent manner. You must beware of giving up the oversight of this matter to servants and nurses, or of trusting too much to your children doing it when left to themselves. I cannot praise that mother who never looks after this most important part of her child’s daily life herself. Surely if there be any habit which your own hand and eye should help in forming, it is the habit of prayer. Believe me, if you never hear your children pray yourself, you are much to blame. You are little wiser than the bird described in Job, “which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear” (Job 39:14-16).

Prayer is, of all habits, the one which we recollect the longest. Many a grey-headed man could tell you how his mother used to make him pray in the days of his childhood. Other things have passed away from his mind perhaps. The church where he was taken to worship, the minister whom he heard preach, the companions who used to play with him,—all these, it may be, have passed from his memory, and left no mark behind. But you will often find it is far different with his first prayers. He will often be able to tell you where he knelt, and what he was taught to say, and even how his mother looked all the while. It will come up as fresh before his mind’s eye as if it was but yesterday.

Reader, if you love your children, I charge you, do not let the seed-time of a prayerful habit pass away unimproved. If you train your children to anything, train them, at least, to a habit of prayer.

VII. Train them to habits of diligence, and regularity about public means of grace.

Tell them of the duty and privilege of going to the house of God, and joining in the prayers of the congregation. Tell them that wherever the Lord’s people are gathered together, there the Lord Jesus is present in an especial manner, and that those who absent themselves must expect, like the Apostle Thomas, to miss a blessing. Tell them of the importance of hearing the Word preached, and that it is God’s ordinance for converting, sanctifying, and building up the souls of men. Tell them how the Apostle Paul enjoins us not “to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Hebrews 10:25); but to exhort one another, to stir one another up to it, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

I call it a sad sight in a church when nobody comes up to the Lord’s table but the elderly people, and the young men and the young women all turn away. But I call it a sadder sight still when no

children are to be seen in a church, excepting those who come to the Sunday School, and are obliged to attend. Let none of this guilt lie at your doors. There are many boys, and girls in every parish, besides those who come to school, and you who are their parents and friends should see to it that they come with you to church.

Do not allow them to grow up with a habit of making vain excuses for not coming. Give them plainly to understand, that so long as they are under your roof it is the rule of your house for every one in health to honour the Lord's house upon the Lord's day, and that you reckon the Sabbath-breaker to be a murderer of his own soul

See to it too, if it can be so arranged, that your children go with you to church, and sit near you when they are there. To go to church is one thing, but to behave well at church is quite another. And believe me, there is no security for good behaviour like that of having them under your own eye.

The minds of young people are easily drawn aside, and their attention lost, and every possible means should be used to counteract this. I do not like to see them coming to church by themselves,—they often get into bad company by the way, and so learn more evil on the Lord's day than in all the rest of the week. Neither do I like to see what I call "a young people's corner" in a church. They often catch habits of inattention and irreverence there, which it takes years to unlearn, if ever they are unlearned at all. What I like to see is a whole family sitting together, old and young, side by side,—men, women, and children, serving God according to their households.

But there are some who say that it is useless to urge children to attend means of grace, because they cannot understand them.

I would not have you listen to such reasoning. I find no such doctrine in the Old Testament. When Moses goes before Pharaoh (Exodus 10:9), I observe he says, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters: for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." When Joshua read the law (Joshua 8:35), I observe, "There was not a word which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers "that were conversant among them." "Thrice in the year," says Exodus 34:23, "shall all your men-children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel." And when I turn to the New Testament, I find children mentioned there as partaking in public acts of religion as well as in the Old. When Paul was leaving the disciples at Tyre for the last time, I find it said (Acts 21:5)," They all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed."

Samuel, in the days of his childhood, appears to have ministered unto the Lord some time before he really knew Him. "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him" (1 Samuel 3:7). The Apostles themselves do not seem to have understood all that our Lord said at the time that it was spoken: "These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him" (John 12:16).

Parents, comfort your minds with these examples. Be not cast down because your children see not the full value of the means of grace now. Only train them up to a habit of regular attendance. Set it before their minds as a high, holy, and solemn duty, and believe me, the day will very likely

come when they will bless you for your deed.

VIII. Train them to a habit of faith.

I mean by this, you should train them up to believe what you say. You should try to make them feel confidence in your judgment, and respect your opinions, as better than their own. You should accustom them to think that, when you say a thing is bad for them, it must be bad, and when you say it is good for them, it must be good; that your knowledge, in short, is better than their own, and that they may rely implicitly on your word. Teach them to feel that what they know not now, they will probably know hereafter, and to be satisfied there is a reason and a needs-be for everything you require them to do.

Who indeed can describe the blessedness of a real spirit of faith? Or rather, who can tell the misery that unbelief has brought upon the world? Unbelief made Eve eat the forbidden fruit,—she doubted the truth of God's word: "Ye shall surely die." Unbelief made the old world reject Noah's warning, and so perish in sin. Unbelief kept Israel in the wilderness,—it was the bar that kept them from entering the Promised Land. Unbelief made the Jews crucify the Lord of glory,—they believed not the voice of Moses and the prophets, though read to them every day. And unbelief is the reigning sin of man's heart down to this very hour,—unbelief in God's promises,—unbelief in God's threatenings,—unbelief in our own sinfulness,—unbelief in our own danger,—unbelief in everything that runs counter to the pride and worldliness of our evil hearts. Reader, you train your children to little purpose if you do not train them to a habit of implicit faith,—faith in their parents' word, confidence that what their parents say must be right.

I have heard it said by some, that you should require nothing of children which they cannot understand: that you should explain and give a reason for everything you desire them to do. I warn you solemnly against such a notion. I tell you plainly, I think it an unsound and rotten principle. No doubt it is absurd to make a mystery of everything you do, and there are many things which it is well to explain to children, in order that they may see that they are reasonable and wise. But to bring them up with the idea that they must take nothing on trust, that they, with their weak and imperfect understandings, must have the "why" and the "wherefore" made clear to them at every step they take,—this is indeed a fearful mistake, and likely to have the worst effect on their minds.

Reason with your child if you are so disposed, at certain times, but never forget to keep him in mind (if you really love him) that he is but a child after all,—that he thinks as a child, he understands as a child, and therefore must not expect to know the reason of everything at once.

Set before him the example of Isaac, in the day when Abraham took him to offer him on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22). He asked his father that single question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" and he got no answer but this, " God will provide Himself a lamb." How, or where, or whence, or in what manner, or by what means,—all this Isaac was not told; but the answer was enough. He believed that it would be well, because his father said so, and he was content.

Tell your children, too, that we must all be learners in our beginnings,—that there is an alphabet to be mastered in every kind of knowledge,—that the best horse in the world had need once to be broken,—that a day will come when they will see the wisdom of all your training. But in the meantime if you say a thing is right, it must be enough for them,—they must believe you, and be content.

Parents, if any point in training is important, it is this. I charge you by the affection you have to your children, use every means to train them up to a habit of faith.

IX. Train them to a habit of obedience.

This is an object which it is worth any labour to attain. No habit, I suspect, has such an influence over our lives as this. Parents, determine to make your children obey you, though it may cost you much trouble, and cost them many tears. Let there is no questioning, and reasoning. And disputing, and delaying, and answering again. When you give them a command, let them see plainly that you will have it done.

Obedience is the only reality. It is faith visible, faith acting, and faith incarnate. It is the test of real discipleship among the Lord's people. "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). It ought to be the mark of well-trained children, that they do whatsoever their parents command them. Where, indeed, is the honour which the fifth commandment enjoins, if fathers and mothers are not obeyed cheerfully, willingly, and at once?

Early obedience has all Scripture on its side. It is in Abraham's praise, not merely he will train his family, but "he will command his children, and his household after him" (Genesis 18:19). It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, that when "He was young He was subject to Mary and Joseph" (Luke 2:51). Observe how implicitly Joseph obeyed the order of his father Jacob (Genesis 37:13). See how Isaiah speaks of it as an evil thing, when "the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient" (Isaiah 3:5). Mark how the Apostle Paul names disobedience to parents as one of the bad signs of the latter days (2 Timothy 3:2). Mark how he singles out this grace of requiring obedience as one that should adorn a Christian minister: "a bishop must be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." And again, "Let the deacons rule their children and their own houses well" (1 Timothy 3:4, 1 Timothy 3:12). And again, an elder must be one "having faithful children, children not accused of riot, or unruly" (Titus 1:6).

Parents, do you wish to see your children happy? Take care, then, that you train them to, obey when they are spoken to,—to do as they are bid. Believe me, we are not made for entire independence,—we are not fit for it. Even Christ's freemen have a yoke to wear,—they "serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:24). Children cannot learn too soon that this is a world in which we are not all intended to rule, and that we are never in our right place until we know how to obey our betters. Teach them to obey while young, or else they will be fretting against God all their lives long, and wear themselves out with the vain idea of being independent of His control.

Reader, this hint is only too much needed. You will see many in this day who allow their children to choose and think for themselves long before they are able, and even make excuses for their disobedience, as if it were a thing not to be blamed. To my eyes, a parent always yielding, and a child always having its own way, are a most painful sight;—painful, because I see God's appointed order of things inverted and turned upside down;—painful, because I feel sure the consequence to that child's character in the end will be self-will, pride, and self-conceit. You must not wonder that many refuse to obey their Father which is in heaven, if you allow them, when children, to disobey their father who is upon earth.

Parents, if you love your children, let obedience be a motto and a watchword continually before their eyes.

X. Train them to a habit of always speaking the truth.

Truth-speaking is far less common in the world that at first sight we are disposed to think. The whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is a golden rule which many would do well to bear in mind. Lying and prevarication are old sins. The devil was the father of them,—he deceived Eve by a bold lie, and ever since the fall it is a sin against which all the children of Eve have need to be on their guard.

Only think how much falsehood and deceit there is in the world! How much exaggeration! How many additions are made to a simple story! How many things left out, if it does not serve the speaker's interest to tell them! How few there are about us of whom we can say, we put unhesitating trust in their word! Verily the ancient Persians were wise in their generation: it was a leading point with them in educating their children, that they should learn to speak the truth. What an awful proof it is of man's natural sinfulness, that it should be needful to name such a point at all

Reader, I would have you remark how often God is spoken of in the Old Testament as the God of truth. Truth seems to be especially set before us as a leading feature in the character of Him with whom we have to do. He never swerves from the straight line. He abhors lying and hypocrisy. Try to keep this continually before your children's minds. Press upon them at all times, that less than the truth is a lie; that evasion, excuse-making, and exaggeration are all halfway houses towards what is false, and ought to be avoided. Encourage them in any circumstances to be straightforward, and, whatever it may cost them, to speak the truth.

I press this subject on your attention, not merely for the sake of your children's character in the world,—though I might dwell much on this,—I urge it rather for your own comfort and assistance in all your dealings with them. You will find it a mighty help indeed, to be able always to trust their word. It will go far to prevent that habit of concealment, which so unhappily prevails sometimes among children. Openness and straightforwardness depend much upon a parent's treatment of this matter in the days of our infancy.

XI. Train them to a habit of always redeeming the time.

Idleness is the devil's best friend. It is the surest way to give him an opportunity of doing us harm. An idle mind is like an open door, and if Satan does not enter in himself by it, it is certain he will throw in something to raise bad thoughts in our souls.

No created being was ever meant to be idle. Service and work is the appointed portion of every creature of God. The angels in heaven work,—they are the Lord's ministering servants, ever doing His will. Adam, in Paradise, had work,—he was appointed to dress the garden of Eden, and to keep it. The redeemed saints in glory will have work,—"They rest not day and night," singing praise and glory to Him who bought them. And maim, weak, sinful man, must have something to do, or else his soul will soon get into an unhealthy state. We must have our hands filled, and our minds occupied with something, or else our imaginations will soon ferment and breed mischief.

And what is true of us, is true of our children too. Alas, indeed, for the man that has nothing to do! The Jews thought idleness a positive sin: it was a law of theirs that every man should bring up his son to some useful trade,—and they were right. They knew the heart of man better than some of us appear to do.

Idleness made Sodom what she was. “This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her” (Ezekiel 16:49). Idleness had much to do with David’s awful sin with the wife of Uriah.—I see in 2 Sam. 11 that Joab went out to war against Ammon, “but David tarried still at Jerusalem.” Was not that idle? And then it was that he saw Bathsheba,—and the next step we read of is his tremendous and miserable fall.

Verily, I believe that idleness has led to more sin than almost any other habit that could be named. I suspect it is the mother of many a work of the flesh,—the mother of adultery, fornication, drunkenness, and many other deeds of darkness that I have not time to name. Let your own conscience say whether I do not speak the truth. You were idle, and at once the devil knocked at the door and came in.

And indeed I do not wonder;—everything in the world around us seems to teach the same lesson. It is the still water which becomes stagnant and impure: the running, moving streams are always clear. If you have steam machinery, you must work it, or it soon gets out of order. If you have a horse, you must exercise him; he is never so well as when he has regular work. If you would have good bodily health yourself, you must take exercise. If you always sit still, your body is sure at length to complain. And just so is it with the soul. The active moving mind is a hard mark for the devil to shoot at. Try to be always full of useful employment, and thus your enemy will find it difficult to get room to sow tares.

Reader, I ask you to set these things before the minds of your children. Teach them the value of time, and try to make them learn the habit of using it well. It pains me to see children idling over what they have in hand, whatever it may be. I love to see them active and industrious, and giving their whole heart to all they do; giving their whole heart to lessons, when they have to learn;—giving their whole heart even to their amusements, when they go to play.

But if you love them well, let idleness be counted a sin in your family.

XII. Train them with a constant fear of over-indulgence. This is the one point of all on which you have most need to be on your guard. It is natural to be tender and affectionate towards your own flesh and blood, and it is the excess of this very tenderness and affection which you have to fear. Take heed that it does not make you blind to your children’s faults, and deaf to all advice about them. Take heed lest it make you overlook had conduct, rather than have the pain of inflicting punishment and correction.

I know well that punishment and correction are disagreeable things. Nothing is more unpleasant than giving pain to those we love, and calling forth their tears. But so long as hearts are what hearts are, it is vain to suppose, as a general rule, that children can ever be brought up without correction.

Spoiling is a very expressive word, and sadly full of meaning. Now it is the shortest way to spoil children to let them have their own way,—to allow them to do wrong and not to punish them for it. Believe me, you must not do it, whatever pain it may cost you unless you wish to ruin your children’s souls.

You cannot say that Scripture does not speak expressly on this subject: “He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes” (Proverbs 13:24). “Chasten thy son

while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Proverbs 19:18). "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction shall drive it from him" (Proverbs 22:15). "Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell" (Proverbs 23:13-14). "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest, yea, he shall give delight to thy soul" (Proverbs 29:15, Proverbs 29:17).

How strong and forcible are these texts! How melancholy is the fact, that in many Christian families they seem almost unknown! Their children need reproof, but it is hardly ever given; they need correction, but it is hardly ever employed. Amid yet this book of Proverbs is not obsolete and unfit for Christians. It is given by inspiration of God, and profitable. It is given for our learning, even as the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians. Surely the believer who brings up his children without attention to its counsel is making himself wise above that which is written, and greatly errs.

Fathers and mothers, I tell you plainly, if you never punish your children when they are in fault, you are doing them a grievous wrong. I warn you, this is the rock on which the saints of God, in every age, have only too frequently made shipwreck. I would fain persuade you to be wise in time, and keep clear of it. See it in Eli's case. His sons Hophni and Phinehas "made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." He gave them no more than a tame and lukewarm reproof, when he ought to have rebuked them sharply. In one word, he honoured his sons above God. And what was the end of these things? He lived to hear of the death of both his sons in battle, and his own grey hairs were brought down with sorrow to the grave (1 Samuel 2:22-29, 1 Samuel 3:13).

See, too, the case of David. Who can read without pain the history of his children, and their sins? Amnon's incest,—Absalom's murder and proud rebellion,—Adonijah's scheming ambition: truly these were grievous wounds for the man after God's own heart to receive from his own house. But was there no fault on his side? I fear there can be no doubt there was. I find a clue to it all in the account of Adonijah in 1 Kings 1:6 : "His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" There was the foundation of all the mischief. David was an over-indulgent father,—a father who let his children have their own way,—and he reaped according as he had sown.

Parents, I beseech you, for your children's sake, beware of over-indulgence. I call on you to remember, it is your first duty to consult their real interests, and not their fancies and likings;—to train them, not to humour them;—to profit, not merely to please.

You must not give way to every wish and caprice of your child's mind, however much you may love him. You must not let him suppose his will is to be everything, and that he has only to desire a thing and it will be done. Do not, I pray you, make your children idols, lest God should take them away, and break your idol, just to convince you of your folly.Learn to say "No" to your children. Show them that you are able to refuse whatever you think is not fit for them. Show them that you are ready to punish disobedience, and that when you speak of punishment, you are not only ready to threaten, but also to perform. Do not threaten too much.4 Threatened folks, and threatened faults, live long. Punish seldom, but really and in good earnest,—frequent and slight punishment is a wretched system indeed.5

Beware of letting small faults pass unnoticed under the idea “it is a little one.” There are no little things in training children; all are important. Little weeds need plucking up as much as any. Leave them alone, and they will soon be great.

Reader, if there be any point which deserves your attention, believe me, it is this one. It is one that will give you trouble, I know. But if you do not take trouble with your children when they are young, they will give you trouble when they are old. Choose which you prefer.

XIII. Train them remembering continually how God trains His children.

The Bible tells us that God has an elect people—a family in this world. All poor sinners who have been convinced of sin, and fled to Jesus for peace, make up

I ask you to lay to heart the lesson which God’s dealings with His people is meant to teach you. Fear not to withhold from your child anything you think will do him harm, whatever his own wishes may be. This is God’s plan.

Hesitate not to lay on him commands, of which he may not atpresent see the wisdom, and to guide him in ways which may not now seem reasonable to his mind. This is God’s plan.

Shrink not from chastising and correcting him whenever you see his soul’s health requires it, however painful it may be to your feelings; and remember medicines for the mind must not be rejected because they are bitter. This is God’s plan.

And be not afraid, above all, that such a plan of training will make your child unhappy. I warn you against this delusion. Depend on it, there is no surer road to unhappiness than always having our own way. To have our wills checked and denied is a blessed thing for us; it makes us value enjoyments when they come. To be indulged perpetually is the way to be made selfish; and selfish people and spoiled children, believe me, are seldom happy.

Reader, be not wiser than God;—train your children as He trains His.

XIV. Train them remembering continually the influence of your own example.

Instruction, and advice, and commands will profit little, unless they are backed up by the pattern of your own life. Your children will never believe you are in earnest, and really wish them to obey you, so long as your actions contradict your counsel. Archbishop Tillotson made a wise remark when he said, “To give children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell.”

We little know the force and power of example. No one of us can live to himself in this world; we are always influencing those around us, in one way or another, either for good or for evil, either for God or for sin.—They see our ways, they mark our conduct, they observe our behaviour, and what they see us practise, that they may fairly suppose we think right. And never, I believe, does example tell so powerfully as it does in the case of parents and children.

Fathers and mothers, do not forget that children learn more by the eye than they do by the ear. No school will make such deep marks on character as home. The best of schoolmasters will not imprint on their minds as much as they will pick up at your fireside. Imitation is a far stronger

principle with children than memory. What they see has a much stronger effect on their minds than what they are told.

Take care, then, what you do before a child. It is a true proverb, “Who sins before a child, sins double.” Strive rather to be a living epistle of Christ, such as your families can read, and that plainly too. Be an example of reverence for the Word of God, reverence in prayer, reverence for means of grace, reverence for the Lord’s day.—Be an example’ in words, in temper, in diligence, in temperance, in faith, in charity, in kindness, in humility. Think not your children will practise what they do not see you do. You are their model picture, and they will copy what you are. Your reasoning and your lecturing, your wise commands and your good advice; all this they may not understand, but they can understand your life.

Children are very quick observers; very quick in seeing through some kinds of hypocrisy, very quick in finding out what you really think and feel, very quick in adopting all your ways and opinions. You will often find as the father is, so is the son.

Remember the word that the conqueror Caesar always used to his soldiers in a battle. He did not say “Go forward,” but “Come.” So it must be with you in training your children. They will seldom learn habits which they see you despise, or walk in paths in which you do not walk yourself. He that preaches to his children what he does not practise, is working a work that never goes forward. It is like the fabled web of Penelope of old, who wove all day, and unwove all night. Even so, the parent who tries to train without setting a good example is building with one hand, and pulling down with the other.

XV.Train them remembering continually the power of sin.

I name this shortly, in order to guard you against unscriptural expectations.

You must not expect to find your children’s minds a sheet of pure white paper, and to have no trouble if you only use right means. I warn you plainly you will find no such thing. It is painful to see how much corruption and evil there is in a young child’s heart, and how soon it begins to bear fruit. Violent tempers, self-will, pride, envy, sulleness, passion, idleness, selfishness, deceit, cunning, falsehood, hypocrisy, a terrible aptness to learn what is bad, a painful slowness to learn what is good, a readiness to pretend anything in order to gain their own ends,—all these things, or some of them, you must be prepared to see, even in your own flesh and blood. In little ways they will creep out at a very early age; it is almost startling to observe how naturally they seem to spring up. Children require no schooling to learn to sin.

But you must not be discouraged and cast down by finding out what you really think and feel, very quick in adopting all your ways and opinions. You will often find as the father is, so is the son.

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But you must not be discouraged and cast down by what you see. You must not think it a strange and unusual thing, that little hearts can be so full of sin. It is the only portion which our father Adam left us; it is that fallen nature with which we come into the world; it is that inheritance which belongs to us all. Let it rather make you more diligent in using every means which seem most likely, by God's blessing, to counteract the mischief. Let it make you increasingly careful, so far as in you lies, to keep your children out of the way of temptation.

Never listen to those who tell you your children are good, and well brought up, and can be trusted. Think rather that their hearts are always inflammable as tinder. At there very best, they only want a spark to set their corruptions alight. Parents are seldom too cautious. Remember the natural depravity of your children, and take care.

XVI. Train them remembering continually the promises of Scripture.

I name this also shortly, in order to guard you against discouragement.

You have a plain promise on your side, "Train up your child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Think what it is to have a promise like this. Promises were the only lamp of hope which cheered the hearts of the patriarchs before the Bible was written. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph,—all lived on a few promises, and prospered in their souls. Promises are the cordials which in every age have supported and strengthened the believer. He that has got a plain text upon his side need never be cast down. Fathers and mothers, when your hearts are failing, and ready to halt, look at the word of this text, and take comfort.

Think who it is that promises. It is not the word of a man, who may lie or repent; it is the word of the King of kings, who never changes. Hath He said a thing, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Neither is anything too hard for Him to perform. The things that are impossible with men are possible with God. Reader, if we get not the benefit of the promise we are dwelling upon, the fault is not in Him, but in ourselves.

Think, too, what the promise contains, before you refuse to take comfort from it. It speaks of a certain time when good training shall especially bear fruit,—"when a child is old." Surely there is comfort in this. You may not see with your own eyes the result of careful training, but you know not what blessed fruits may not spring from it, long after you are dead and gone. It is not God's way to

give everything at once. “Afterward” is the time when He often chooses to work, both in the things of nature and in the things of grace. “Afterward” is the season when affliction bears the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). “Afterward” was the time when the son who refused to work in his father’s vineyard repented and went (Matthew 21:29). And “afterward” is the time to which parents must look forward if they see not success at once,—you must sow in hope and plant in hope.

“Cast thy bread upon the waters,” saith the Spirit, “for thou shalt find it after many days” (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Many children, I doubt not, shall rise up in the day of judgment, and bless their parents for good training, who never gave any signs of having profited by it during their parents’ lives. Go forward then in faith, and be sure that your labour shall not be altogether thrown away. Three times did Elijah stretch himself upon the widow’s child before it revived. Take example from him, and persevere.

XVII Train them, lastly, with continual prayer for a blessing on all you do.

Without the blessing of the Lord, your best endeavours will do no good. He has the hearts of all men in His hands, and except He touch the hearts of your children by His Spirit, you will weary yourself to no purpose. Water, therefore, the seed you sow on their minds with unceasing prayer. The Lord is far more willing to hear than we to pray; far more ready to give blessings than we to ask them;—but He loves to be entreated for them. And I set this matter of prayer before you, as the top-stone and seal of all you do. I suspect the child of many prayers is seldom cast away.

Look upon your children as Jacob did on his; he tells Esau they are “the children which God hath graciously given thy servant” (Genesis 33:5). Look on them as Joseph did on his; he told his father, “They are the sons whom God hath given me” (Genesis 48:9). Count them with the Psalmist to be “an heritage and reward from the Lord” (Psalms 127:3). And then ask the Lord, with a holy boldness, to be gracious and merciful to His own gifts. Mark how Abraham intercedes for Ishmael, because he loved him, “Oh that Ishmael might live before thee” (Genesis 17:18). See how Manoah speaks to the angel about Samson, “How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?” (Judges 13:12). Observe how tenderly Job cared for his children’s souls, “He offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all, for he said, It may be my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually” (Job 1:5). Parents, if you love your children, go and do likewise. You cannot name their names before the mercy-seat too often.

And now, reader, in conclusion, let me once more press upon you the necessity and importance of using every single means in your power, if you would train children for heaven.

I know well that God is a sovereign God, and doeth all things according to the counsel of His own will. I know that Rehoboam was the son of Solomon, and Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, and that you do not always see godly parents having a godly seed. But I know also that God is a God who works by means, and sure am I, if you make light of such means as I have mentioned, your children are not likely to turn out well.

Fathers and mothers, you may take your children to be baptized, and have them enrolled in the ranks of Christ’s Church;—you may get godly sponsors to answer for them, and help you by their prayers;—you may send them to the best of schools, and give them Bibles and Prayer Books, and fill them with head knowledge:—but if all this time there is no regular training at home, I tell you

plainly, I fear it will go hard in the end with your children's souls. Home is the place where habits are formed;—home is the place where the foundations of character are laid;—home gives the bias to our tastes, and likings, and opinions. See then, I pray you, that there be careful training at home. Happy indeed is the man who can say, as Bolton did upon his dying bed, to his children, "I do believe not one of you will dare to meet me before the tribunal of Christ in an unregenerate state."

Fathers and mothers, I charge you solemnly before God and time Lord Jesus Christ, take every pains to train your children in the way they should go. I charge you not merely for the sake of your children's souls; I charge you for the sake of your own future comfort and peace. Truly it is your interest so to do. Truly your own happiness in great measure depends on it. Children have ever been the bow from which the sharpest arrows have pierced man's heart. Children have mixed the bitterest cups that man has ever had to drink. Children have caused the saddest tears that man has ever had to shed. Adam could tell you so; Jacob could tell you so; David could tell you so. There are no sorrows on earth like those which children have brought upon their parents. Oh! take heed, lest your own neglect should lay up misery for you in your old age. Take heed, lest you weep under the ill-treatment of a thankless child, in the days when your eye is dim, and your natural force abated.

If ever you wish your children to be the restorers of your life, and the nourishers of your old age,—if you would have them blessings and not curses—joys and not sorrows—Judahs and not Reubens—Ruths and not Orpahs,—if you would not, like Noah, be ashamed of their deeds, and, like Rebekah, be made weary of your life by them: if this be your wish, remember my advice betimes, train them while young in the right way.

And as for me, I will conclude by putting up my prayer to God for all who read this paper, that you may all be taught of God to feel the value of your own souls. This is one reason why baptism is too often a mere form, and Christian training despised and disregarded. Too often parents feel not for themselves, and so they feel not for their children. They do not realize the tremendous difference between a state of nature and a state of grace, and therefore they are content to let them alone.

Now the Lord teach you all that sin is that abominable thing which God hateth. Then, I know you will mourn over the sins of your children, and strive to pluck them out as brands from the fire.

The Lord teach you all how precious Christ is, and what a mighty and complete work He hath done for our salvation. Then, I feel confident you will use every means to bring your children to Jesus, that they may live through Him.

The Lord teach you all your need of the Holy Spirit, to renew, sanctify, and quicken your souls. Then, I feel sure you will urge your children to pray for Him without ceasing, and never rest till He has come down into their hearts with power, and made them new creatures.

The Lord grant this, and then I have a good hope that you will indeed train up your children well,—train well for this life, and train well for the life to come; train well for earth, and train well for heaven; train them for God, for Christ, and for eternity.

Footnotes

1As a minister, I cannot help remarking that there is hardly any subject about which people seem so tenacious as they are about their children. I have sometimes been perfectly astonished at the slowness of sensible Christian parents to allow that their own children are in fault, or deserve blame. There are not a few persons to whom I would far rather speak about their own sins, than tell them their children had done anything wrong.

2 “He has seen but little of life who does not discern everywhere the effect of education on men’s opinions and habits of thinking. The children bring out of the nursery that which displays itself throughout their lives.”—Cecil.

3 As to the age when the religious instruction of a child should begin, no general rule can be laid down. The mind seems to open in some children much more quickly than in others. We seldom begin too early. There are wonderful examples on record of what a child can attain to, even at three years old.

4Some parents and nurses have a way of saying, “Naughty child,” to a boy or girl on every slight occasion, and often without good cause. It is a very foolish habit. Words of blame should never be used without real reason.

5 As to the best way of punishing a child, no general rule can be laid down. The characters of children are so exceedingly different, that what would be a severe punishment to one child, would be no punishment at all to another. I only beg to enter my decided protest against the modern notion that no child ought ever to be whipped. Doubtless some parents use bodily correction far too much, and far too violently; but many others, I fear, use it far too little.

Chapter 28

Evangelical Religion

Preface The Church of England has had some excellent bishops in its long history, but without doubt John Charles Ryle was one of the most useful of them through his ministry and writings. There are many reasons for this. The main one, and the foundation for all the rest was the precedence he gave to the plenary inspiration and sufficiency of holy Scripture. He was one of the Lord's standard bearers of the Victorian age, but being dead he continues to speak to our apostate generation as though he were still alive, for his writings were inspired by the Word of God to speak to every generation on the issues that matter for our Christian faith.

To present day readers he is chiefly known through his expository and biographical writings and tracts, as reprinted by the Banner of Truth and Evangelical Press publishers. J. C. Ryle originally wrote a series of “Tracts for the Times” and the following tract, entitled “Evangelical Religion”, was one of them. In 1877, while Ryle was still vicar of the Suffolk village of Stradbroke, some of those tracts were published in a book entitled “Knots Untied”, which has often been reprinted and remains as popular with Christians today as it did over 120 years ago. Ryle's “Evangelical Religion” tract is prophetic not only because it reflects the important conflicts of the Church of England that still remain key issues for the Church today; but what is of far more importance, as in all his writings, they have a permanent quality about them. He wrote in the plainest and most effective language. He was the Bible expositor and tract writer par excellence.

Ryle was a man who always expounded the Bible no matter what he wrote about. He never preached, explained, defended or argued for his convictions without the irrefutable support of Biblical proofs. His writings always opened up the truth of the Scriptures for their edifying spiritual and practical applications, and that is why his writings do not grow old, nor can they. He was not interested in the passing theological fashions unless they dishonoured the Lord to the detriment of the fundamentals of the faith. Then he would denounce them forcefully but without rancour. He was always concerned to espouse the eternal truth of God's revelation as it applied to the great questions of a Christian on his journey to heaven.

Ryle was a master in the art of plain, effective, evangelical writing. Not all who expound the Bible faithfully stand the test of time, and even those whom Ryle most admired, such as the Puritans, were often too prolix even for his times. But Ryle has endured because he could present the Biblical message with such clarity and wisdom in a way that makes you want to return again and again to read his writings. His tracts are pure gold.

Ryle always stood fearlessly for what he believed to be the truth, and men will usually respect that, even when they disagree with their views. He was never in his life prepared to face both ways at once, which is arguably the attitude of the Church of England leaders today. He would have been appalled by the current Anglican worldliness of moral ambiguities, doctrinal evasions and downright hostility to the infallible authority of the Word of God in the holy Bible. Add to that the Liberal denigration of the 39 Articles of Faith he loved, with the Liberal's obsession in wanting to be all things to all men, so as to cause no offence to the world, and yet, hypocritically, supporting

lifestyles the Word of God condemns as sinful with an intolerance to opponents that knowingly gives offence to Christians everywhere. Ryle would have been vigorous in his denunciation of them. He would also, I believe, no longer be a member of that Church as it exists today. He always said that God would remove the candlestick from the Church of England if the 39 Articles of Faith, as being derived from holy Scripture, was cast aside for “another gospel” not of God. Today each Liberal minister preaches their own gospel: “the gospel according to me.”

It never ceases to amaze me in re-reading what Ryle wrote to discover how relevant it all is today. The tracts of Ryle are needed more than ever because Christians everywhere must defend the truth of the Gospel and the very honour of God Himself in this apostate age. The fight against the unreformed Church of Rome goes on. The fight against those hypocritical ministers who live off the name of Jesus Christ, but dishonour His sacred teaching through their contempt of the Bible, goes on. All Ryle's tracts bear witness to this “fight the good fight” more than anything else. They are not for the fainthearted who wonder whether it is politically correct to say “yes” or “no” on matters of spiritual life or death. With the writings of Ryle there is “no uncertain sound.”

Ryle wrote out of a knowledge which came from much reading and study. He knew his Bible thoroughly. Also he had read many of the classical Protestant divines of the 16th century and the Puritans of the 17th. He had read the ancient Fathers too, but his deep learning was not paraded ostentatiously through his writings. His learning rather lay in knowing exactly what to say to drive home the essential truths of the Christian faith in the most effective way.

John Charles Ryle became the first Bishop of the new diocese of Liverpool between 1880-1900AD, where he faced a most formidable task. He was called to be the bishop there at the age of 65, when most men contemplate retirement from the pressures of a lifetime's work. He viewed it as a call from God and continued to labour in season and out of season, with untiring dedication, almost to his last breath. The 10 years as Bishop of Liverpool proved he was a successful man of action as well. As the leading evangelical of the Church of England he was comparable in witnessing to the faith in 19th century England as his contemporary Charles Spurgeon, who greatly admired him. His successor at Liverpool, Bishop Chavasse, summed up Bishop Ryle by calling him “a man of granite with a heart of a child.”

At his memorial service Ryle's effectiveness was summed up by Canon Richard Hobson in the following words:

“A great man has just now fallen in Israel in the decease of the dear Bishop. Yes, he was great through the abounding grace of God. He was great in stature; great in mental power; great in spirituality; great as a preacher and expositor of God's most holy Word; great in hospitality; great in winning souls to God; great as a writer of Gospel tracts; great as an author of works which will live long; great as a bishop of the Reformed Evangelical Protestant Church of England of which he was a noble defender; great as the first Bishop of Liverpool.” May the Lord send us more like him.

Editor, Evangelical Tracts, July, 2003 [taken from “Knots Untied” first published 1877AD]

KNOTS UNTIED.

BEING

PLAIN STATEMENTS ON DISPUTED POINTS IN RELIGION,

FROM THE

STANDPOINT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCHMAN.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.

Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels," etc.,

PEOPLE'S EDITION.

(Second Impression of 10,000)

LONDON :

CHAS. J. THYNNE,

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[1900AD edition] EVANGELICAL RELIGION BY

J. C. Ryle D.D.

IT may be laid down as a rule, with tolerable confidence, that the absence of accurate definitions is the very life of religious controversy. If men would only define with precision the theological terms which they use, many disputes would die. Scores of excited disputants would discover that they do not really differ, and that their disputes have arisen from their own neglect of the great duty of explaining the meaning of words.

In opening the subject of this paper, I desire to remember carefully this important rule. Without further preface, I shall begin by explaining what I mean when I speak of “Evangelical Religion.”

By “Evangelical Religion,” I do not mean Christianity as compared with Heathenism, or Protestantism as compared with Romanism, or Trinitarianism as compared with Socinianism or Deism. I do not propose to argue with the Sceptic or the Modernist, with the Papist or the Jew. What I do want to consider is the religion which is peculiar to that party in the Church of England which is commonly called “Evangelical.” To that point I shall confine myself, and to that alone.

I will not waste time by proving the existence of such a party as “the Evangelical party.” It is a fact as patent as the sun in heaven. When it began first to be called by this name, and why it was so called, are points into which it is not worth while now to inquire. It is a simple fact that it exists. Whether we like it or not, whether it be right or wrong, the well-known tripartite division is correct and may be assumed as true. There are three great schools of thought in the Church of England, High Church, Broad Church, and Evangelical;-and the man who cannot see them is in a very curious state of mind.1 Now what are the distinctive peculiarities of the religion of the Evangelical school? That it has some leading tenets or principles is unmistakable and undeniable. What are those principles which distinguish it from other schools? This in plain words is my subject,-Has Evangelical Religion any distinctive principles? I answer, it has.-Are they worth contending for? I answer, they are.

I approach the subject with a deep sense of its difficulty. It cannot be handled without touching points of extreme nicety, and treading on very delicate ground. It necessitates comparison between section and section of our Church; and all comparisons are odious. It lays a writer open to the charge of being “party-spirited, narrow-minded, combative, pugnacious,” and what not. But there are times when comparisons are a positive duty. It is an apostolic command to “try things that differ.” (Php_1:10) The existence of diversities in the Church of England is a fact that cannot be ignored. To pretend that we do not see them is absurd. Everybody else can see them, talk about them, and criticise them. To attempt to deny their existence is mere squeamishness and affectation. Whether we like it or not, there they are, and the world around us knows it.

But while I have a deep sense of the difficulty of the subject, I have a deeper sense of its importance. The clouds are gathering round the Church of England; her very existence is in peril. Conflicting opinions bid fair to rend her in twain. A strife has arisen within her pale in the last thirty or forty years, not about the trappings and vestments of religion, but about the very foundations of the Gospel. It remains to be seen whether our beloved Church will survive the struggle. Surely it is high time for Evangelical clergymen and laymen to review calmly their position, and to consider seriously what it is they have got to maintain and defend. Let us walk round our lines. Let us mark well our bulwarks. Let us distinctly understand the principles which are characteristic of our body. It must do us good; it can do us no harm.

In defining what Evangelical Religion is, I admit at the outset that I have no written creed, no formal declaration of principles, to refer to. The reader will do me the justice to believe that I feel that want very keenly. I can only bring forward the results of such reading, study, and observation, as are within the reach of all ordinary men. But for many years I have examined carefully the published works of most of the Fathers of the Evangelical school, and especially of the men of the last century, and I have formed decided opinions about their peculiar principles. I may be wrong in my estimate of their merits; but I can honestly say that I have not arrived at my conclusions without prayer, thought, and pains.2

There are three questions which I wish to bring under the notice of the readers of this paper.

I. What Evangelical Religion is.

II. What it is not.

III. What makes much religion not Evangelical.

Each of these questions I shall attempt to touch very briefly.

I. To the question “what Evangelical Religion is?” the simplest answer I can give is to point out what appear to be its leading features. These I consider to be five in number.

(a) The first leading feature in Evangelical Religion is the absolute supremacy it assigns to Holy Scripture, as the only rule of faith and practice, the only test of truth, the only judge of controversy.

Its theory is that man is required to believe nothing, as necessary to salvation, which is not read in God's Word written, or can be proved thereby. It totally denies that there is any other guide for man's soul, coequal or co-ordinate with the Bible. It refuses to listen to such arguments as “the Church says so,”-“the Fathers say so,”-“primitive antiquity says so,”-“Catholic tradition says

so,”-“the Councils say so,”-“the ancient liturgies say so,”-“the Prayer-book says so,”-“the universal conscience of mankind says so,”-“the verifying light within says so,”-unless it can be shown that what is said is in harmony with Scripture.

The supreme authority of the Bible, in one word, is one of the cornerstones of our system. Show us anything plainly written in that Book, and, however trying to flesh and blood, we will receive it, believe it, and submit to it. Show us anything, as religion, which is contrary to that Book, and, however specious, plausible, beautiful, and apparently desirable, we will not have it at any price. It may come before us endorsed by Fathers, schoolmen, and catholic writers; it may be commended by reason, philosophy, science, the inner light, the verifying faculty, the universal conscience of mankind. It signifies nothing. Give us rather a few plain texts. If the thing is not in the Bible, deducible from the Bible, or in manifest harmony with the Bible, we will have none of it. Like the forbidden fruit, we dare not touch it, lest we die. Our faith can find no resting-place except in the Bible, or in Bible arguments. Here is rock: all else is sand.

(b) The second leading feature in Evangelical Religion is the depth and prominence it assigns to the doctrine of human sinfulness and corruption. Its theory is that in consequence of Adam's fall, all men are as far as possible gone from original righteousness, and are of their own natures inclined to evil. They are not only in a miserable, pitiable, and bankrupt condition, but in a state of guilt, imminent danger, and condemnation before God. They are not only at enmity with their Maker, and have no title to heaven, but they have no will to serve their Maker, no love to their Maker, and no meetness for heaven.

We hold that a mighty spiritual disease like this requires a mighty spiritual medicine for its cure. We dread giving the slightest countenance to any religious system of dealing with man's soul, which even seems to encourage the notion that his deadly wound can be easily healed. We dread fostering man's favourite notion that a little church-going and sacrament-receiving,-a little patching, and mending, and whitewashing, and gilding, and polishing, and varnishing, and painting the outside,-is all that his case requires. Hence we protest with all our heart against formalism, sacramentalism, and every species of mere external or vicarious Christianity. We maintain that all such religion is founded on an inadequate view of man's spiritual need. It requires far more than this to save, or satisfy, or sanctify, a soul. It requires nothing less than the blood of God the Son applied to the conscience, and the grace of God the Holy Ghost entirely renewing the heart. Man is radically diseased, and man needs a radical cure. I believe that ignorance of the extent of the fall, and of the whole doctrine of original sin, is one grand reason why many can neither understand, appreciate, nor receive Evangelical Religion. Next to the Bible, as its foundation, it is based on a clear view of original sin.

(c) The third leading feature of Evangelical Religion is the paramount importance it attaches to the work and office of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the nature of the salvation which He has wrought out for man.

Its theory is that the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, has by His life, death, and resurrection, as our Representative and Substitute, obtained a complete salvation for sinners, and a redemption from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin, and that all who believe on Him are, even while they live, completely forgiven and justified from all things,-are reckoned completely righteous before God,-are interested in Christ and all His benefits.

We hold that nothing whatever is needed between the soul of man the sinner and Christ the Saviour, but simple, childlike faith, and that all means, helps, ministers, and ordinances are useful just so far as they help this faith, but no further;-but that rested in and relied on as ends and not as means, they become downright poison to the soul.

We hold that an experimental knowledge of Christ crucified and interceding, is the very essence of Christianity, and that in teaching men the Christian religion we can never dwell too much on Christ Himself, and can never speak too strongly of the fulness, freeness, presentness, and simplicity of the salvation there is in Him for every one that believes.

Not least, we hold most firmly that the true doctrine about Christ is precisely that which the natural heart most dislikes. The religion which man craves after is one of sight and sense, and not of faith. An external religion, of which the essence is “doing something,”-and not an inward and spiritual one, of which the essence is “believing,” this is the religion that man naturally loves. Hence we maintain that people ought to be continually warned not to make a Christ of the Church, or of the ministry, or of the forms of worship, or of baptism, or of the Lord's Supper. We say that life eternal is to know Christ, believe in Christ, abide in Christ, have daily heart communion with Christ, by simple personal faith,-and that everything in religion is useful so far as it helps forward that life of faith, but no further.

(d) The fourth leading feature in Evangelical Religion is the high place which it assigns to the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man. Its theory is that the root and foundation of all vital Christianity in any one, is a work of grace in the heart, and that until there is real experimental business within a man, his religion is a mere husk, and shell, and name, and form, and can neither comfort nor save. We maintain that the things which need most to be pressed on men's attention are those mighty works of the Holy Spirit, inward repentance, inward faith, inward hope, inward hatred of sin, and inward love to God's law. And we say that to tell men to take comfort in their baptism or Church-membership, when these all-important graces are unknown, is not merely a mistake, but positive cruelty.

We hold that, as an inward work of the Holy Ghost is a necessary thing to a man's salvation, so also it is a thing that must be inwardly felt. We admit that feelings are often deceptive, and that a man may feel much, or weep much, or rejoice much, and yet remain dead in trespasses and sins. But we maintain firmly that there can be no real conversion to God, no new creation in Christ, no new birth of the Spirit, where there is nothing felt and experienced within. We hold that the witness of the Spirit, however much it may be abused, is a real, true thing. We deem it a solemn duty to be no less jealous about the work of the Holy Ghost, in its place and degree, than we are about the work of Christ. And we insist that where there is nothing felt within the heart of a man, there is nothing really possessed.

(e) The fifth and last leading feature in Evangelical Religion is the importance which it attaches to the outward and visible work of the Holy Ghost in the life of man.

Its theory is that the true grace of God is a thing that will always make itself manifest in the conduct, behaviour, tastes, ways, choices, and habits of him who has it. It is not a dormant thing, that can be within a man and not show itself without. The heavenly seed is “not corruptible, but incorruptible.” It is a seed which is distinctly said to “remain” in every one that is born of God. (1

Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9) Where the Spirit is, He will always make His presence known.

We hold that it is wrong to tell men that they are “children of God, and members of Christ, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven,” unless they really overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. We maintain that to tell a man he is “born of God,” or regenerated, while he is living in carelessness or sin, is a dangerous delusion, and calculated to do infinite mischief to his soul. We affirm confidently that “fruit” is the only certain evidence of a man's spiritual condition; that if we would know whose he is and whom he serves, we must look first at his life. Where there is the grace of the Spirit there will be always more or less fruit of the Spirit. Grace that cannot be seen is no grace at all, and nothing better than Antinomianism. Note, in short, we believe that where there is nothing seen, there is nothing possessed.

Such are the leading features of Evangelical Religion. Such are the main principles which characterize the teaching of the Evangelical school in the Church of England. To my eyes they seem to stand out in the theological horizon like Tabor and Hermon among the mountains, and to tower upward like cathedral spires in our English plains. It will readily be perceived that I have only sketched them in outline. I have purposely avoided much that might have been said in the way of amplification and demonstration. I have omitted many things which might have been handled as parts and portions of our system, not because they are not important, but because they are comparatively of secondary importance. But enough has probably been said to serve my present purpose. I have pointed out what I conscientiously believe are the five distinctive doctrinal marks by which the members of the Evangelical body may be discerned. Rightly or wrongly, I have laid them down plainly. I venture to think that my statement will hold water and stand the fire.

I do not for a moment deny, be it remembered, that many Churchmen who are outside the Evangelical body, are sound in the main about the five points I have named, if you take them one by one. Propound them separately, as points to be believed, and they would admit them every one. But they do not give them the prominence, position, rank, degree, priority, dignity, and precedence which we do. And this I hold to be a most important difference between us and them. It is the position which we assign to these points, which is one of the grand characteristics of Evangelical theology. We say boldly that they are first, foremost, chief, and principal things in Christianity, and that want of attention to their position mars and spoils the teaching of many well-meaning Churchmen.

To show all the foundations on which Evangelical Religion is based, would be clearly impossible in a paper like this. We appeal boldly to the Holy Scriptures, and challenge any one to examine our system by the light of the New Testament.-We appeal boldly to the Thirty-nine Articles of our own Church, and assert unhesitatingly that they are on our side. We appeal boldly to the writings of our leading Divines, from the Reformation down to the time of Archbishop Laud, and invite any man to compare our teaching with theirs.-We repudiate with scorn the vulgar charge of novelty, and tell the man who makes it that he only exposes his own ignorance. We ask him to turn again to his New Testament, to study afresh the Thirty-nine Articles, to take down and read once more the English theology of the pre-Caroline age. We court the fullest, strictest investigation into our case, and shall abide the result without fear. Of ourselves and our imperfections we may well be ashamed; but of what is called “Evangelical Religion” we have no cause to be ashamed at all. Let men say what they please. Nothing is easier than to call names, affix odious epithets, and frighten

ignorant people, by raising the cry of “Calvinism” or “Puritanism” against the Evangelical school. “The curse causeless shall not come.” (Proverbs 26:2) I believe firmly that impartial inquiry will always show that Evangelical Religion is the religion of Scripture and of the Church of England.

II. I turn now to the negative side of my subject. Having shown what Evangelical Religion is, it becomes my duty next to show what it is not.

I am almost ashamed to take up time by saying anything on this point. But slanders and false reports about Evangelical Religion are so sadly numerous, and shameless misrepresentations of its nature are so widely current, that I can hardly pass over this branch of my subject. We are not perfect, we know to our sorrow. We have many faults and defects, we humbly confess. But to many charges brought against us we plead “Not guilty.” We say they are not true.

(1) 1 begin then by saying that Evangelical Religion does not despise learning, research, or the wisdom of days gone by. It is not true to say that we do. In thorough appreciation of anything that throws light on God's Word, we give place to none. Let any one look over the lists of those who in days gone by have been eminent for theological scholarship in this country, and I am bold to say he will find some of the most eminent are Evangelical men. Ridley, Jewell, Usher, Lightfoot, Davenant, Hall, Whittaker, Willett, Reynolds, Leighton, Owen, Baxter, Manton, are names that for profound learning stand second to none. To what school do they belong, I should like to know, if not to the Evangelical? What school, I ask confidently, has done more for the exposition and interpretation of Scripture than the Evangelical school? What school has given to the world more Commentaries? Poole's Synopsis and Owen on Hebrews are alone sufficient to show that Evangelical men do read and can think. Even in the Egyptian darkness of last century, there were few English divines who showed more real learning than Hervey, Romaine, and Toplady.

Turn even to our own day, and I say, unhesitatingly, that we have no cause to be ashamed. To name divines of our own generation is somewhat invidious. Yet I do not shrink from saying that the three great books of Dean Goode on Scripture, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, remain to the present day unanswered by the opponents of the Evangelical school. Coarse sneers about ignorance and shallowness may be safely disregarded, while books like these are unrefuted.

But while we do not despise learning, we steadily refuse to place any uninspired writings on a level with revelation. We refuse to call any man “father” or “master,” however learned or intellectual he may be. We will follow no guide but Scripture. We own no master over conscience in religious matters, except the Bible. We leave it to others to talk of “primitive antiquity” and “Catholic truth.” To us there is but one test of truth “What is written in the Scripture? What saith the Lord?”

(2) I go on to say that Evangelical Religion does not undervalue the Church, or think lightly of its privileges. It is not true to say that we do. In sincere and loyal attachment to the Church of England we give place to none. We value its form of government, its Confession of Faith, its mode of worship, as much as any within its pale. We have stuck by it through evil report and good report, while many who once talked more loudly about their Churchmanship have seceded and gone over to Rome. We stick by it still, and will resist all attempts to Romanize it to the very death! We know its value, and would hand it down unimpaired to our children's children.

But we steadily refuse to exalt the Church above Christ, or to teach our people that membership of the Church is identical with membership of Christ. We refuse to assign it an authority for which we

find no warrant either in Scripture or the Articles. We protest against the modern practice of first personifying the Church, then deifying it, and finally idolizing it. We hold that Church councils, Church synods, and Church convocations, may err, and that “things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture.” We can find no proof in the Bible that the Lord Jesus Christ ever meant a body of erring mortals, whether ordained nor not ordained, to be treated as infallible. We consequently hold that a vast quantity of language in this day about “the Church” and the “voice of the Church” is mere unmeaning verbiage. It is “the talk of the lips, which tendeth only to penury.” (Proverbs 14:23)

(3) I go on to say that Evangelical Religion does not under value the Christian ministry. It is not true to say that we do. We regard it as an honourable office instituted by Christ Himself, and of general necessity for carrying on the work of the Gospel. We look on ministers as preachers of God's Word, God's ambassadors, God's messengers, God's servants, God's shepherds, God's stewards, God's overseers, and labourers in God's vineyard.

But we steadily refuse to admit that Christian ministers are in any sense sacrificing priests, mediators between God and man, lords of men's consciences, or private confessors. We refuse it, not only because we cannot see it in the Bible, but also because we have read the lessons of Church history. We find that Sacerdotalism, or priestcraft, has frequently been the curse of Christianity, and the ruin of true religion. And we say boldly that the exaltation of the ministerial office to an unscriptural place and extravagant dignity in the Church of England in the present day, is likely to alienate the affections of the laity, to ruin the Church, and to be the source of every kind of error and superstition.

(4) I go on to say that Evangelical Religion does not undervalue the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is not true to say that we do. We honour them as holy ordinances appointed by Christ Himself, and as blessed means of grace, which in all who use them rightly, worthily, and with faith, “have a wholesome effect or operation.”

But we steadily refuse to admit that Christ's Sacraments convey grace ex opere operato, and that in every case where they are administered, good must of necessity be done. We refuse to admit that they are the grand media between Christ and the soul,-above faith, above preaching, and above prayer. We protest against the idea that in baptism the use of water, in the name of the Trinity, is invariably and necessarily accompanied by regeneration. We protest against the practice of encouraging any one to come to the Lord's Table unless he repents truly of sin, has a lively faith in Christ, and is in charity with all men. We protest against the theory that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice, as a theory alike contrary to the Bible, Articles, and Prayer-book. And above all, we protest against the notion of any corporal presence of Christ's flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper, under the forms of bread and wine, as an “idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians.”

(5) I go on to say that Evangelical Religion does not undervalue the English Prayer-book. It is not true to say that we do. We honour that excellent book as a matchless form of public worship, and one most admirably adapted to the wants of human nature. We use it with pleasure in our public ministrations, and should grieve to see the day when its use is forbidden.

But we do not presume to say there can be no acceptable worship of God without the Prayer-book. It does not possess the same authority as the Bible. We steadily refuse to give to the Prayer-book the honour which is only due to the Holy Scriptures, or to regard it as forming, together with the Bible, the rule of faith for the Church of England. We deny that it contains one single truth of religion, besides, over and above what is contained in God's Word. And we hold that to say the Bible and Prayer-book together are “the Church's Creed,” is foolish and absurd.

(6) I go on to say that Evangelical Religion does not undervalue Episcopacy. It is not true to say that we do. We give to our Bishops as much honour and respect as any section of the Church of England does, and in reality a great deal more. We thoroughly believe that Episcopal government, rightly administered, is the best form of Church government that can be had in this evil world.

But we steadily refuse to believe that Bishops are infallible, or that their words are to be believed when they are not in harmony with the Scriptures, -or that Episcopacy is the first test of a Church being a true Church,-or that Presbyterian orders are not valid orders, or that non-Episcopal Christians are to be handed over to the uncovenanted mercies of God. We hold as firmly as any that “from the beginning there have been bishops, priests, and deacons.” But we refuse to join in the bigoted cry, “No bishop, no Church.”

I repeat that in due respect to the Episcopal office we yield to none. But we never will admit that the acts and doings and deliverances of any Bishops, however numerous, and by whatever name they are called, whether a Pan-Anglican Synod or not, are to be received as infallible, and not to be submitted to free criticism. We cannot forget that erring Bishops ruined the Church of England in the days of Charles the First,-almost ruined it again in 1662, when they cast out the Puritans,-and nearly ruined it once more in the last century, when they shut out the Methodists. No! we have read history, and we have not forgotten that while we have had a Cranmer and a Parker, we have also had a Sheldon and a Laud; and that while we have had stars in our ecclesiastical firmament like Hooper, Ridley, and Jewell, we have also had men who were a disgrace to their office, like the semi-papists, Cheyney and Montague, and the subtle politician, Atterbury.

(7) I go on to say that Evangelical Religion does not object to handsome churches, good ecclesiastical architecture, a well-ordered ceremonial, and a well-conducted service. It is not true to say that we do. We like handsome, well-arranged places of worship, when we can get them. We abhor slovenliness and disorder in God's service, as much as any. We would have all things done “decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40)

But we steadily maintain that simplicity should be the grand characteristic of Christian worship. We hold that human nature is so easily led astray, and so thoroughly inclined to idolatry, that ornament in Christian worship should be used with a very sparing hand. We firmly believe that the tendency of excessive ornament, and a theatrical ceremonial, is to defeat the primary end for which worship was established, to draw away men's minds from Christ, and to make them walk by sight and not by faith. We hold above all that the inward and spiritual character of the congregation is of far more importance than the architecture and adornments of the church. We dare not forget the great principle of Scripture, that “man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

(8) I go on to say that Evangelical religion does not undervalue unity. It is not true to say that we do. We love harmony and peace as much as any Christians in the world. We long for that day when there shall be no more controversy, strife, and division; when Ephraim shall no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim.

But we firmly maintain that there can be no real unity without oneness in the faith. We protest against the idea of unity based on a common Episcopacy, and not on a common belief of Christ's Gospel. As for the theories of those who make advances to Rome, and hold out the hand to the Church of Bonner and Gardiner, while they turn their backs on the Church of Knox and Rutherford, Chalmers and M'Cheyne, we repudiate them with indignation as unworthy of English Churchmen. We abhor the very idea of reunion with Rome, unless Rome first purges herself from her many false doctrines and superstitions.

(9) Last, but not least, I say that Evangelical Religion does not undervalue Christian holiness and self-denial. It is not true to say that we do. We desire as much as any to promote habitual spirituality of heart and life in Christians. We give place to none in exalting humility, charity, meekness, gentleness, temperance, purity, self-denial, good works, and separation from the world. With all our defects, we are second to no section of Christ's Church in attaching the utmost importance to private prayer, private Bible-reading, and private communion with God.

But we steadily deny that true holiness consists in calling everything “holy” in religion, and thrusting forward the word “holy” with sickening frequency at every turn. We will not allow that it is really promoted by an ostentatious observance of Lent, by keeping Ecclesiastical fasts and saints' days, by frequent communion, by joining Houses of mercy, by doing penance, by going to confession, by wearing peculiar dresses, by decorating our persons with enormous crosses, by frequent gestures, and postures expressive of humility, in public worship, by walking in procession and the like. We believe, on the contrary, that such holiness (so-called) too often begins from the outside, and is a complete delusion. It has a “show of wisdom,” and may satisfy silly young women and brainless young men, who like to compound for races and balls one part of their week, by asceticism and will-worship at another. But we utterly deny that it is the holiness recommended by St. Paul and St. Peter, St. James and St. John 3:1-36

I leave my list of negatives here. I have not time to dwell on them further. The sum of the whole matter is this:-we give all lawful honour to learning, the Church, the ministry, the Sacrament, Episcopacy, the Prayer-book, Church ornament, unity, and holiness; but we firmly decline to give them more honour than we find given to them in God's Word.

We dare not take up any other position, because of the plain teaching of the Scriptures. We read there how the ark itself was utterly useless to Israel when trusted in as a saviour, and exalted into the place of God. We read there how God Himself has said, that the sacrifices and feasts which He Himself had appointed, were “abominations” and a “weariness” to Him, when rested on as ends and not as means.-We read there how the very temple itself, with all its divinely ordained services, was denounced as a “den of thieves,” by Christ Himself. (1 Samuel 4:1-11; Isaiah 50:11-15; Luke 19:46)

And what do we learn from all this? We learn that we must be very careful how we give primary honour to things invented by man, or even to things which, though ordained by God, are

secondary things in religion. We learn, above all, that those who accuse us of undervaluing the things I have mentioned, because we refuse to make them idols, are only exposing their own ignorance of Scripture. They know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. We may listen to their slanderous charges and misrepresentations with calm indifference. Let them show us that we do not estimate learning, the Church, the Ministry, the Sacraments, the Prayer-book, Episcopacy, unity, and holiness, with the estimate of Scripture, and we will confess that we have erred. But till they can do that, we shall firmly maintain that we are right and they are wrong.

III. It only remains for me to say a few words on the last question I propose to consider:-"What is it that makes much religion appear to us not Evangelical?"

This is no doubt a delicate point, but a very serious and important one. I repeat here what I have remarked before. We do not say that men who are not professedly Evangelical ignore and disbelieve the leading doctrines of the Evangelical creed. We say nothing of the kind. But we do say confidently, that there are many ways in which the faith of Christ may be marred and spoiled, without being positively denied. And here we venture to think is the very reason that so much religion called Christian, is not truly Evangelical. The Gospel in fact is a most curiously and delicately compounded medicine, and a medicine that is very easily spoiled.

You may spoil the Gospel by substitution. You have only to withdraw from the eyes of the sinner the grand object which the Bible proposes to faith,-Jesus Christ; and to substitute another object in His place,-the Church, the Ministry, the Confessional, Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, and the mischief is done. Substitute anything for Christ, and the Gospel is totally spoiled! Do this, either directly or indirectly, and your religion ceases to be Evangelical.

You may spoil the Gospel by addition. You have only to add to Christ, the grand object of faith, some other objects as equally worthy of honour, and the mischief is done. Add anything to Christ, and the Gospel ceases to be a pure Gospel! Do this, either directly or indirectly, and your religion ceases to be Evangelical.

You may spoil the Gospel by interposition. You have only to push something between Christ and the eye of the soul, to draw away the sinner's attention from the Saviour, and the mischief is done. Interpose anything between man and Christ, and man will neglect Christ for the thing interposed! Do this, either directly or indirectly, and your religion ceases to be Evangelical.

You may spoil the Gospel by disproportion. You have only to attach an exaggerated importance to the secondary things of Christianity, and a diminished importance to the first things, and the mischief is done. Once alter the proportion of the parts of truth, and truth soon becomes downright error! Do this, either directly or indirectly, and your religion ceases to be Evangelical.

Lastly, but not least, you may completely spoil the Gospel by confused and contradictory directions. Complicated and obscure statements about faith, baptism, Church privileges, and the benefits of the Lord's Supper, all jumbled together, and thrown down without order before hearers, make the Gospel no Gospel at all! Confused and disorderly statements of Christianity are almost as bad as no statement at all! Religion of this sort is not Evangelical.

I know not whether I succeed in making my meaning clear. I am very anxious to do so. Myriads of our fellow-countrymen are utterly unable to see any difference between one thing and another in

religion, and are hence continually led astray. Thousands can see no distinct difference between sermons and sermons, and preachers and preachers, and have only a vague idea that “sometimes all is not right.” I will endeavour, therefore, to illustrate my subject by two familiar illustrations.

A doctor's prescription of a medicine often contains five or six different ingredients. There is so much of one drug and so much of another; a little of this, and a good deal of that. Now what man of common sense can fail to see that the whole value of the prescription depends on a faithful and honest use of it? Take away one ingredient, and substitute another; leave out one ingredient altogether; add a little to the quantity of one drug; take away a little from the quantity of another. Do this, I say, to the prescription, my good friend, and it is a thousand chances to one that you spoil it altogether. The thing that was meant for your health, you have converted into downright poison.

Apply this little simple parable to the Gospel. Regard it as a medicine sent down from heaven, for the curing of man's spiritual disease, by a Physician of infinite skill and power; a medicine of singular efficacy, which man with all his wisdom could never have devised. Tell me now, as one of common sense, does it not stand to reason that this medicine should be used without the slightest alteration, and precisely in the manner and proportion that the great Physician intended? Tell me whether you have the least right to expect good from it, if you have tampered with it in the smallest degree? You know what the answer to these questions must be: your conscience will give the reply. Spoil the proportions of your doctor's prescription, and you will spoil its usefulness, even though you may call it medicine. Spoil the proportions of Christ's Gospel, and you spoil its efficacy. You may call it religion if you like; but you must not call it Evangelical. The several doctrines may be there, but they are useless if you have not observed the proportions.

The brazen serpent supplies another valuable illustration of my meaning. The whole efficacy of that miraculous remedy, we must remember, depended on using it precisely in the way that God directed.-It was the serpent of brass, and nothing else, that brought health to him that looked at it. The man who thought it wise to look at the brazen altar, or at the pole on which the serpent hung, would have died of his wounds.-It was the serpent looked at, and only looked at, that cured the poor bitten Israelite. The man who fancied it would be better to touch the serpent, or to offer a sacrifice to it, would have got no benefit.-It was the serpent looked at by each sufferer with his own eyes, and not with the eyes of another, that healed. The man who bade another look for him, would have found a vicarious look useless.-Looking, looking, only looking, was the prescription.-The sufferer, and only the sufferer, must look for himself with his own eyes.-The serpent, the brazen serpent, and nothing but the serpent, was the object for the eye.

Let us apply that marvellous and most deeply typical history to the Gospel. We have no warrant for expecting the slightest benefit for our souls from Christ's salvation, unless we use it precisely in the way that Christ appointed. If we add anything to it, take anything away from it, try to improve the terms, depart in the slightest degree from the path which the Bible marks out for us, we have no right whatever to look for any good being done. God's plan of salvation cannot possibly be mended or improved. He who tries to amend or improve it, will find that he spoils it altogether.

In one word I wind up this last part of my subject by saying, that a religion to be really “Evangelical” and really good, must be the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, as Christ

prescribed it and expounded it to the Apostles; the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; the terms, the whole terms, and nothing but the terms,-in all their fulness, all their freeness, all their simplicity, all their presentness.

Here, I am sorry to say, a vast quantity of so-called religion in the present day appears to me to break down. It does not come up to the standard I have just given. Things are added to it, or things are taken away, or things are put in their wrong places, or things are set forth in their wrong proportions. And hence, painful as it is, I cannot avoid the conclusion that much of the religion of our own times does not deserve to be called Evangelical. I do not charge all clergymen who are not “Evangelical” with not being “Christians.” I do not say that the religion they teach is not Christianity. I trust I am not so uncharitable as to say anything of this kind. But I do say that, for the reasons already assigned, they appear to me to teach that which is not Christ's whole truth. In a word, they do not give full weight, full measure, and the prescription of the Gospel accurately made up. The parts are there, but not the proportions.

I cannot bring my paper to a conclusion without offering some practical suggestions about the present duties of the Evangelical body. We have been considering what Evangelical religion is and is not. A few pages devoted to our immediate duties, in the present position of the Church, can hardly be thought misapplied.

The times no doubt are very critical, full of danger to our beloved Church, full of danger to the nation. Never has there been such an unblushing avowal of Popish opinions among Churchmen, and such shameless additions to the faith as defined in our Articles. The grand question is, whether our Protestantism shall die or live? Now I believe much depends on the attitude and line of conduct taken up by the Evangelical body. If they know the times and do their duty, there is hope for the Church. If they are timid, supine, compromising, vacillating, and indolent, there is no hope at all.

(1) I suggest, for one thing, that we ought to exercise a special jealousy over our own personal religion. Let us take heed that it is thoroughly and entirely Evangelical. The times we live in are desperately unfavourable to a sharply-cut, decided, distinct, doctrinal Christianity. A fog of vague liberalism overspreads the ecclesiastical horizon. A settled determination to think everybody is right, and nobody is wrong, everything is true, and nothing is false, meets us at every turn. The world is possessed with a devil of false charity about religion. Men try to persuade us, like Gallio, that the alleged differences between creeds and schools of thought are only about “words and names,” and that it is “all the same thing.” In times like these, let us be on our guard, and take heed to our souls.-“Watch ye: stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men: be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13) Let us steadfastly resolve to stand fast in the old paths, the good way of our Protestant Reformers. Narrow, old-fashioned, obsolete, as some may be pleased to call that way, they will never show us a better. The nearer we draw to the great realities of death, judgment, and eternity, the more excellent will that way appear. When I go down the valley of the shadow of death, and my feet touch the cold waters, I want something better than vague, high-sounding words, or the painted playthings and gilded trifles of man-made ceremonials. Give me no stone altars and would-be confessors. Give me no surpliced priests or pretended sacrifice in my bedroom. Put no man or form between me and Christ. Give me a real staff for my hand such as David had, and real meat and drink for my soul such as aged Paul felt within him, and feeling cried, “I am not

ashamed.” (2 Timothy 1:12) I must know distinctly whom I believe, what I believe, and why I believe and in what manner I believe. Nothing, nothing will answer these questions satisfactorily, but thorough, downright Evangelical Religion. Let us make sure that this religion is our own.

(2) I suggest, secondly, that ministers who call themselves Evangelical, ought to be specially careful that they do not compromise their principles, and damage their testimony, by vain attempts to conciliate the world.

This is a great danger in these days. It is a sunken rock, on which I fear many are striking, and doing themselves immense harm. The plausible pretext of making our services more attractive, and cutting the ground from under the feet of Ritualists, too often induces Evangelical ministers to do things which they had far better let alone. New church decorations, new church music, and a semi-histrionic mode of going through church worship, are things which I suggest that we must watch most narrowly, and keep at arm's length. They are points on which we must take heed that we do not let in the Pope and the devil.

Tampering with these things, we may be sure, does no real good. It may seem to please the world, and have a “show of wisdom,” but it never converts the world, and makes the world believe. We had far better leave it alone. Some Evangelical clergymen, I suspect, have begun flirting and trifling with these things with the best intentions, and have ended by losing their own characters, disgusting their true believing hearers, making themselves miserable, and going out of the world under a cloud.

Oh, no! we cannot be too jealous in these days about the slightest departure from the “faith once delivered to the saints,” and from the worship handed down to us by the Reformers. We cannot be too careful to add nothing to, and take nothing away from, the simplicity of the Gospel, and to do nothing in our worship, which seems to cast the slightest reflection on Evangelical principles.-“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”- “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” (Galatians 5:9; Matthew 16:6)

Let us mark the testimony of Scripture on this subject. The Epistle to the Galatians is the inspired handbook for these times. Mark how in that Epistle St. Paul declares, “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”-Mark how he repeats it: “As we said before, so we say again, If any man preach any other Gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”-Mark how he tells us that “when he came to Antioch he withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed.” Mark how he says to the Galatians, “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.” And then comes the solemn and weighty remark which ought to ring in the ears of many: “I am afraid of you.” (Galatians 1:9; Galatians 2:11; Galatians 4:10-11)

Let us carefully observe how little good they do who attempt to mix up Evangelical preaching and a Ritual ceremonial. Little, did I say?-they do no good at all! The world is never won by trimming, and compromising, by facing both ways, and trying to please all. The cross of Christ is never made more acceptable by sawing off its corners, or by polishing, varnishing, and adorning it. Processions, and banners, and flowers, and crosses, and excessive quantity of music, and elaborate services, and beautiful vestments, may please children and weak-minded people. But they never helped forward heart-conversion and heart-sanctification, and they never will. Scores of

English clergymen, I strongly suspect, have found out too late that St. Paul's words are deeply true, when he says, “It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” (Hebrews 13:9)

I grant freely that we have need of much patience in these times. No doubt it is very provoking to be twitted with the nakedness, poverty, and meagreness (so called) of Evangelical worship. It is very annoying to see our younger members slipping away to churches where there are processions, banners, flowers, incense, and a thoroughly histrionic and gorgeous ceremonial. It is vexing to hear them say, that “they feel so much better after these services.” But none of these things must move us. “He that believeth shall not make haste.” (Isaiah 28:16) The end will never justify illicit means. Let us never leave the high ground of principle under any false pressure, from whatever side it may come. Let us hold on our own way, and be jealously sensitive of any departure from simplicity. Popularity obtained by pandering to the senses or the sentiment of our hearers is not worth anything. Worshippers who are not content with the Bible, the cross of Christ, simple prayers and simple praise, are worshippers of little value. It is useless to try to please them, because their spiritual taste is diseased.

Let us remember, not least, the enormous injury which we may do to souls, if we once allow ourselves to depart in the least degree from the simplicity of the Gospel either in our doctrine or in our worship. Who can estimate the shipwrecks that might occur in a single night, and the lives that might be lost, if a light-house keeper dared to alter but a little the colour of his light?-Who can estimate the deaths that might take place in a town, if the chemist took on himself to depart but a little from the doctor's prescriptions?-Who can estimate the wholesale misery that might be caused in a war, by maps a little wrong and charts a little incorrect?-Who can estimate these things?-Then perhaps you may have some idea of the spiritual harm that ministers may do by departing in the slightest degree from the Scriptural proportions of the Gospel, or by trying to catch the world by dressing simple old Evangelical Religion in new clothes.

(3) I suggest, finally, that we must not allow Evangelical Religion to be thrust out of the Church of England without a struggle.

It is a religion which is worth a struggle; for it can point to works which no other school in the Church of England has ever equalled. In this matter we fear no comparison, if honestly and fairly made. We confess with sorrow that we have done but little compared to what we ought to have done; and yet we say boldly, that both abroad and at home no Churchmen have done so much good to souls as those who are called Evangelical. What Sierra Leone can the extreme Ritualists place before us as the result of their system? What Tinnevelly bears testimony to the truth of their school? What manufacturing towns have they rescued from semi-heathenism? What mining districts have they Christianized? What teeming populations of poor in our large cities can they point to, as evangelized by their agencies? We boldly challenge a reply. Let them come forward and name them. In the day when Evangelical Religion is cast out of the Church of England, the usefulness of the Church will be ended and gone. Nothing gives the Church of England such power and influence as genuine, well-worked, well-administered Evangelical Religion.

But it is a religion that can only be preserved amongst us just now by a great effort, and a mighty struggle. For our nation's sake, for our children's sake, for the world's sake, for the honour and glory of our God, let us gird up the loins of our minds, and resolve that the struggle shall be made.

It is a struggle, we can honestly call the world to witness, which is not one of our seeking. The controversy is thrust upon us, whether we like it or not. We are driven to a painful dilemma. We must either sit by in silence, like sneaks and cowards, and let the Church of England be unprotestantized and re-united with Rome; or else we must basely desert the dear old Church and let traitors work their will; or else we must look the danger manfully in the face, and fight!-Our fight, of course, is to be carried on with the same Word that Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley fought with, and not with carnal weapons. But as they did, so must we do: we must stand up and fight. Yes! even if a secession of our antagonists is the consequence, we must not shrink from fighting. Let every man go to the place that suits him best. Let Papists join the Pope, and Romanists retire to Rome.4 But if we want our Church to continue Protestant and Evangelical, we must not be afraid to fight. There are times when there is a mine of deep meaning in our Lord's words,-“He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.” (Luke 22:36) To such times we have come.

Does any one ask me what is to be done? I answer that the path of duty, to my mind, is clear, plain, and unmistakable. Union and organization of all Protestant and Evangelical Churchmen,-untiring exposure of the Popish dealings of our antagonists, by the pulpit, the platform, and the press, lawsuits whenever there is a reasonable hope of success,-appeals to Parliament for declarative statutes, and the reform of our Ecclesiastical courts,-bold, decided, prompt action, the moment any necessity requires,-these are the weapons of our warfare. They are weapons which, from one end of the country to the other, we ought to wield, boldly, untiringly, unflinchingly, be the sacrifice and cost what it may. But I say, “No surrender! No desertion! No compromise! No disgraceful peace!”

Let us then resolve to “contend earnestly for the faith.” By preaching and by praying, by pulpit and by platform, by pen and by tongue, by printing and by speaking, let us labour to maintain Evangelical Religion within the Church of England, and to resist the enemies which we see around us.-We are not weak if we stand together and act together. The middle classes and the poor are yet sound at heart. They do not love Popery. God Himself has not forsaken us, and truth is on our side. But, be the issue of the conflict what it may, let us nail our colours to the mast; and, if need be, go down with our colours flying. Let us only settle it deeply in our minds, that without Protestant and Evangelical principles, a Church is as useless as a well without water. In one word, when the Church of England becomes Popish once more, it will be a Church not worth preserving.

FOOTNOTES

1 Beneath this tripartite division there are, no doubt, many sub-divisions, and subordinate shades of difference. There is certainly a very distinct line of demarcation between the old High Church party and the modern Ritualistic section of the Church of England.

2 Of course my readers will understand that, throughout this paper, I am only expressing my own individual opinion. I do not for a moment pretend to be a mouthpiece of the Evangelical party, or to speak for anybody but myself. Indeed I am not sure that all who are called Evangelical will agree with all that this paper contains. I am only describing what I, personally, believe to be the leading sentiments of most Evangelical Churchmen, and my description must be taken for what it is worth.

3 I am aware that this paragraph is likely to be misinterpreted, and may give offence. A captious reader may say that I consider keeping Lent and saints' days and fasts is wrong. I beg to remind

him that I say nothing of the kind. I only say that these things do not constitute Christian holiness. I will go even further I will say that the history of the last three hundred years in England does not incline me to think that these things, however well meant, are conducive to real holiness.

I am quite sure that the substance of this paragraph is imperatively demanded by the times. Things have come to this pass in England that thousands of Churchmen are making the whole of religion to consist in externals. Against such a religion, as long as I live, I desire to protest. It may suit an Italian bandit, who oscillates between Lent and Carnival, between fasting and robbing. It ought never to satisfy a Bible-reading Christian. It is the religion that the natural heart likes, but it is not the religion of God.

When I speak of an “ostentatious” observance of Lent, I do it with a reason. There are hundreds of people who “scruple” at weddings and dinner parties in Lent, but rush to balls, theatres, and races as soon as Lent is over! If this is Christian holiness, we may throw our Bibles to the winds.

4 I trust that no one will misunderstand me here. If any one supposes that I want to narrow the pale of the Church of England, and to make it the Church of one particular party, he is totally mistaken. I am quite aware that my Church is eminently liberal, truly comprehensive, and tolerant of wide differences of opinion. But I deny that the Church ever meant its members to be downright Papists.

The Church has always found room in its ranks for men of very different schools of thought. There has been room for Ridley, and room for Hooper, room for Jewell, and room for Hooker,-room for Whitgift, and room for Tillotson,-room for Usher, and room for Jeremy Taylor,-room for Davenant, and room for Andrews,-room for Waterland, and room for Beveridge,-room for Chillingworth, and room for Bull,-room for Whitby, and room for Scott,-room for Toplady, and room for Fletcher. Where is the Churchman who would like any one of these men to have been shut out of the Church of England? If there is such an one, I do not agree with him.

But if any man wants me to believe that our Church ever meant to allow its clergy to teach the Romish doctrine of the Real Presence, the sacrifice of the Mass, and the practice of auricular confession, without let or hindrance, I tell him plainly that I cannot believe it. My common sense revolts against it. I would as soon believe that black is white, or that two and two make five.

Between the old High Churchman and the Ritualists I draw a broad line of distinction. With all his faults and mistakes, in my judgment, the old High Churchman is a true Churchman, and is thoroughly and heartily opposed to Popery. The Ritualists, on the other hand, scorn the very name of Protestant; and, if words mean anything, are so like Roman Catholics, that a plain man can see no difference between their tenets and those of Rome.

Chapter 29

Faith and Assurance

FAITH AND ASSURANCE.

by

Bishop J. C. Ryle D.D.

READER,

If you are a thoughtless, careless man about your soul, you will take no interest in the subject of this tract. Faith and assurance are mere names and words to you: they are neither land, nor money, nor horses, nor dress, nor meat, nor drink: like Gallio, you care not for them. Alas, poor soul! I mourn over you. The day will come when you will think differently.

Reader, if you really desire to go to heaven, and to go there in the Bible way, you will find the subject of this tract of the deepest importance. Believe me, your own comfort in religion, and your peace of conscience, depend exceedingly on understanding the matter about which I am going to speak.

I say then, that faith in Christ, and a full assurance of being saved by Christ, are two distinct things.

A man may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope, like the Apostle Paul. To believe, and have a glimmering hope of acceptance, is one thing; to have joy and peace in our believing, and abound in hope, is quite another. All God's children have faith: not all have assurance. I think this ought never to be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different opinion: I believe that many excellent ministers do not allow the distinction I have stated; but I desire to call no man master. I dread as much as anyone the idea of healing the wounds of conscience slightly; but I should think any other view than that I have given a most uncomfortable gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep souls back a long time from the gate of life.

I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad, or to discourage one fainting child of God, or to give a soul the impression that you have no part or lot in Christ, except you feel assurance.

I do not shrink from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ,¾really to lay hold on Him,¾really to trust in Him,¾really to be a child of God,¾really to be saved; and yet to his last day be never free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

"A letter," says an old writer, "may be written which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it."

A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches,¾live childish, die childish, and never know the greatness of his possessions.

And so also a man may be a babe in Christ's family; think as a babe, speak as a babe, and, though saved, never enjoy a lively hope, or know the full privileges of his inheritance.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ a man must have, beyond all question, if he is to be saved. I know no other way of access to the Father: I see no intimation of mercy excepting through Christ. A man must feel his sins and lost estate,¾must come to Jesus for pardon and salvation,¾must rest his hope on Him and on Him alone. But if he only have faith to do this, however weak and feeble that faith may be, I will engage, from Scripture warrants, he shall not miss heaven.

Never, never let us curtail the freeness of the glorious gospel, or clip its fair proportions. Never let us make the gate more strait, and the way more narrow, than pride or love of sin have made it already. The Lord Jesus is very pitiful and of tender mercy. He does not regard the quantity of faith, but the quality¾He does not measure its degree, but its truth. He will not break any bruised reed, nor quench any smoking flax. He will never let it be said that any perished at the foot of the cross. "Him that cometh unto Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).1

Yes, reader! though a man's faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, if it only brings him to Christ, and enables him to touch the hem of His garment, he shall be saved: saved as surely as the oldest saint in paradise; saved as completely and eternally as Peter, or John, or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification: in our justification there are none. What is written is written, and shall never fail: "Whosoever believeth on Him,"¾not whosoever has a strong and mighty faith,¾ "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 10:11).

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no full assurance of his pardon and acceptance with God. He may be troubled with fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt. He may have many a question and many an anxiety,¾many a struggle, and many a misgiving,¾clouds and darkness,¾storm and tempest to the very end.

I will engage, I repeat, that bare simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he may never attain to assurance; but I will not engage it shall bring him to heaven, with strong and abounding consolations. I will engage it shall land him safe in harbour, but I will not engage he shall enter that harbour under full sail, confident and rejoicing. I shall not be surprised if he reaches his desired haven weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely realising his own safety till he opens his eyes in glory.

Reader, I believe it is of great importance to keep in view this distinction between faith and assurance. It explains things which an inquirer in religion some times finds it hard to understand.

Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root;¾but it is no less certain you may have the root and not the flower.

Faith is that poor trembling woman who came behind Jesus in the press and touched the hem of His garment (Mark 5:25).¾Assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

Faith is the penitent thief crying, "Lord, remember me" (Luke 23:42).¾Assurance is Job sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25). "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:13).

Faith is Peter's drowning cry as he began to sink: "Lord, save me!" (Matthew 14:30).¾Assurance is the same Peter declaring before the Council, in after times, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12).

Faith is the anxious, trembling voice: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). ¾Assurance is the confident challenge: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth?" (Romans 8:33-34).

Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone (Acts 9:11).¾Assurance is Paul, the aged prisoner, looking calmly into the grave, and saying, "I know Whom I have believed," "There is laid up for me a crown" (2 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:8).

Faith is life. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death? And yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, and smileless to the very end.

Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigour, activity, energy, manliness, and beauty.

Reader, it is not a question of saved or not saved that lies before us, but of privilege or no privilege,¾it is not a question of peace or no peace, but of great peace or little peace,¾it is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ, it is one that belongs only to the school,¾it is between the first form and the last.

He that has faith does well. Happy should I be if I thought all readers of this tract had it. Blessed, thrice blessed are they that believe: they are safe; they are washed; they are justified. They are beyond the power of hell. Satan, with all his malice, shall never pluck them out of Christ's hands.

But he that has assurance does far better,¾sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy, even "the days of heaven upon the earth" (Deuteronomy 11:21).2

Reader, whoever you may be, I exhort you never to be satisfied with anything short of a full assurance of your own salvation. With faith, no doubt, you must begin,¾with simple, child-like faith: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But from faith go on to assurance. Rest not till you can say, "I know Whom I have believed."

Believe me, believe me, assurance is worth the seeking. You forsake your own mercies when you rest content without it. The things I speak are for your peace. It is good to be sure in earthly things; how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things!

Make it then your daily prayer that you may have an increase of faith. According to your faith will be your peace. Cultivate that blessed root more, and sooner or later, by God's blessing, you may hope to have the flower. You may not perhaps attain to full assurance at once: it is good sometimes to be kept waiting; we do not value things that we get without trouble. But though it tarry, wait for it. Seek on, and expect to find.

FOOTNOTES

1 “He that believeth on Jesus shall never be confounded. Never was any; neither shall you, if you believe. It was a great word of faith spoken by a dying man, who had been converted in a singular way, betwixt his condemnation and execution: his last words were these, spoken with a mighty shout¾‘Never man perished with his face towards Jesus Christ.’”¾Traill.

2 “The greatest thing that we can desire, next to the glory of God, is our own salvation; and the sweetest thing we can desire is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher than to be assured of that which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth: some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth.”¾Joseph Carlyle. 1658.

Chapter 30

Faith's Choice

FAITH'S CHOICE.

Hebrews 11:24-26.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." THE eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is a great chapter I need not tell you. I can well believe it must have been most cheering and encouraging to a converted Jew. I suppose none found so much difficulty in a profession of Christianity as the Hebrews did. The way was narrow to all, but pre-eminently so to them. The cross was heavy to all, but surely they had to carry double weight. And this chapter would refresh them like a cordial,-it would be as "wine to those of a heavy heart." Its words would be pleasant as the honey-comb, "sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."

The three verses I am going to explain are far from being the least interesting in the chapter. Indeed I think few, if any, have so strong a claim on our attention. And I will tell you why I say so.

It seems to me that the work of faith here spoken of, comes home more especially to our own case. The men of God who are named in the former part of the chapter are all examples to us, beyond question. But we cannot literally do what most of them did, however much we may drink into their spirit. We are not called upon to offer a literal sacrifice like Abel-or build a literal ark like Noah-or leave our country literally, and dwell in tents, and offer up our Isaac like Abraham. But the faith of Moses comes nearer to us. It seems to operate in a way more familiar to our own experience. It made him take up a line of conduct such as we must often take up ourselves in the present day, each in our own walk of life. And for this reason I think these three verses deserve more than ordinary consideration.

Now I have nothing but the simplest things to say about them. I shall only try to enforce upon you the greatness of the things Moses did, and the principle on which he did them. And then perhaps you will be better prepared for the practical instruction which the verses appear to hold out to every one who will receive it.

May the Holy Ghost bless the subject to us all! May He give us the same spirit of faith, that we may walk in the steps of Moses, do as he did, and share his reward!

I. First, then, I will speak of what Moses gave up and refused.

Moses gave up three things for the sake of his soul.

He felt that his soul would not be saved if he kept them, so he gave them up. And in so doing, I say that he made three of the greatest sacrifices that man's heart can make.

1. He gave up rank and greatness.

"He refused to be a called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." You all know his history. The daughter of Pharaoh had preserved his life, when he was an infant-adopted him and educated him as her own son.

If writers of history may be trusted, she was Pharaoh's only child. Men go so far as to say that in the common order of things Moses would one day have been king of Egypt. That may be, or may not-we cannot tell. It is enough for us to know that, from his connection with Pharaoh's daughter, Moses might have been, if he had pleased, a very great man. If he had been content with the position in which he found himself at the Egyptian court, he might easily have been among the first-if not the very first-in all the land of Egypt.

Think, reader, for a moment, how great this temptation was.

Here was a man of like passions with ourselves. He might have had as much greatness as earth can well give. Rank, power, place, honour, titles, dignities-all were before him, and within his grasp. These are the things for which many men are continually struggling. These are the prizes which there is such an incessant race in the world around us to obtain. To be somebody-to be looked up to-to raise themselves in the scale of society-to get a handle to their names-these are the things for which many sacrifice time, and thought, and health, and life itself. But Moses would not have them at a gift. He turned his back upon them. He refused them. He gave them up.

2. And more than this, he refused pleasure.

Pleasure of every kind, no doubt, was at his feet, if he had liked to take it up-sensual pleasure-intellectual pleasure-social pleasure-whatever could strike his fancy. Egypt was a land of artists-a residence of learned men-a resort of everyone who had skill, or science of any description. There was nothing which could feed the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life, which one in the place of Moses might not easily have commanded.

Think again, reader, how great was this temptation also.

This, be it remembered, is the one thing for which millions live. They differ, perhaps, in their views of what makes up real pleasure-but all agree in seeking first and foremost to obtain it. Pleasure and enjoyment in the holidays is the grand object to which a school boy looks forward. Pleasure and satisfaction in making himself independent, is the mark on which the young man in business fixes his eye. Pleasure and ease in retiring from business with a fortune, is the aim which the merchant sets before him. Pleasure and bodily comfort at his own house is the sum of the poor man's wishes. Pleasure and fresh excitement in politics, in travelling, in amusements, in company, in books-this is the goal towards which the rich man is straining. Pleasure is the shadow that all alike are hunting-high and low-rich and poor-old and young, one with another; each perhaps pretending to despise his neighbour for seeking it-each in his own way seeking it for himself-each secretly wondering that he does not find it-each firmly persuaded that somewhere or other it is to be found. This was the cup that Moses had before his lips. He might have drank as deeply as he liked of earthly pleasure. But he would not have it. He turned his back upon it. He refused it. He

gave it up

3. And more than this, he refused riches.

"The Treasures in Egypt" is an expression that seems to tell of wealth that he might have enjoyed had he been content to remain with Pharaoh's daughter. We may well suppose these treasures would have been a mighty fortune. Enough is still remaining in Egypt to give us some faint idea of the money at its king's disposal. The pyramids, and obelisks, and statues, are still standing there as witnesses. The ruins at Carnac, and Luxor, and Denderah, and many other places, are still the mightiest buildings in the world. They testify to this day that the man who gave up Egyptian wealth, gave up something which even our English minds would find it hard to reckon up.

Think once more, how great was this temptation.

Consider, reader, the power of money-the immense influence that the love of money obtains over men's minds. Look around you and see how men covet it, and what amazing pains and trouble they will go through to obtain it. Tell them of an island many thousand miles away, where something may be found which may be profitable if imported, and at once a fleet of ships will be sent to get it. Show them a way to make one per cent more of their money, and they will reckon you among the wisest of men-they will almost fall down and worship you. To possess money seems to hide defects-to cover over faults-to clothe a man with virtues. People can get over much, if you are rich. But here is a man who might have been rich, and would not. He would not have Egyptian treasures. He turned his back upon them. He refused them. He gave them up.

Such were the things that Moses refused-rank, pleasure, riches, all three at once.

Add to all this that he did it deliberately. He did not refuse these things in a hasty fit of youthful excitement. He was forty years old. He was in the prime of life. He knew what he was about. He weighed both sides of the question.

Add to it that he did not refuse them because he was obliged. He was not like the dying man, who tells us "He craves nothing more in this world;" and why?-Because he is leaving the world, and cannot keep it. He was not like the pauper, who makes a merit of necessity, and says, "He does not want riches;" and why? Because he cannot get them. He was not like the old man, who boasts "that he has laid aside worldly pleasures;" and why? Because he is worn out, and cannot enjoy them. No! reader. Moses refused what he might have kept, and gave up what he might have enjoyed. Rank, pleasure, and riches did not leave him, but he left them.

And then judge whether I am not right in saying that his was one of the greatest sacrifices mortal man ever made. Others have refused much, but none, I think, so much as Moses. Others have done well in the way of self-sacrifice and self-denial, but he excels them all.

II. And now let me go on to the second thing I wish to set before you. I will speak of what Moses chose.

I think his choice as wonderful as his refusal. He chose three things for his soul's sake. The road to salvation led through them, and he followed it; and in so doing he chose three of the last things that man is ever disposed to take up.

1. For one thing he chose suffering and affliction. He left the ease and comfort of Pharaoh's court, and openly took part with the children of Israel. They were an enslaved and persecuted people-an object of distrust, suspicion, and hatred; and the man who befriended them was sure to taste something of the bitter cup they were daily drinking.

To man's eye there seemed no chance of their deliverance from bondage without a long and doubtful struggle. A settled home and country for them must have appeared a thing never likely to be obtained, however much desired. In fact, if ever man seemed to be choosing pain, trials, poverty, want, distress, anxiety, perhaps even death, with his eyes open, Moses was that man.

Think only, reader, how wonderful was this choice.

Man naturally shrinks from pain. It is in us all to do so. We draw back by a kind of instinct from suffering, and avoid it if we can. If two courses of action are set before us, which both seem right, we always take that which is the least disagreeable to flesh and blood. We spend our days in fear and anxiety, when we think affliction is coming near us, and use every means to escape it. And when it does come, we often fret and murmur under the burden of it; and if we can but bear it patiently we count it a great matter indeed.

But look here. Here is a man of like passions with yourself, and he actually chooses affliction!

Moses saw the cup of suffering that was before him if he left Pharaoh's court, and he chose it, preferred it, and took it up.

2. But he did more than this, he chose the company of a despised people.

He left the society of the great and wise, among whom he had been brought up, and joined himself to the children of Israel. He who had lived from infancy in the midst of rank, and riches, and luxury, came down from his high estate, and cast in his lot with poor men-slaves, bondservants, oppressed, destitute, afflicted, tormented-labourers in the brick-kiln.

How wonderful, once more, was this choice!

Generally speaking we think it enough to carry our own troubles. We may be sorry for others whose lot is to be mean and despised-we may even try to help them-we may give money to raise them-we may speak for them to those on whom they depend; but here we generally stop.

But here is a man who does far more. He not merely feels for despised Israel, but actually goes down to them, adds himself to their society, and lives with them altogether. You would wonder if some great man in Grosvenor or Belgrave Square were to give up house, and fortune, and position in society, and go to live on a small allowance in some narrow lane in Bethnal Green, for the sake of doing good: yet this would convey a very faint and feeble notion of the kind of thing that Moses did. He saw a despised people, and he chose their company in preference to that of the noblest in the land. He became one with them,-their fellow, their associate, and their friend.

3. But he did even more. He chose reproach and scorn.

Who can conceive the torrent of mockery and ridicule that Moses would have to stem, in turning away from Pharaoh's court to join Israel.

Men would tell him he was mad, foolish, weak, silly, out of his mind; he would lose his influence; he would forfeit the favour and good opinion of all among whom he had lived.

Think again, reader, what a choice this was?

There are few things more powerful than ridicule and scorn. It can do far more than open enmity and persecution. Many a man who would march up to a cannon's mouth, or lead a forlorn hope, or storm a breach! has found it impossible to face the mockery of a few companions, and has flinched from the path of duty to avoid it. To be laughed at! To be made a joke of! To be jested and sneered at! To be reckoned weak and silly! To be thought a fool! There is nothing grand in all this, and they cannot make up their minds to undergo it.

Yet here is a man who made up his mind to it, and did not shrink from the trial. Moses saw reproach and scorn before him, and he chose them, and accepted them for his portion.

Such then were the things that Moses chose-affliction, the company of a despised people, and scorn.

Set down beside all this, that Moses was no weak, ignorant, illiterate person, who did not know what he was about. You are specially told he was a "learned" man, he was one "mighty in words and in deeds," and yet he chose as he did.

Set down, too, the circumstances of his choice. He was not obliged to choose as he did. None compelled him to take such a course. The things he took up did not force themselves upon him against his will. He went after them, they did not come after him. All that he did, he did of his own free choice, voluntarily and of his own accord.

And then judge whether it is not true that his choice was as wonderful as his refusal. Since the world began, I suppose, none ever made such a choice as the man Moses did in our text.

III. And now let me go on to a third thing:-let me speak of the principle which moved Moses, and made him do as he did.

How can this conduct of his be accounted for? What possible reason can be given for it? To refuse that which is generally called a good-to choose that which is commonly thought an evil-this is not the way of flesh and blood-this is not the manner of man-this requires some explanation. What will that explanation be?

You hear the answer in the text. I know not whether its greatness or its simplicity is more to be admired. It all lies in one little word, and that word is, "FAITH."

Moses had faith. Faith was the mainspring of his wonderful conduct. Faith made him do as he did, choose what he chose, and refuse what he refused. He did it all because he believed.

God set before the eyes of his mind His Own will and purpose. God revealed to him that a Saviour was to be born of the stock of Israel-that mighty promises were bound up in these children of Abraham, and yet to be fulfilled-that the time for fulfilling a portion of these promises was at hand-and Moses put credit in this, and believed. And every step in his wonderful career-every action in his journey through life, after leaving Pharaoh's court-his choice of seeming evil, his refusal of seeming good-all must be traced up to this fountain, all will be found to rest on this

foundation-God had spoken to him, and be had faith in God's word.

He believed that God would keep his promises: that what He had said He would surely do; and what He had covenanted He would surely perform.

He believed that with God nothing was impossible. Reason and sense might say that the deliverance of Israel was out of the question,-the obstacles were too many, the difficulties too great. But faith told Moses that God was all-sufficient. God had undertaken the work, and it would be done.

He believed that God was all wise. Reason and sense might tell him that his line of action was absurd; he was throwing away useful influence, and destroying the chance of benefiting his people, by breaking with Pharaoh's daughter. But faith told Moses that if God said, "Go this way," it must be the best.

He believed that God was all merciful. Reason and sense might hint that a more pleasant manner of deliverance might be found; that some compromise might be effected, and many hardships be avoided. But faith told Moses that God was love, and would not give His people one drop of bitterness beyond what was absolutely needed.

Faith was a telescope to Moses. It made him see the goodly land afar off-rest, peace, victory-when dim-sighted reason could only see trial and barrenness, storm and tempest, weariness and pain.

Faith was an interpreter to Moses. It made him pick out a comfortable meaning in the dark demands of God's handwriting, while ignorant sense could see nothing in it all but mystery and foolishness.

Faith told Moses that all this rank and greatness was of the earth, earthy; a poor, vain, empty thing, frail, fleeting, and passing away; and that there was no true greatness like that of serving God. He was the king, he the true nobleman who belonged to the family of God. It was better to be last in heaven, than first in hell.

Faith told Moses that worldly pleasures were pleasures of sin. They were mingled with sin-they led on to sin,-they were ruinous to the soul, and displeasing to God. It would be small comfort to have pleasure while God was against him. Better suffer and obey God, than be at ease and sin.

Faith told Moses that these pleasures after all were only for a season :-they could not last-they were all short-lived-they would weary him soon-he must leave them all in a few years.

Faith told him there was a reward in heaven for the believer far richer than the treasures in Egypt; durable riches, where rust could not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. The crown there would be incorruptible; the weight of glory would be exceeding and eternal; and faith bade him look away to that if his eyes were dazzled with Egyptian gold.

Faith told Moses that affliction and suffering were not real evils: they were the school of God, in which he trains the children of grace for glory; the medicines which are needful to purify our corrupt wills; the furnace which must burn away our dross; the knife which must cut loose the ties that bind us to the world.

Faith told Moses that this despised people were the people of God; that to them belonged the adoption, and covenant, and the promises, and the glory; that of them the seed of the woman was one day to be born, who should bruise the serpent's head; that the special blessing of God was upon them; that they were lovely and beautiful in his eyes; and that it was better to be a door-keeper among the people of God, than to reign in the palaces of wickedness.

Faith told Moses that all the reproach and scorn poured out on him was the reproach of Christ; that it was honourable to be mocked and despised for Christ's sake; that whoso persecuted Christ's people was persecuting Christ Himself; and that the day must come when His enemies would bow before Him and lick the dust.

All this, and much more, of which I cannot speak particularly, Moses saw by faith. These were the things he believed, and believing did what he did. He was persuaded of them, and embraced them, he reckoned them as certainties, he regarded them as substantial verities, he counted them as sure as if he had seen them with his eyes, he acted on them as realities, and this made him the man that he was.

Marvel not that he refused greatness, riches, and pleasure. He looked far forward. He saw with the eye of faith kingdoms crumbling into dust, riches making to themselves wings and fleeing away, pleasures leading on to death and judgment, and Christ only and His little flock enduring for ever.

Wonder not that he chose affliction, a despised people, and reproach. He beheld things below the surface. He saw with the eye of faith affliction lasting but for a moment, reproach rolled away, and ending in everlasting honour, and the despised people of God reigning as kings with Christ in glory.

And, reader, was he not right? Does he not speak to us, though dead, this very day? The name of Pharaoh's daughter has perished; the city where Pharaoh reigned is not known; the treasures in Egypt are gone: but the name of Moses is known wherever the Bible is read, and is still a standing witness that whoso liveth by faith, happy is he.

IV. And now let me wind up all by trying to set before you some practical lessons, which appear to me to follow from this text.

What has all this to do with us? some men will say. We do not live in Egypt, we have seen no miracles; we are not Israelites, we are weary of the subject.

Stay a little, reader, if this be the thought of your heart, and by God's help I will show you that all may lean here, and all may be instructed.

1. For one thing, if ever you would be saved, you must make the choice that Moses made,-you must prefer God before the world.

Reader, mark well what I say. Do not overlook this, though all the rest be forgotten. I do not say that the statesman must throw up his office, and the rich man forsake his property. Let no one fancy that I mean this. But I say, if a man would be saved, whatever be his rank in life, he must be prepared for tribulation; they must make up his mind to choose that which is evil, and to give up and refuse that which seems good.

I dare be sure this sounds strange language to some who read these pages. I know well you may have a certain form of religion, and find no trouble in your way. There is a common worldly kind of Christianity in this day, which many have, and think they have enough-a cheap Christianity which offends nobody, and requires no sacrifice, which costs nothing, and is worth nothing. I am not speaking of religion of this kind.

But if you really are in earnest about your soul, if your religion is something more than a mere fashionable cloak, if you are determined to live by the Bible, if you are resolved to be a New Testament Christian, then, I repeat, you will soon find you must carry a cross, you must endure hard things, you must suffer because of your soul, as Moses did, or you cannot be saved.

The world in the nineteenth century is what it always was. The hearts of men are still the same. The offence of the cross is not ceased. God's true people are still a despised little flock. True evangelical religion still brings with It reproach and scorn. A real servant of God will still be thought by many a weak enthusiast and a fool.

Reader, do you wish your soul to be saved? Then remember, you must choose wham you will serve. You cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot be on two sides at once. You cannot be a friend of Christ, and a friend of the world at the same time. You must come out from the children of this world, and be separate; you must put up with much ridicule, trouble, and opposition, or you are lost for ever. You must be willing to think and do things which the world considers foolish, and to hold opinions which are only held by a few. It will cost you something. The stream is strong, and you have to stem it. The way is narrow and steep, and it is no use saying it is not. But depend on it, there can be no saving religion without sacrifices and self-denial.

Now, reader, are you doing anything of this kind? I put it to your conscience in all affection and tenderness, are you, like Moses, preferring God to the world, or not? I beseech you not to take shelter under that dangerous word "we,"-"we ought," and "we hope," and "we mean," and the like. I ask you plainly, what are you doing yourself? Are you willing to give up anything which keeps you back from God? or are you clinging to the Egypt of the world, and saying to yourself "I must have it; I must have it; I cannot tear myself away? "What sacrifices are you making? Are you making any at all? Is there any cross in your Christianity? Are there any sharp corners in your religion, anything that ever jars and comes in collision with the earthly-mindedness around you, or is all smooth and rounded off, and comfortably fitted into custom and fashion? Do you know anything of the afflictions of the Gospel? Is your faith and practice ever a subject of scorn and reproach? Are you thought a fool by any one because of your soul? Have you left Pharaoh's daughter, and heartily joined the people of God? Are you venturing all on Christ? Search and see.

Reader, these are hard and rough sayings. I cannot help it. I believe they are founded on Scripture truths. I remember it is written, "There went great multitudes with Jesus; and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:25, Luke 14:27) Many, I fear, would like glory, who have no wish for grace-they would fain have the wages, but not the work, the harvest, but not the labour, the reaping, but not the sowing, the reward, but not the battle. But it may not be. As Bunyan says, "the bitter must go before the sweet." If there is no cross there will be no crown.

2. The second thing I will say is this-nothing will ever enable you to choose God before the world except faith.

Nothing else will do it. Knowledge will not; feeling will not; a regular use of outward forms will not; good companions will not. All these may do something, but the fruit they produce has no power of continuance, it will not last. A religion springing from such sources will only endure so long as there is no tribulation or persecution because of the word; but so soon as there is any, it will dry up. It is a clock without weights-its face may be beautiful, you may turn its fingers round, but it will not go.

A religion that is to stand must have a living foundation, and there is none other but faith.

Reader, have you got this faith? If you have, you will find it possible to refuse seeming good, and choose seeming evil-you will think nothing of to-day's losses, in the hope of to-morrow's gains-you will follow Christ in the dark, and stand by Him to the very last. If you have not, I warn you, you will never war a good warfare, and so run as to obtain-you will soon be offended and turn back to the world.

There must be a real belief that God's promises are sure and to be depended on, a real belief that what God says in the Bible is all true, and that every doctrine contrary to this is false, whoever may say it. There must be a real belief that all God's words are to be received, however hard and disagreeable to flesh and blood, and that His way is right, and all others wrong, this there must be, or you will never come out from the world, take up the cross, follow Christ and be saved.

You must learn to believe promises better than possession; things unseen better than things seen, things in heaven out of sight, better than things on earth before your eyes; the praise of the invisible God better than the praise of visible man. Then, and then only, you will make a choice like Moses, and prefer God to the world.

This was the faith by which the old saints obtained a good report. This was the weapon by which they overcame the world. This made them what they were.

This was the faith that made Noah go on building his ark, while the world looked on and mocked-and Abraham give the choice of the land to Lot, and dwell on quietly in tents-and Ruth cleave to Naomi, and turn away from her country and her gods-and Daniel continue in prayer, though he knew the lions' den was prepared-and the three children refuse to worship idols, though the fiery furnace was before their eyes. All these acted as they did because they believed. Well may the Apostle Peter speak of faith as "precious faith" (2 Peter 1:1).

8. The third thing I shall say is this, the true reason why so many are worldly and ungodly persons is, that they have no faith.

Reader, you must be aware that multitudes of professing Christians would never think for a moment of doing as Moses did. It is useless to speak smooth things, and shut our eyes to the fact. That man must, be blind who does not see thousands around him who are daily preferring the world to God-placing the things of time before the things of eternity-the things of the body before the things of the soul. You may not like to hear it, but so it is.

And why do they do so? No doubt they will all give us reasons and excuses. Some will talk of the snares of the world, some of the want of time, some of the peculiar difficulties of their position, some of the cares and anxieties of life, some of the strength of temptation, some of the power of passions, some of the effects of bad companions. But what does it come to after all? There is a far shorter way to account for the state of their souls, they do not believe. One simple sentence, like Aaron's rod, will swallow up all their excuses, they have no faith.

They do not really think what God says is true. They secretly flatter themselves with the notion, "It will surely not be fulfilled, all of it; there must surely be some other way to heaven besides that which ministers speak of; there cannot surely be so much danger of being lost." In short they do not put implicit confidence in the words that God has written and spoken, and so do not act upon them. They do not thoroughly believe in hell, and so do not flee from it; nor heaven, and so do not seek it; nor the guilt of sin, and so do not turn from it; nor the holiness of God, and so do not fear Him; nor their need of Christ, and so do not trust in Him, nor love Him. They do not feel confidence in God, and so venture nothing for Him. Like the boy Passion, in Pilgrim's Progress, they must have their good things now. They do not trust God, and so they cannot wait.

Reader, how is it with yourself? Do you believe all the Bible? Ask yourself that question. Depend on it, it is a much greater thing to believe all the Bible than many suppose. Happy is the man who can say, "I am a believer."

We talk of infidels sometimes as if they were the rarest people in the world. And I grant you that open avowed infidelity is happily not common now. But there is a vast amount of practical infidelity around us, for all that, which is as dangerous in the end as the principles of Voltaire and Paine. There are many who Sunday after Sunday repeat their creed, and make a point of declaring their belief in all that the Apostolic and Nicene forms contain, and yet these very persons will live all the week as if Christ had never died, and as if there were no judgment, and no resurrection of the dead, and no life everlasting at all. There are many who will say, "Oh, we know it all," when spoken to about eternal things, and the value of their souls; and yet their lives show plainly they know not anything as they ought to know; and the saddest part of their state is, that they think they do.

Reader, I warn you that knowledge not acted upon, in God's sight, is no knowledge at all. A faith that does not influence a man's practice is not worthy of the name. There are only two classes in the church of Christ-those who believe, and those who do not. The difference between the true Christian and the mere outward professor just lies in one' word; the true Christian is like Moses, "he has faith;" the professor has none. The true Christian believes, and therefore lives as he does; the mere professor does not believe, and therefore is what he is. Oh! where is your faith? Be not faithless, but believing.

4. The last thing I will say is this, the true secret of doing great things for God is, to have great faith.

I suspect that we are all apt to err a little on this point. We think too much, and talk too much about graces, and gifts, and attainments, and do not sufficiently remember that faith is the root and mother of them all. In walking with God, a man will go just as far as he believes, and no further. His life will always be proportioned to his faith. His peace, his patience, his courage, his zeal, his works-all will be according to his faith.

You read the lives of eminent Christians perhaps. Such men as Romaine, or Newton, or Martyn, Scott, or Simeon, or M'Cheyne; and you are disposed to say, "What wonderful gifts and graces these men had!" I answer, you should rather give honour to the mother-grace which God puts forward in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews-you should give honour to their faith. Depend on it, faith was the mainspring in the character of each and all.

I can fancy someone saying, "They were so prayerful; that made them what they were." I answer, why did they pray much? Simply because they had much faith. What is prayer, but faith speaking to God?

Another perhaps will say, "They were so diligent and laborious-that accounts for their success." I answer, why were they so diligent? Simply because they had faith. What is Christian diligence, but faith at work?

Another will tell me, "They were so bold-that rendered them so useful." I answer, why were they so bold? Simply because they had much faith. What is Christian boldness, but faith honestly doing its duty?

And another will cry, "It was their holiness and spirituality-that gave them their weight." For the last time I answer, what made them holy? Nothing but a living realizing spirit of faith. What is holiness, but faith visible and faith incarnate?

Now, dear reader, would you grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ? Would you bring forth much fruit? Would you be eminently useful? Would you be bright, and shine as a light in your day? Would you, like Moses, make it clear as noonday that you have chosen God before the world! I dare be sure that every believer will reply: "Yes! yes! yes! these are the things we long for and desire."

Then take the advice I give you this day:-go and cry to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the disciples did, "Lord, increase our faith." Faith is the root of a real Christian's character. Let your root be right, and your fruit will soon abound. Your spiritual prosperity will always be according to your faith. He that believeth shall not only be saved, but shall never thirst-shall overcome-shall be established-shall walk firmly on the waters of this world-and shall do great works.

Free Salvation

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short "Helmingham Series" tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you these three exactly word for word as they were first published about the middle of the last century, while J. C. Ryle was a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk.

FREE SALVATION.

READER,

Of all the doctrines of the Bible there is none so important as that of free salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. "He that believeth on Jesus is not condemned." "By Him all that believe are justified from all things."

This is the cornerstone of all Christianity. A mistake here is fatal: it is a worm at the root: it is a defect in the foundation. Let a man get wrong on this point, and his whole religion will get into confusion; let a man be right on this point, and he will never wander very far from the path of truth.

This is the doctrine for which we should contend to the very death. We should cling to it for our own soul's peace; we should seek it in the public means of grace we use. Better a thousand times take away the sun from heaven than take out of Christianity free forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ.

This is the glorious doctrine that was the strength of the Apostles when they went forth to the Gentiles to preach a new religion. They began, a few poor fishermen, in a despised corner of the earth; they turned the world upside down; they changed the face of the Roman empire; they emptied the heathen temples of their worshippers, and made the whole system of idolatry crumble away. And what was the weapon by which they did it all? It was free forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is the doctrine which brought light into Europe 300 years ago, at the time of the blessed Reformation, and enabled one solitary monk, Martin Luther, to shake the whole Church of Rome. Through his preaching and writing, the scales fell from men's eyes, and the chains of their souls were loosed. And what was the lever that gave him his power? It was free forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is the doctrine that revived our own Church in the middle of last century, when Whitefield, and the Wesleys, and Berridge, and Venn broke the wretched spirit of slumber that had come over the land, and roused men to think. They began a mighty work, with little seeming likelihood of success; they began, few in number, with small encouragement from the rich and great: but they prospered. And why? Because they preached free forgiveness through faith in Christ.

This is the doctrine which is the true strength of any Church on earth at this day. It is not orders, or endowments, or liturgies, or learning, that will keep a Church alive. Let free forgiveness through Christ be faithfully proclaimed in her pulpits, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her: let it be buried or kept back, and her candlestick shall soon be taken away. When the Saracens invaded the lands where Jerome and Athanasius, Cyprian and Augustine once wrote and preached, they found bishops and liturgies, I make no question; but I fear they found no preaching of free forgiveness of sins: and so they swept the Churches of those lands clean away. They were a body without a vital principle, and therefore they fell. Let us never forget the brightest days of a Church are those when Christ crucified is most exalted. The dens and caves of the earth, where the early Christians met to hear of the love of Jesus, were more full of glory and beauty in God's sight than ever was St. Peter's at Rome; the meanest barn, at this day, where the true way of pardon is offered to sinners, is a far more honourable place than the Cathedral of Cologne or Milan. A Church is only useful so far as she exalts free forgiveness through Christ.

This is the doctrine which of all others is the mightiest engine for pulling down the kingdom of Satan. The Greenlanders were unmoved so long as the Moravians told them of the creation and the fall of man; but when they heard of redeeming love, their frozen hearts melted like snow in spring. Preach salvation by the sacraments, exalt the Church above Christ, and keep back the doctrine of the atonement, and the devil cares little: his goods are at peace. But preach a full Christ and a free pardon, and then Satan will have great wrath, for he knows he has but a short time. John Berridge said he went on preaching morality, and nothing else, till he found there was not a moral man in his parish; but when he changed his plan, and began to preach the love of Christ to sinners, then there was a stirring of the dry bones, and a mighty turning to God. This is the only doctrine which will ever bring peace to an uneasy conscience, and rest to a troubled soul. A man may get on pretty well without it, so long as he is asleep about his spiritual condition; but once let him awake from his slumber, and nothing will ever calm him but the blood of atonement, and the peace of Christ. How any one can undertake to be a minister of religion without a firm grasp of this doctrine, I never can understand; for myself, I can only say, I should think my office a most painful one if I had not the message of free forgiveness to convey. It would be miserable work indeed to visit the sick and dying, if I could not say, "Behold the Lamb of God, —believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The right hand of a Christian minister is the doctrine of free forgiveness through faith in Christ. Give us this doctrine and we have power: we will never despair of doing good to men's souls. Take away this doctrine, and we are weak as water. We may read the prayers, and go through a round of forms, but we are like Samson with his head shorn; our strength is gone. Souls will not be benefited by us, and good will not be done.

Reader, I commend the things I have been saying to your notice. I am not ashamed of free pardon through faith in Christ, whatever some may say against the doctrine: I am not ashamed of it, for its fruits speak for themselves. It has done things that no other doctrine can do; it has effected moral changes which laws and punishments have failed to work,—which magistrates and policemen have laboured after in vain,—which mechanics' institutes and secular knowledge have proved utterly powerless to produce. Just as the fiercest lunatics in Bethlehem Hospital became suddenly gentle when kindly treated, even so the worst and most hardened sinners have often become as little children when told of Jesus loving them, and willing to forgive. I can well understand Paul ending his Epistle to the erring Galatians with that solemn burst of feeling: "God forbid that I should

glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14). The crown has indeed fallen from a Christian's head when he leaves the doctrine of justification by faith.

See now how you should ask yourself whether you have really received the truth which I have been dwelling on, and know it by experience. Jesus, and faith in Him, is the only way to the Father. He that thinks to climb into paradise by some other road, will find himself fearfully mistaken: other foundation can no man lay for an immortal soul than that of which I have been feebly speaking. He that ventures himself here is safe: he that is off this rock has got no standing ground at all.

See too how you should seriously consider what kind of a ministry you are in the habit of attending, supposing you have a choice. You have reason indeed to be careful: it is not all the same where you go, whatever people may say. There are many places of worship, I fear, where you might look long for Christ crucified, and never find Him; He is buried under outward ceremonies,—thrust behind the baptismal font,—lost sight of under the shadow of the Church. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." Take heed where you settle yourself. Try all by this single test: "Is Jesus and free forgiveness proclaimed here?" There may be comfortable pews,—there may be good singing,there may be learned sermons; but if Christ's Gospel is not the sun and centre of the whole place, do not pitch your tent there; say rather with Isaac, "Here is the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb?" Be very sure this is not the place for your soul.

Reader, remember these things, and you will be wise. I have set before you the way of life; I have told you where pardon is to be found. Oh, beware, lest having been told of free forgiveness you should come short of it, and never embrace it yourself! Settle it down in your mind, that if you are willing to partake of this free salvation the Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive you, and save you.

Does any man suppose that Jesus is not willing to see heaven filled? Do you think He does not desire to bring many sons to glory? Oh, but you little know the depth of His mercy and compassion, if you can think such a thought! He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem; He mourns over the impenitent and the thoughtless in the present day. He sends you invitations by my mouth this hour. He invites you to hear and live, to forsake the way of the foolish, and go in the paths of understanding: "As I live," He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Oh, reader, if you never came to Christ for life before, come to Him this very day. Come to Him with the penitent's prayer for mercy and grace; come to Him without delay. Come and drink of the water of life; come and be freely saved.

If you are determined to have the world and the things of the world,—its pleasures and its rewards, its follies and its sins; if you must have your own way, and cannot give up anything for Christ and your soul; if this be your case, there is but one end before you. I fairly warn you,—I plainly tell you,—you will sooner or later come to the unquenchable fire of hell.

But if any man is willing to be saved, the Lord Jesus Christ stands ready to save him. "Come unto Me," He says, "weary soul, and I will give you rest. Come, guilty and sinful soul, and I will give you free pardon. Come, lost and ruined soul, and I will give you eternal life. Come and be freely saved."

Oh, reader, let this message be a word in season! Arise and call upon the Lord. Let the angels of God rejoice over one more saved soul; let the courts of heaven hear the good tidings that one more lost sheep is found. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

Chapter 32

Farewall Address

J. C. Ryle's

Farewell to the Diocese.

Reverend and Dear Brethren,

Almost the last words of the great Apostle to the Gentiles are before the eyes of my mind today: 'I have finished my course; the time of my departure is at hand.' After filling unexpectedly the office of your Bishop for nearly twenty years, I am about to resign a post which years and failing health at the age of eighty-three told me I was no longer able to fill with advantage to the diocese or to the Church of England.

I have resigned my Bishopric with many humbled feelings. As I look back over the years of my episcopate, I am conscious that I have left undone many things which I hoped to have done when I first came to Liverpool. I am equally conscious that the many things I have had to do with-meetings, ordinations, confirmations, and consecrations-have been done very imperfectly. I only ask you to remember that I was sixty-four, and not a young man, when I first came here, and to believe that, amidst many difficulties, I have tried to do my duty. But I am thankful that our God is a merciful God.

I can truly say that my approaching separation from Liverpool will be a heavy wrench to me. I shall never forget you. I had ventured to hope that I might be allowed to end my days near the Mersey, and to die in harness. But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, and he has gradually taught me by failing health that the huge population of this diocese requires a younger and stronger Bishop.

Before I leave you I ask you to accept a few parting words from an old minister who has had more than fifty-eight years' experience, and during that time has seen and learned many things. It is written, 'Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom' (Job 32:7). Let me, then, charge all the clergy whom I am about to leave behind me never to neglect their preaching. Your districts and population may be comparatively small or large, but the minds of your people are thoroughly awake. They will not be content with dull, tame sermons. They want life, and light, and fire, and love in the pulpit as well as in the parish. Let them have plenty of it. Never forget that a lively, Christ-exalting minister will always have a church-going people.

Last, but not least, cultivate and study the habit of being at peace with all your brother ministers. Beware of divisions. One thing the children of the world can always understand if they do not understand doctrine. That thing is angry quarrelling and controversy. Be at peace among yourselves.

May God bless you all.

To the many lay Churchmen whom I shall leave behind in this diocese (knowing far less of them than I should have done if I had come among them a younger man), I can only send my best

wishes, and add my prayers that this diocese may have God's blessing both in temporal and spiritual prosperity. Cling to the old Church of England, my lay brethren, cling to its Bible, its Prayer-book, and its Articles. Let no charitable institution suffer. Consider the many poor and needy. Support missionary work at home and abroad. Help the underpaid clergy. Never forget that the principles of the Protestant Reformation made this country what she is, and let nothing ever tempt you to forsake them.

In a little time we shall all meet again; many, I hope, on the King's right hand and few on the left. Till that time comes I commend you to God and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. I remain, your affectionate Bishop and lasting friend,

J. C. LIVERPOOL.

THE PALACE, ABERCROMBY SQUARE,

February 1st, 1900.

[The following extract is taken from John Charles Ryle 1816-1900 by Marcus L. Loane pp.112-113. published 1983AD] His resignation took effect on March 1st and he and his daughter moved from Liverpool to Lowestoft a week or two later. He had bought a pleasant house overlooking the North Sea. Only a few weeks of life still remained; his strength was spent. On June 9th, he was only partly conscious and his daughter called the doctor and sent for her brothers. Only Herbert was able to arrive in time, for on Sunday, June 10th, in the eighty-fifth year of his age, Ryle was summoned to his reward. There was no pain; the end was calm: but for Herbert, it was “a blow to which nothing can be compared”. Eighteen months later, he wrote to a friend: “The father is the background of life: and when he is taken, the world looks a different place ... It never can be the same. This is ... only the very fresh recollection of my own experience last year when my father died.”

Ryle was buried beside his wife at All Saints' Church, Childwall, on the slope of a hill looking south across the Mersey into Cheshire. “The church,” so Herbert wrote, “was filled with clergy and gentry. The graveyard was crowded with poor people who had come in carts and vans and buses to pay the last honours to the old man who certainly had won their love.” The gravestone was engraved with two texts of which the second was a deliberate reminder of his conversion: “By grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8).

Hobson was the ordinary preacher at the provisional cathedral for the afternoon service on Sunday, June 17th.

Ryle, he said, “was great through the abounding grace of God. He was great in stature; great in mental power; great in spirituality; great as a preacher and expositor of God's most holy Word; great in hospitality; great in winning souls to God; great as a writer of Gospel tracts; great as an author of works which will long live... great as first Bishop of Liverpool. I am bold to say that perhaps few men in the nineteenth century did so much for God, for truth, for righteousness, among the English speaking race and in the world as our late bishop.” And no finer tribute could have been paid than in one brief phrase of Bishop Chavasse who spoke of him as “that man of granite with the heart of a child”.

Chapter 33

Few are Saved

[Chapter taken from “Old Paths“ 1900AD edition]

OLD PATHS BEING PLAIN STATEMENTS

OF SOME OF THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS OF CHRISTIANITY

BY “THE RIGHT REV. JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.

LATE LORD BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL.

Author of “ Knots Untied, “ “Practical Religion, “ etc.

“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”- 1 Corinthians 14:8.

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CHARLES MURRAY

I I LUDGATE SQUARE, E.C.

1900

FEW SAVED! BY JOHN CHARLES RYLE D.D.

“Are there few that be saved?“- Luke 13:23.

I TAKE it for granted that every reader of this paper calls himself a Christian. You would not like to be reckoned a deist, or an infidel. You profess to believe the Bible to be true. The birth of Christ the Saviour, the death of Christ the Saviour, the salvation provided by Christ the Saviour,-all these are facts which you have probably never doubted. But, after all, will Christianity like this profit you anything at last? Will it do your soul any good when you die? In one word,-Shall you be saved?

It may be you are now young, healthy and strong. Perhaps you never had a day's illness in your life, and scarcely know what it is to feel weakness and pain. You scheme and plan for future years, and feel as if death was far away, and out of sight. Yet, remember, death sometimes cuts off young people in the flower of their days. The strong and healthy of the family do not always live the longest. Your sun may go down before your life has reached its midday. Yet a little while, and you may be lying in a narrow, silent home, and the daisies may be growing over your grave. And then,

consider,-Shall you be saved?

It may be you are rich and prosperous in this world. You have money, and all that money can command. You have “honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.” But, remember, “riches are not for ever.” You cannot keep them longer than a few years. “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.” (Proverbs 27:24; Hebrews 9:27) And then, consider,-Shall you be saved?

It may be you are poor and needy. You have scarcely enough to provide food and raiment for yourself and family. You are often distressed for want of comforts, which you have no power to get. Like Lazarus, you seem to have “evil things” only, and not good. But, nevertheless, you take comfort in the thought that there will be an end of all this. There is a world to come, where poverty and want shall be unknown. Yet, consider a moment, Shall you be saved?

It may be you have a weak and sickly body. You hardly know what it is to be free from pain. You have so long parted company with health, that you have almost forgotten what it is like. You have often said in the morning, “Would God it were evening,” and in the evening, “Would God it were morning.” There are days when you are tempted by very weariness to cry out with Jonah, “It is better for me to die than to live.” (Jonah 4:3) But, remember, death is not all. There is something else beyond the grave. And then, consider, Shall you be saved?

If it was an easy thing to be saved, I would not write as I do in this volume. But is it so? Let us see.

If the common opinion of the world as to the number of the saved was correct, I would not trouble men with searching and hard questions. But is it so? Let us see. If God had never spoken plainly in the Bible about the number of the saved, I might well be silent. But is it so? Let us see.

If experience and facts left it doubtful whether many or few would be saved, I might hold my peace. But is it so? Let us see.

There are four points which I propose to examine in considering the subject before us.

I. Let me explain what it is to be saved.

II. Let me point out the mistakes which are common in the world about the number of the saved.

III. Let me show what the Bible says about the number of the saved.

IV. Let me bring forward some plain facts as to the number of the saved. A calm examination of these four points, in a day of widespread carelessness about vital religion, will be found of vast importance to our souls.

I. First of all let me explain what it is to be saved.

This is a matter that must be cleared up. Till we know this, we shall make no progress. By being “saved” I may mean one thing, and you may mean another. Let me show you what the Bible says it is to be “saved,” and then there will be no misunderstanding

To be saved, is not merely to profess and call ourselves Christians. We may have all the outward parts of Christianity, and yet be lost after all. We may be baptized into Christ's Church, go to Christ's table, have Christian knowledge,-be reckoned Christian men and women-and yet be dead

souls all our lives,-and at last, in the judgment day, be found on Christ's left hand, among the goats. No: this is not salvation! Salvation is something far higher and deeper than this. Now what is it?

(a) To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from the guilt of sin, by faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour. It is to be pardoned, justified, and freed from every charge of sin, by faith in Christ's blood and mediation. Whosoever with his heart. believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall have eternal life. This is the first part of salvation, and the root of all the rest. But this is not all.

(b) To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from the power of sin, by being born again, and sanctified by Christ's spirit. It is to be freed from the hateful dominion of sin, the world, and the devil, by having a new nature put in us by the Holy Ghost. Whosoever is thus renewed in the spirit of his mind, and converted, is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall enter into the glorious kingdom of God. This is the second part of salvation. Bit this is not all.

(c) To be saved, is to be delivered in the day of judgment, from all the awful consequences of sin. It is to be declared blameless, spotless, faultless, and complete in Christ, while others are found guilty, and condemned for ever. It is to hear those comfortable words,-”Come, ye blessed!” while others are hearing those fearful words, “Depart, ye cursed!” (Matthew 25:34, Matthew 24:41) It is to be owned and confessed by Christ, as one of His dear children and servants, while others are disowned and cast off for ever. It is to be pronounced free from the portion of the wicked,-the worm that never dies, the fire that is not quenched, the weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, that never ends. It is to receive the reward prepared for the righteous, in the day of Christ's second coming-the glorious body, the kingdom that is incorruptible, the crown that fadeth not away, and the joy that is for evermore. This is complete salvation. This is the “redemption” for which true Christians are bid to look and long. (Luke 21:28) This is the heritage of all men and women who believe and are born again. By faith they are saved already. In the eye of God their final salvation is an absolutely certain thing. Their names are in the book of life. Their mansions in heaven are even now prepared But still there is a fulness of redemption and salvation which they do not attain to while they are in the body. They are saved from the guilt and power of sin; but not from the necessity of watching and praying against it. They are saved from the fear and love of the world but not from the necessity of daily fighting with it. They are saved from the service of the devil; but they are not saved from being vexed by his temptations. But when Christ comes the salvation of believers shall be complete. They possess it already in the bud. They shall see it then in the flower.

Such is salvation. It is to be saved from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin. It is to believe and be sanctified now, and to be delivered from the wrath of God in the last day. He that has the first part in the life that now is, shall undoubtedly have the second part in the life to come. Both parts of it hang together. What God has joined together, let no man dare to put asunder, Let none dream he shall ever be saved at last, if he is not born again first. Let none doubt, if he is born again here, that he shall assuredly be saved hereafter.

Let it never be forgotten that the chief object of a minister of the Gospel is to set forward the salvation of souls. I lay it down as a certain fact that he is no true minister who does not feel this. Talk not of a man's orders! All may have been done correctly, and according to rule. He may wear

a black coat, and be called a “reverend” man. But if the saving of souls is not the grand interest-the ruling passion-the absorbing thought of his heart,-he is no true minister of the Gospel: he is a hireling, and not a shepherd. Congregations may have called him, but he is not called by the Holy Ghost. Bishops may have ordained him, but not Christ.

For what purpose do men suppose that ministers are sent forth? Is it merely to wear a surplice, and read the services, and preach a certain number of sermons? Is it merely to administer the sacraments, and officiate at weddings and funerals? Is it merely to get a comfortable living, and be in a respectable profession? No, indeed! we are sent forth for other ends than these. We are sent to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We are sent to persuade men to flee from the wrath to come. We are sent to draw men from the service of the world to the service of God, to awaken the sleeping,-to arouse the careless,-and “by all means to save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22)

Think not that all is done when we have set up regular services, and persuaded people to attend them. Think not that all is done, when full congregations are gathered, and the Lord's table is crowded, and the parish school is filled. We want to see manifest work of the Spirit among people, an evident sense of sin, a lively faith in Christ,-a decided change of heart, a distinct separation from the world, a holy walk with God. In one word, we want to see souls saved,-and we are fools and impostors, blind leaders of the blind,-if we rest satisfied with anything less.

After all the grand object of having a religion is to be saved. This is the great question that we have to settle with our consciences. The matter for our consideration is not whether we go to church or chapel,-whether we go through certain forms and ceremonies,-whether we observe certain days, and perform a certain number of religious duties. The matter is whether, after all, we shall be “saved.” Without this all our religious doings are weariness and labour in vain.

Never, never let us be content with anything short of a saving religion. Surely to be satisfied with a religion which neither gives peace in life, nor hope in death, nor glory in the world to come, is childish folly.

II. Let me, in the second place, point out the mistakes which are common in the world about the number of the saved.

I need not go far for evidence on this subject. I will speak of things which every man may see with his own eyes, and hear with his own cars.

I will try to show that there is a widespread delusion abroad about this matter, and that this very delusion is one of the greatest dangers to which our souls are exposed.

(a) What then do men generally think about the spiritual state of others while they are alive? What do they think of the souls of their relations, and friends, and neighbours, and acquaintances? Let us just see how that question can be answered.

They know that all around them are going to die, and to be .judged. They know that they have souls to he lost or saved. And what, to all appearance, do they consider their end is likely to be?

Do they think those around them are in danger of hell? There is nothing whatever to show they think so. They eat and drink together; they laugh, and talk, and walk, and work together. They

seldom or never speak to one another of God and eternity, of heaven and of hell. I ask any one, who knows the world, as in the sight of God, is it not so?

Will they allow that anybody is wicked or ungodly? Never, hardly, whatever may be his way of life. He may be a breaker of the Sabbath; he may be a neglecter of the Bible; he may be utterly without evidence of true religion. No matter! His friends will often tell you, that he may not make so much profession as some, but that he has a “good heart” at the bottom, and is not a wicked man. I ask any one, who knows the world, as in God's sight, is it not so?

And what does all this prove? It proves that men flatter themselves there is no great difficulty in getting to heaven. It proves plainly that men are of opinion that most persons will be saved.

(b) But what do men generally think about the spiritual state of others after they are dead? Let us just see how this question can be answered.

Men allow, if they are not infidels, that all who die have gone to a place of happiness, or of misery. And to which of these two places do they seem to think the greater part of persons go, when they leave this world?

I say, without fear of contradiction, that there is an unhappily common fashion of speaking well of the condition of all who have departed this life. It matters little, apparently, how a man has behaved while he lived. He may have given no signs of repentance, or faith in Christ; he may have been ignorant of the plan of salvation set forth in the Gospel; he may have shown no evidence whatever of conversion or sanctification; he may have lived and died like a creature without a soul. And yet, as soon as this man is dead, people will dare to say that he is “probably happier than ever he was in his life.” They will tell you complacently, they “hope he is gone to a better world.” They will shake their heads gravely, and say they “hope he is in heaven.” They will follow him to the grave without fear and trembling, and speak of his death afterwards as “a blessed change for him.” They may have disliked him, and thought him a bad man while he was alive; but the moment he is dead they turn round in their opinions and say they trust he is gone to heaven. I have no wish to hurt any one's feelings. I only ask any one, who knows the world, is it not true?

And what does it all prove? It just supplies one more awful proof that men are determined to believe it is an easy business to get to heaven. Men will have it that most persons are saved.

(c) But again, what do men generally think of ministers who preach fully the doctrines of the New Testament? Let us see how this question can be answered.

Send a clergyman into a parish who shall “declare all the counsel of God,” and “keep back nothing that is profitable.” Let him be one who shall clearly proclaim justification by faith, regeneration by the Spirit, and holiness of life. Let him be one who shall draw the line distinctly between the converted and the unconverted, and give both to sinners and to saints their portion. Let him frequently produce out of the New Testament a plain, unanswerable description of the true Christian's character. Let him show that no man who does not possess that character can have any reasonable hope of being saved. Let him constantly press that description on the consciences of his hearers, and urge upon them repeatedly that every soul who dies without that character will be lost. Let him do this, ably and affectionately, and after all, what will the result be?

The result will be, that while some few repent and are saved, the great majority of his hearers will not receive and believe his doctrine. They may not oppose him publicly. They may even esteem him, and respect him as an earnest, sincere, kind-hearted man, who means well. But they will go no further. He may show them the express words of Christ and His Apostles; he may quote text upon text, and passage upon passage: it will be to no purpose. The great majority of his hearers will think him “too strict,” and “too close,” and “too particular.” They will say among themselves, that the world is not so bad as the minister seems to think,-and that people cannot be so good as the minister wants them to be, and that after all, they hope they shall be all right at the last! I appeal to any minister of the Gospel, who has been any length of time in the ministry, whether I am not stating the truth. Are not these things so?

And what does it prove? It just makes one more proof that men generally are resolved to think that salvation is not a very hard business, and that after all most people will be saved.

Now what solid reason can men show us for these common opinions? Upon what Scripture do they build this notion, that salvation is an easy business, and that most people will be saved? What revelation of God can they show us, to satisfy us that these opinions are sound and true?

They have none, literally none at all. They have not a text of Scripture which, fairly interpreted, supports their views. They have not a reason which will bear examination. They speak smooth things about one another's spiritual state, just because they do not like to allow there is danger. They build up one another into an easy, self-satisfied state of soul, in order to soothe their consciences and make things pleasant. They cry “Peace, peace,” over one another's graves, because they want it to be so, and would fain persuade themselves that so it is. Surely against such hollow, foundationless opinions as these, a minister of the Gospel may well protest.

The plain truth is that the world's opinion is worth nothing in matters of religion. About the price of an ox, or a horse, or a farm, or the value of labour,-about wages and work, about money, cotton, coals, iron and corn, about arts, and sciences, and manufactures, about railways, and commerce, and trade, and politics, about all such things the men of the world may give a correct opinion. But we must beware, if we love life, of being guided by man's judgment in the things that concern salvation. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Let us remember, above all, that it never will do to think as others do, if we want to get to heaven. No doubt it is easy work to “go with the crowd” in religious matters. It will save us much trouble to swim with the stream and tide. We shall be spared much ridicule: we shall be freed from much unpleasantness. But let us remember, once for all, that the world's mistakes about salvation are many and dangerous. Unless we are on our guard against them we shall never be saved.

III. Let me show, in the third place, what the Bible says about the number of the saved.

There is only one standard of truth and error to which we ought to appeal. That standard is the Holy Scripture. Whatsoever is there written we must receive and believe: whatsoever cannot be proved by Scripture we ought to refuse.

Can any reader of this paper subscribe to this? If he cannot, there is little chance of his being moved by all any words of mine. If he can, let him give me his attention for a few moments, and I

will tell him some solemn things.

Let us look, then, for one thing, at one single text of Scripture, and examine it well. We shall find it in Matthew 7:13-14 :-“Enter ye in at the strait gate for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Now these are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are the words of Him who was very God, and whose words shall never pass away. They are the words of Him who knew what was in man, who knew things to come, and things past,-who knew that He should judge all men at the last day. And what do those words mean? Are they words which no man can understand without a knowledge of Hebrew or Greek? No: they are not! Are they a dark, unfulfilled prophecy, like the visions in Revelation, or the description of Ezekiel's temple? No: they are not! Are they a deep mysterious saying, which no human intellect can fathom? No: they are not! The words are clear, plain, and unmistakable. Ask any labouring man who can read, and he will tell you so. There is only one meaning which can be attached to them. Their meaning is, that many people will be lost, and few will be found saved.

Let us look, in the next place, at the whole history of mankind as respects religion, as we have it given in the Bible. Let us go through the whole four thousand years, over which the history of the Bible reaches. Let us find, if we can, one single period of time at which godly people were many, and ungodly people were few.

How was it in the days of Noah? The earth we are told expressly was “filled with violence.” The imagination of man's heart was only “evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5, Genesis 6:12) “All flesh had corrupted his way.” The loss of paradise was forgotten. The warnings of God, by Noah's month, were despised. And at length, when the flood came on the world and drowned every living thing, there were but eight people who had faith enough to flee for refuge to the ark! And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it in the days of Abraham, and Isaac, and Lot? It is evident that in the matter of religion they stood very much alone. The family from which they were taken was a family of idolaters. The nations among whom they lived were sunk in gross darkness and sin. When Sodom and Gomorrah were burned there were not five righteous people to be found in the four cities of the plain. When Abraham and Isaac desired to find wives for their sons, there was not a woman in the land where they sojourned to whom they could wish to see them married, And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel in the days of the Judges? No one can read the book of Judges, and not be struck with the sad examples of man's corruption which it affords. Time after time we are told of the people forsaking God, and following idols. In spite of the plainest warnings, they joined affinity with the Canaanites, and learned their works. Time after time we read of their being oppressed by foreign kings, because of their sins, and then miraculously delivered. Time after time we read of the deliverance being forgotten, and of the people returning to their former sins, like the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel in the days of the Kings? From Saul, the first king, down to Zedekiah, the last king, their history is a melancholy account of backsliding, and declension, and idolatry,-with a few bright exceptional periods. Even under the best kings there seems to have been a vast amount of unbelief and ungodliness, which only lay hid for a season, and burst out at the first favourable opportunity. Over and over again we find that under the most zealous king; “the high places were not taken away.” Mark how even David speaks of the state of things around him: “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.” (Psalms 12:1) Mark how Isaiah describes the condition of Judah and Jerusalem: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it.”-“Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and should have been like unto Gomorrah.” (Isaiah 1:5-9) Mark how Jeremiah describes his time: “ Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executed) judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.” (Jeremiah 5:1) Mark how Ezekiel speaks of the men of his times: “The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to become dross: all they are brass, and iron, and tin and lead in the midst of the furnace: they are even the dross of silver.” (Ezekiel 22:17-18) Mark what he says in the sixteenth and twenty-third chapters of his prophecy about the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the Jews when our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth? The words of Saint John are the best account of their spiritual state: “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” (John 1:11) He lived as no one born of woman had ever lived before,-a blameless, harmless, holy life. “He went about doing good.” (Acts 10:38) He preached as no one ever preached before. Even the officers of his enemies confessed, “Never man spake like this man.” (John 7:46) He did miracles to confirm His ministry, which, at first sight, we might have fancied would have convinced the most hardened. But, notwithstanding all this, the vast majority of the Jews refused to believe Him. Follow our Lord in all His travels over Palestine, and you will always find the same story. Follow Him into the city, and follow Him into the wilderness; follow him to Capernaum and Nazareth, and follow Him to Jerusalem; follow Him among Scribes and Pharisees, and follow Him among Sadducees and Herodians: everywhere you will arrive at the same result. They were amazed;-they were silenced;-they were astonished;-they wondered; but very few became disciples. The immense proportion of the nation would have none of His doctrine, and crowned all their wickedness by putting Him to death. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the world in the days of the Apostles? If ever there was a period when true religion flourished it was then. Never did the Holy Ghost call into the fold of Christ so many souls in the same space of time. Never were there so many conversions under the preaching of the Gospel as when Paul and his fellow labourers were the preachers. But still, it is plain from the Acts of the Apostles, that true Christianity was “everywhere spoken against.” (Acts 28:22) It is evident that in every city, even in Jerusalem itself, true Christians were a small minority. We read of perils of all kinds which the Apostles had to go through,-not only perils from without, but perils from within, not

only perils from the heathen, but perils from false brethren. We hardly read of a single city visited by Paul where he was not in danger from open violence and persecution. We see plainly, by some of his epistles, that the professing Churches were mixed bodies, in which there were many rotten members. We find him telling the Philippians a painful part of his experience, “Many walk, of whom I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things.” (Php_3:18-19) And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to this question. There can be no doubt what that answer must be.

I ask any honest-minded unprejudiced reader of the volume to weigh well the lessons of the Bible which I have just brought forward. Surely they are weighty and solemn, and deserve serious attention.

Let no one think to evade their force by saying that the Bible only tells the story of the Jews. Think not to comfort yourself by saying that “perhaps the Jews were more wicked than other nations, and many people were probably saved among other nations, though few were saved among the Jews.” You forget that this argument tells against you. You forget that the Jews had light and privileges which the Gentiles had not, and with all their sins and faults, were probably the holiest, and most moral nation upon earth. As to the moral state of people among the Assyrians, and Egyptians, and Greeks, and Romans, it is fearful to think what it must have been. But this we may be sure of, that if many were ungodly among the Jews, the number was far greater among the Gentiles. If few were saved in the green tree, alas, how much fewer must have been saved in the dry?

The sum of the whole matter is this: the Bible and the men of the world speak very differently about the number of the saved. According to the Bible, few will be saved: according to the men of the world, many.-According to the men of the world few are going to hell according to the Bible few are going to heaven.-According to the men of the world salvation is an easy business according to the Bible the way is narrow and the gate is strait.-According to the men of the world few will be found at last seeking admission into heaven when too late according to the Bible many will be in that sad condition, and will cry in vain, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” Yet the Bible was never wrong yet. The most unlikely and improbable prophecies about Tyre, Egypt, Babylon, and Nineveh, have all come true to the letter. And as in other matters, so it will be about the number of the saved. The Bible will prove quite right and the men of the world quite wrong.

IV. Let me show, in the last place, some plain facts about the number of the saved.

I ask particular attention to this part of the subject. I know well that people flatter themselves that the world is far better and wiser than it was 1800 years ago. We have churches, and schools, and books. We have civilization, and liberty, and good laws. We have a far higher standard of morality in society than that which once prevailed. We have the power of obtaining comforts and enjoyments which our forefathers knew nothing of. Steam, and gas, and electricity, and chemistry, have effected wonders for us. All this is perfectly true. I see it, and I am thankful. But all this does not diminish the importance of the question; Are there few or many of us likely to be saved?

I am thoroughly satisfied that the importance of this question is painfully overlooked. I am persuaded that the views of most people about the quantity of unbelief and sin in the world, are

utterly inadequate and incorrect. I am convinced that very few people, whether ministers or private Christians, at all realize how few there are in a way to be saved. I want to draw attention to the subject, and I will therefore bring forward a few plain facts about it.

But where shall I go for these facts? I might easily turn to the millions of heathen, who in various parts of the world are worshipping they know not what. But I shall not do so. I might easily turn to the millions of Mahometans who honour the Koran more than the Bible, and the false prophet of Mecca more than Christ. But I shall not do so. I might easily turn to the millions of Roman Catholics who are making the Word of God of none effect by their traditions. But I shall not do Son_1:1-17 shall look nearer home. I shall draw my facts from the land in which I live, and then ask every honest reader whether it be not strictly true that few are saved.

I invite any intelligent reader of these pages to imagine himself in any parish in Protestant England or Scotland at this day. Choose which you please, a town parish, or a country parish,-a great parish or a small. Let us take our New Testaments in our hands. Let us sift the Christianity of the inhabitants of this parish, family by family, and man by man. Let us put on one side any one who does not possess the New Testament evidence of being a true Christian. Let us deal honestly and fairly in the investigation, and not allow any one to be a true Christian who does not come up to the New Testament standard of faith and practice. Let us count every man a saved soul in whom we see something of Christ, some evidence of true repentance,-some evidence of saving faith in Jesus,-some evidence of real evangelical holiness. Let us reject every man in whom, on the most charitable construction, we cannot see these evidences, as one “weighed in the balances, and found wanting.” Let us apply this sifting process to any parish in this land, and see what the result would be.

(a) Let us set aside, first of all, those persons in a parish who are living in any kind of open sin. By these I mean such as fornicators, and adulterers, and liars, and thieves, drunkards, and cheats, and revilers, and extortioners. About these I think there can be no difference of opinion. The Bible says plainly, that “they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:21) Now will these persons be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind. In their present condition they will not.

(b) Let us set aside, in the next place, those persons who are Sabbath-breakers. I mean by this expression, those who seldom or never go to a place of worship, though they have the power, -those who do not give the Sabbath to God, but to themselves,- those who think of nothing but doing their own ways, and finding their own pleasure upon Sundays. They show plainly that they are not meet for heaven! The inhabitants of heaven would be company they could not like. The employments of heaven would be a weariness to them, and not a joy. Now will these persons be saved? The answer is clear to my mind: in their present condition they will not.

(c) Let us set aside, in the next place, all those persons who are careless and thoughtless Christians. I mean by this expression, those who attend many of the outward ordinances of religion, but show no signs of taking any real interest in its doctrines and substance. They care little whether the minister preaches the Gospel or not. They care little whether they hear a good sermon or not. They would care little if all the Bibles in the world were burned. They would care little if an Act of Parliament were passed forbidding anyone to pray. In short, religion is not the “one thing needful” with them. Their treasure is on earth. They are just like Gallio, to whom it mattered

little whether people were Jews or Christians: he “cared for none of these things.” (Acts 18:17) Now will these persons be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind: in their present condition they will not.

(d) Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who are formalists and self-righteous. I mean by this expression, those who value themselves on their own regularity in the use of the forms of Christianity, and depend either directly or indirectly on their own doings for their acceptance with God. I mean all who rest their souls on any work but the work of Christ, or any righteousness but the righteousness of Christ. Of such the Apostle Paul has expressly testified, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.” “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (Romans 3:20; 1 Corinthians 3:11)

And dare we say, in the face of such texts, that such as these will be saved? The answer is plain to my own mind: in their present condition they will not.

(e) Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who know the Gospel with their heads, but do not obey it with their hearts. These are those unhappy persons who have eyes to see the way of life, but have not will or courage to walk in it. They approve sound doctrine. They will not listen to preaching which does not contain it. But the fear of man, or the cares of the world, or the love of money, or the dread of offending relations, perpetually holds them back. They will not come out boldly, and take up the cross, and confess Christ before men. Of these also the Bible speaks expressly: “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”-“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” “If any man is ashamed of Me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.” (James 2:17; James 4:17; Luke 9:26) Shall we say that such as these will be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind: in their present condition they will not.

(f) Let us set aside, in the last place, all those who are hypocritical professors. I mean by that expression, all those whose religion consists in talk and high profession, and in nothing besides. These are they of whom the prophet Ezekiel speaks, saying, “With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” “They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him.”-They “have a form of godliness, but they have not the power” of it. (Ezekiel 33:31; Titus 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:5) They are saints at church, and saints to talk to in public. But they are not saints in private, and in their own homes; and worst of all, they are not saints in heart. There can be no dispute about such persons. Shall we say that they will be saved? There can only be one answer: in their present condition they will not.

And now, after setting aside these classes which I have described, I ask any sensible thinking reader to tell me how many persons in any parish in England will these be left behind? How many, after sifting a parish thoroughly and honestly, how many men and women will remain who are in a way to be saved? How many true penitents, how many real believer's in Christ, how many truly holy people will there be found? I put it to the conscience of every reader of this volume to give an honest answer, as in the sight of God. I ask you whether, after sifting a parish with the Bible in the fashion described, you can come to any conclusion but this,-that few persons, sadly few persons, are in a way to be saved?

It is a painful conclusion to arrive at, but I know not how it can be avoided. It is a fearful and tremendous thought, that there should be so many churchmen in England, and so many dissenters, so many seat-holders, and so many pew-renters, so many hearers, and so many communicants,-and yet, after all, so few in a way to be saved? But the only question is, Is it not true?-It is vain to shut our eyes against facts. It is useless to pretend not to see what is going on around us. The statements of the Bible and the facts of the world we live in will lead us to the same conclusion: Many are being lost, an, few being saved!

(a) I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because they think there is an immense quantity of death-bed repentance. They flatter themselves that multitudes who do not live religious lives will yet die religious deaths. They take comfort in the thought that vast numbers of persons turn to God in their last illness and are saved at the eleventh hour. I will only remind such persons that all the experience of ministers is utterly against the theory. People generally die just as they have lived. True repentance is never too late: but repentance deferred to the last hours of life is seldom true. A man's life is the surest evidence of his spiritual state, and if lives are to be witnesses, then few are likely to be saved.

(b) I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because they find it contradicts the mercy of God. They dwell on the love to sinners which the Gospel reveals. They point to the offers of pardon and forgiveness which abound in the Bible. They ask us if we maintain, in the face of all this, that only few people will be saved. I answer, I will go as far as any one in exalting God's mercy in Christ, but I cannot shut my eyes against the fact that this mercy profits no man so long as it is wilfully refused. I see nothing wanting, on God's part, for man's salvation. I see room in heaven for the chief of sinners. I see willingness in Christ to receive the most ungodly. I see power in the Holy Ghost to renew the most unholy. But I see on the other hand, desperate unbelief in man: he will not believe what he tells him in the Bible. I see desperate pride in man: he will not bow his heart to receive the Gospel as a little child. I see desperate sloth in man: he will not take the trouble to arise and call upon God. I see desperate worldliness in man: he will not loose his hold on the poor perishable things of time, and consider eternity. In short, I see the words of our Lord continually verified: “Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life” (John 5:40), and therefore I am driven to the sorrowful conclusion that few are likely to be saved.

(c) I know well that, many will not believe what I am saying, because they refuse to obey the evil there is in the world. They live in the midst of a little circle of good people: they know little of anything that goes on in the world outside that circle. They tell us the world is a world which is rapidly improving and going on to perfection. They count up on their fingers the number of good ministers whom they have heard and seen in the last year. They call our attention to the number of religious societies, and religious meetings, to the money which is subscribed, to the Bibles and tracts which are being constantly distributed. They ask its if we really dare to say, in the face of all this, that few are in the way to be saved. In reply, I will only remind these amiable people, that there are other people in the world besides their own little circle, and other men and women besides the chosen few whom they know in their own congregation. I entreat them to open their eyes, and see things as they really are. I assure them there are things going on in this country of ours of which they are at present in happy ignorance. I ask them to sift any parish or congregation in England, with the Bible, before they condemn me hastily. I tell them, if they will do this honestly, they will soon find that I am not far wrong, when I say that few are likely to be saved.

(d) I know well that many will not believe me, because they think such a doctrine very narrow-minded and exclusive. I utterly deny the charge. I disclaim any sympathy with those Christians who condemn everybody outside their own communion, and appear to shut the door of heaven against everybody who does not see everything with their eves. Whether Roman Catholics, or Episcopalians, or Free Churchmen, or Baptists, or Plymouth Brethren, whosoever does anything of this kind, I reckon him an exclusive man. I have no desire to shut up the kingdom of heaven against any one. All I say is, that none will enter that kingdom, except converted, believing, and holy souls; and all I take on myself to assert is, that both the Bible and facts combine to prove that such persons are few.

(e) I know well that many will not believe what I am saying, because they think it a gloomy, uncharitable doctrine. It is easy to make vague, general assertions of this kind. It is not so easy to show that any doctrine deserves to be called “gloomy and uncharitable” which is scriptural and true. There is a spurious charity, I am afraid, which dislikes all strong statements in religion, a charity which would have no one interfered with a charity which would have everyone let alone in his sills, a charity which, without evidence, takes for granted that everybody is in a way to be saved, a charity which never doubts that all people are going to heaven, and seems to deny the existence of such a place as hell. But such charity is not the charity of the New Testament, and does not deserve the name. Give me the charity which tries everything by the test of the Bible, and believes nothing and hopes nothing that is not sanctioned by the Word. Give me the charity which St. Paul describes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13:1, etc.): the charity which is not blind, and deaf, and stupid, but has eyes to see and senses to discern between him that feareth God and him that feareth Him not. Such charity will rejoice in nothing but “the truth,” and will confess with sorrow that I tell nothing but the truth when I say that few are likely to be saved.

(f) I know well that many will not believe me, because they think it presumptuous to have any opinion at add about the number of the saved. But will these people dare to tell us that the Bible has not spoken plainly as to the character of saved souls? And will they dare to say that there is any standard of truth except the Bible? Surely there can be no presumption in asserting that which is agreeable to the Bible. I tell them plainly that the charge of presumption doers not lie at my door. I say that he is the truly presumptuous man who, when the Bible has said a thing clearly and unmistakably, refuses to receive it.

(g) I know, finally, that many will not believe me, because they think my statement extravagant, and unwarrantable. They regard it as a piece of fanaticism, unworthy of the attention of a rational man. They look on ministers who make such assertions, as weak-minded persons, and wanting in common sense. I can bear such imputations unmoved. I only ask those who make them to show me some plain proof that they are right and I am wrong. Let them show me, if they can, that anybody is likely to get to heaven whose heart is not renewed, who is not a believer in Jesus Christ, who is not a spiritually-minded and holy man. Let them show me, if they can, that people of this description are many, compared with those who are not. Let them, in one word, point to any place on EARTH where the great majority of the people are not ungodly, and the truly godly are not a little flock. Let them do this, and I will grant they have done right to disbelieve what I have said. Till they do this, I must maintain the sorrowful conclusion, that few persons are likely to be saved. And now it only remains to make some practical application of the subject of this paper. I have set forth as plainly as I can the character of saved people. I have shown the painful delusions

of the world as to the number of the saved. I have brought forward the evidence of the Bible on the subject. I have drawn from the world around us plain facts in confirmation of the statements I have made.-May the Lord grant that all these solemn truths may not have been exhibited in vain!

I am quite aware that I have said many things in this paper which are likely to give offence. I know it. It must be so. The point which it handles is far too serious and heart-searching to be otherwise than offensive to some. But I have long had a deep conviction that the subject has been painfully neglected, and that few things are so little realized as the comparative numbers of the lost and saved. All that I have written, I have written because I firmly believe it to be God's truth. All that I have said, I have said, not as an enemy but as a lover of souls. You do not count him an enemy who gives you a bitter medicine to save your life. You do not count him an enemy who shakes you roughly from your sleep when your house is on fire. Surely you will not count me an enemy because I tell you strong truths for the benefit of your soul. I appeal, as a friend, to every man or woman into whose hands this volume has come. Bear with me, for a few moments, while I say a few last words to impress the whole subject on your conscience.

(a) Are there few saved? Then, shall you be one of the few? Oh, that you would see that salvation is the one thing needful! Health, and riches, and titles, are not needful things. A man may gain heaven without them. But what shall the man do who dies not saved? Oh, that you would see that, you must have salvation now, in this present life, and lay hold upon it for your own soul! Oh, that you would see that “saved” or “not saved” is the grand question in religion! High Church or Low Church, Churchman or Dissenter, all these are trifling questions in comparison. What a man needs in order to get to heaven is an actual personal interest in Christ's salvation. Surely, if you are not saved, it will be better at last never to have been born.

(b) Are there few saved? Then, if you are not one of the few already, strive to be one without delay. I know not who and what you are, but I say boldly, Come to Christ and you shall be saved. The gate that leads to life may be strait, but it was wide enough to admit Manasseh, and Saul of Tarsus, and why not you? The way that leads to life may be narrow, but it is marked by the footsteps of thousands of sinners like yourself. All have found it a good way. All have persevered, and got safe home at last. Jesus Christ invites you. The promises of the Gospel encourage you. Oh, strive to enter in without delay!

(c) Are there few saved? Then, if you are doubtful whether you are one of the few, make sure work at once, and be doubtful no more. Leave no stone unturned in order to ascertain your own spiritual state. Be not content with vague hopes and trusts. Rest not on warm feelings and temporary desires after God. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Oh, give me leave to say, that if you are content to live on uncertain about salvation, you live the maddest life in the world! The fires of hell are before you, and you are uncertain whether your soul is insured. This world below must soon be left, and you are uncertain whether you have a mansion prepared to receive you in the world above. The judgment will soon be set, and you are uncertain whether you have an Advocate to plead your cause. Eternity will soon begin, and you are uncertain whether you are prepared to meet God. Oh, sit down this day, and study the subject of salvation! Give God no rest till uncertainty has disappeared, and you have got hold of a reasonable hope that you are saved.

(d) Are there few that be saved? Then, if you are one, be thankful. Chosen and called of God, while thousands around you are sunk in unbelief,-seeing the kingdom of God, while multitudes

around you are utterly blind,-delivered from this present evil world, while crowds are overcome by its love and fear-taught to know sin, and God, and Christ, while numbers, to all appearance as good as you, live in ignorance and darkness. Oh, you have reason every day to bless and praise God! Whence came this sense of sin, which you now experience? Whence came this love of Christ this desire after holiness, this hungering after righteousness,-this delight in the Word? Has not free grace done it, while many a companion of your youth still knows nothing about it, or has been cut off in his sins? You ought indeed to bless God! Surely Whitefield might well say, that one anthem among the saints in heaven will be “Why me, Lord? Why didst Thou choose me?”

(e) Are there few that be saved? Then, if you are one, do not wonder that you often find yourself standing alone. I dare believe you are sometimes almost brought to a standstill, by the corruption and wickedness that you see in the world around you. You see false doctrine abounding. You see unbelief and ungodliness of every description. You are sometimes tempted to say, “Can I really be in the right in my religion? Can it really be that all these people are in the wrong?” Beware of giving way to thoughts like these. Remember, you are only having practical proof of the truth of your Master's sayings. Think not that His purposes are being defeated. Think not that His work is not going forward in the world. He is still taking out a people to His praise. He is still raising up witnesses to Himself, here and there, all over the world. The saved will yet be found to be a “multitude that no man can number,” when all are gathered together at last. (Revelation 7:9) The earth will yet be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. All nations shall serve Him: all kings shall yet delight to do Him honour. But the night is not yet spent. The day of the Lord's power is yet to come. In the mean time all is going on as He foretold 1100 years ago. Many are being lost and few saved.

(f) Are there few saved? Then, if you are one, do not be afraid of having too much religion. Settle it down in your mind that you will aim at the highest degree of holiness, and spiritual-mindedness, and consecration to God, that you will not be content with any low degree of sanctification. Resolve that, by the grace of God, you will make Christianity beautiful in the eyes of the world. Remember that the children of the world have but few patterns of true religion before them. Endeavour, as far as in you lies, to make those few patterns recommend the service of your Master. Oh, that every true Christian would recollect that he is set as a lighthouse in the midst of a dark world, and would labour so to live that every part of him may reflect light, and no side be dim!

(g) Are there few saved? Then, if you are one, use every opportunity of trying to do good to souls. Settle it down in your mind that the vast majority of people around you are in awful danger of being lost for ever. Work every engine for bringing the Gospel to bear upon them. Help every Christian machinery for plucking brands from the burning. Give liberally to every Society which has for its object to spread the everlasting Gospel. Throw all your influence heartily and unreservedly into the cause of doing good to souls. Live like one who thoroughly believes that time is short and eternity near, the devil strong and sin abounding,-the darkness very great and the light very small,-the ungodly very many and the godly very few,-the things of the world mere transitory shadows, and heaven and hell the great substantial realities. Alas, indeed, for the lives that many believers live! How cold are many, and how frozen,-how slow to do decided things in religion, and how afraid of going too far,-how backward to attempt anything new,-how ready to discourage a good movement,-how ingenious in discovering reasons why it is best to sit still,-how unwilling ever to allow that “the time” for active exertion is come,-how wise in finding fault,-how shiftless in devising

plans to meet growing evils! Truly a man might sometimes fancy, when he looks at the ways of many who are counted believers, that all the world was going to heaven, and hell was nothing but a lie.

Let us all beware of this state of mind! Whether we like to believe it or not, hell is filling fast,-Christ is daily holding out His hand to a disobedient people,-many, many are in the way to destruction, few, few are in the way to life. Many, many are likely to be lost. Few, few are likely to be saved.

Once more I ask every reader, as I asked at the beginning of this paper,-Shall you be saved? If you are not saved already, my heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may seek salvation without delay. If you are saved, my desire is that you may live like a saved soul, and-like one who knows that saved souls are few.

Form or Heart

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

FORM OR HEART?

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof"- 2 Timothy 3:5.

"He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

"But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."- Romans 2:28-29.

READER,

The question which heads this page deserves your serious attention at any time. I take it for granted that you have some religion. You are not an infidel. You profess and call yourself a Christian. Well, is your Christianity formal or spiritual? Is religion with you a matter of form, or a matter of the heart? Is it form or heart?

The question deserves especial notice in this age of the church and world. Never since the Lord Jesus Christ left the earth, was there so much formality and false profession, as there is at the present day. Now, if ever, we ought to examine ourselves, and search our religion, that we may know of what sort it is. Reader, let us find out whether our Christianity is a thing of form or a thing of heart.

I know no better way of unfolding the subject than by turning to a plain passage of the Word of God. Let us hear what St. Paul says about it. He lays down the following great principles in his Epistle to the Romans: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28-29). Three most instructive lessons appear to me to stand out on the face of that passage. Let us see what they are.

I. We learn, firstly, that formal religion is not religion, and a formal Christian is not a Christian in God's sight.

II. We learn, secondly, that the heart is the seat of true religion, and that the true Christian is the Christian in heart.

III. We learn, thirdly, that true religion must never expect to be popular. It will not have the "praise of man, but of God."

Let us thoroughly consider these great principles. Two hundred years have passed away since a mighty Puritan divine said, "Formality, formality, formality, is the great sin of England at this day, under which the land groans. There is more light than there was, but less life; more shadow, but less substance; more profession, but less sanctification." (Thomas Hall, on 2 Timothy 3:5. 1658). What would this good man have said if he had lived in our times?

I. We learn, first, that formal religion is not religion, and a formal Christian is not a Christian in God's sight.

What do I mean when I speak of formal religion? This is a point that must be made clear. Thousands, I suspect, know nothing about it. Without a distinct understanding of this point my whole paper will be useless. My first step shall be to paint, describe, and define. When a man is a Christian in name only, and not in reality,-in outward things only, and not in his inward feelings,-in profession only, and not in practice,-when his Christianity, in short, is a mere matter of form, or fashion, or custom, without any influence on his heart or life,-in such a case as this the man has what I call a "formal religion." He possesses indeed the form, or husk, or skin of religion, but he does not possess its substance or its power.

Look, for example, at those thousands of people whose whole religion seems to consist in keeping religious ceremonies and ordinances. They attend regularly on public worship. They go regularly to the Lord's table. But they never get any further. They know nothing of experimental Christianity. They are not familiar with the Scriptures, and take no delight in reading them. They do not separate themselves from the ways of the world. They draw no distinction between godliness and ungodliness in their friendships, or matrimonial alliances. They care little or nothing about the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel. They appear utterly indifferent as to what they hear preached. You may be in their company for weeks, and for anything you may hear or see on a week day, you might suppose they were infidels or deists. What can be said about these people? They are Christians undoubted, by profession; and yet there is neither heart nor life in their Christianity. There is but one thing to be said about them: They are formal Christians-their religion is a form.

Look in another direction, at those hundreds of people whose whole religion seems to consist in talk and high profession. They know the theory of the Gospel with their heads, and profess to delight in Evangelical doctrine. They can say much about the "soundness" of their own views, and the "darkness" of all who disagree with them; but they never get any further! When you examine their inner lives, you find that they know nothing of practical godliness. They are neither truthful, nor charitable, nor humble, nor honest, nor kind-tempered, nor unselfish, nor honourable. What shall we say of these people? They are Christians, no doubt, in name, and yet there is neither substance nor fruit in their Christianity. There is but one thing to be said: They are formal Christians-their religion is an empty FORM.

Such, reader, is the formal religion against which I wish to warn you this day. Here is the point about which I offer you a question. Here is a rock on which myriads on every side are making miserable shipwreck of their souls. One of the wickedest things that Machiavel ever said was this, "Religion itself should not be cared for, but only the appearance of it. The credit of it is a help; the

reality and use is a cumber." Such notions, reader, are of the earth, earthy. Nay, rather, they are from beneath; they smell of the pit. Beware of them, and stand upon your guard. If there is anything about which the Scripture speaks expressly, it is the sin and uselessness of formality.

Hear what St. Paul tells the Romans: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh" (Romans 2:28). These are strong words indeed! A man might be a son of Abraham according to the flesh, a member of one of the twelve tribes, circumcised the eighth day,-a keeper of all the feasts,-a regular worshipper in the temple,-and yet in God's sight not be a Jew! Just so a man may be a Christian by outward profession,-a member of a Christian Church,-baptized with Christian baptism, - an attendant on Christian ordinances,-and yet, in God's sight, not a Christian at all.

Hear what the prophet Isaiah says: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (Isaiah 1:11-15) These words, when duly weighed, are very extraordinary. The sacrifices which are here declared to be useless were appointed by God Himself. The feasts and ordinances which God says He "hates," had been prescribed by Himself. God Himself pronounces His own institutions to be useless when they are used formally and without heart in the worshipper. In fact they are worse than useless; they are even offensive and hurtful. Words cannot be imagined more distinct and unmistakable. They show that formal religion is worthless in God's sight. It is not worth calling religion.

Hear, lastly, what our Lord Jesus Christ says. We find Him saying of the Jews of His day, "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me" (Matthew 15:8-9). We see Him repeatedly denouncing the formalism and hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, and warning His disciples against it. Eight times in one chapter (Matthew 23:3) He says to them, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." For sinners of the worst description He always had a word of kindness, and held out to them an open door. But formalism, He would have us know, is a desperate disease, and must be exposed in the severest language. To the eye of the ignorant man a formalist may seem to have a very decent quantity of religion, though not perhaps of the best quality. In the eye of Christ, however, the case is very different. In His sight formality is no religion at all.

Reader, what shall we say to these testimonies of Scripture? It would be easy to add to them. They do not stand alone. If words mean anything, they are a clear warning to all who profess and call themselves Christians. They teach you plainly that as you dread sin and avoid sin, so you ought to dread formality and avoid formality. Formalism may take your hand with a smile, and look like a brother, while sin comes against you with sword drawn, and strikes at you like an open enemy. But both have one end in view. Both want to ruin your soul; and, of the two, formalism is

far the most likely to do it. Reader, if you love life, beware of formality in religion.

Nothing is so common. It is one of the great family diseases of the whole race of mankind. It is born with us, grows with us, and is never completely cast out of us till we die. It meets us in church and it meets us in chapel. It meets us among rich and it meets us among poor. It meets us among learned people and it meets us among unlearned. It meets us among Romanists and it meets us among Protestants. It meets us among High Churchmen and it meets us among Low Churchmen. It meets us among Evangelicals and it meets us among Tractarians. Go where we will, and join what Church we may, we are never beyond the risk of its infection. We shall find it among Quakers and Plymouth Brethren, as well as at Rome. The man who thinks that there is no formal religion in his own camp, at any rate, is a very blind and ignorant person. Reader, if you love life, beware of formality.

Nothing is so dangerous to a man's own soul. Familiarity with the form of religion, while we neglect its reality, has a fearfully deadening effect on the conscience. It brings up by degrees a thick crust of insensibility over the whole inner man. None seem to become so desperately hard as those who are continually repeating holy words and handling holy things, while their hearts are running after sin and the world. Landlords who only go to church formally, to set an example to their tenants,-masters who have family prayers formally, to keep up a good appearance in their households,-unconverted clergymen, who are every week reading prayers and lessons of Scripture in which they feel no real interest,- unconverted clerks, who are constantly reading responses and saying "Amen," without feeling what they say,-unconverted singers, who sing the most spiritual hymns every Sunday, merely because they have good voices, while their affections are entirely on things below,-all, all, all are in awful danger! They are gradually hardening their hearts, and searing the skin of their consciences. Reader, if you love your own soul, beware of formality.

Nothing, finally, is so foolish, senseless, and unreasonable. Can a formal Christian really suppose that the mere outward Christianity he professes will comfort him in the day of sickness and the hour of death? The thing is impossible. A painted fire cannot warm, and a painted banquet cannot satisfy hunger, and a formal religion cannot bring peace to the soul.-Can he suppose that God does not see the heartlessness and deadness of his Christianity? Though he may deceive neighbours, acquaintances, fellow-worshippers, and ministers with a form of godliness, does he think that he can deceive God? The very idea is absurd. He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He knows the very secrets of the heart. He will judge the secrets of men at the last day. He who said to each angel of the seven churches, "know thy works," is not changed. He who said to the man without the wedding garment, "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" will not be deceived by a little cloak of outward religion. Reader, if you would not be put to shame at the last day, once more I say, beware of formality.

II. I pass on to the second thing which I proposed to consider. The heart is the seat of true religion, and the true Christian is the Christian in heart.

The heart is the real test of a man's character. It is not what he says or what he does, by which the man may be always known. He may say and do things that are right from false and unworthy motives, while his heart is altogether wrong. The heart is the man. "As he thinketh in his heart so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

The heart is the right test of a man's religion. It is not enough that a man holds a correct creed of doctrine, and maintains a proper outward form of godliness. What is his heart?-That is the grand question. This is what God looks at. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). This is what St. Paul lays down distinctly as the standard measure of the soul: "He is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart" (Romans 2:28). Who can doubt that this mighty sentence was written for Christians as well as for Jews? He is a Christian, the apostle would have us know, which is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart.

The heart is the place where saving religion must begin. It is naturally irreligious, and must be renewed by the Holy Ghost. "A new heart will I give unto you."-It is naturally hard, and must be made tender and broken. "I will take away the heart of stone, and I will give you a heart of flesh." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."-It is naturally closed and shut against God, and must be opened. The Lord "opened the heart" of Lydia (Ezekiel 36:26; Psalms 51:7; Acts 16:14).

The heart is the seat of true saving faith. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10). A man may believe that Jesus is the Christ, as the devils do, and yet remain in his sins. He may believe that he is a sinner, and that Christ is the only Saviour, and feel occasional, lazy wishes that he was a better man. But no one ever lays hold on Christ, and receives pardon and peace, until he believes with the heart. It is heart-faith that justifies.

The heart is the spring of true holiness and steady continuance in well doing. True Christians are holy because their hearts are interested. They obey from the heart. They do the will of God from the heart. Weak, and feeble, and imperfect as all their doings are, they please God, because they are done from a loving heart. He who commended the widow's mite more than all the offerings of the wealthy Jews regards quality far more than quantity. What He likes to see is, a thing done from an honest and good heart. There is no real holiness without a right heart.

Reader, the things I am saying may sound strange. Perhaps they run counter to all your notions. Perhaps you have thought that if a man's religion is correct outwardly, he must be one with whom God is well pleased. You are completely mistaken. You are rejecting the whole tenor of Bible teaching. Outward correctness without a right heart is neither more nor less than Phariseeism. The outward things of Christianity,-baptism, the Lord's Supper, Church-membership, almsgiving, and the like,-will never take any man's soul to heaven, unless his heart is right. There must be inward things as well as outward,-and it is on the inward things that God's eyes are chiefly fixed.

Hear how St. Paul teaches us about this matter, in three most striking texts. "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God" (Galatians 5:6; Galatians 6:5; 1 Corinthians 7:9). Did the Apostle only mean in these texts that circumcision was no longer needed under the Gospel? Was that all? No, indeed! I believe he meant much more. He meant that true religion did not consist of forms, and that its essence was something far greater than being circumcised or not circumcised. He meant that under Christ Jesus, everything depended on being born again,-on having true saving faith,-on being holy in life and conduct. He meant that these are the things we ought to look at chiefly, and not at outward

forms. "Am I a new creature? Do I really believe on Christ? Am I a holy man?" These are the grand questions that I must seek to answer.

When the heart is wrong, all is wrong in God's sight. Many right things may be done. The forms and ordinances which God Himself has appointed may seem to be honoured. But so long as the heart is at fault, God is not pleased. He will have man's heart or nothing.

The ark was the most sacred thing in the Jewish tabernacle. On it was the mercy-seat. Within it were the tables of the law, written by God's own finger. The High Priest alone was allowed to go into the place where it was kept, within the veil, and that only once every year. The presence of the ark with the camp was thought to bring a special blessing. And yet this very ark could do the Israelites no more good than any common wooden box, when they trusted to it like an idol, with their hearts full of wickedness. They brought it over into the camp, on a special occasion, saying, "Let us fetch the ark, that it may save us out of the hand of our enemies" (1 Samuel 4:3). When it came into the camp they showed it all reverence and honour. "They shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." But it was all in vain. They were smitten before the Philistines and the ark itself was taken. And why was this? It was because their religion was a mere form. They honoured the ark, but did not give the God of the ark their hearts.

There were kings of Judah and Israel who did many things that were right in God's sight, and yet were never written in the list of godly and righteous men. Rehoboam began well, and for three years walked in the way of David and Solomon" (2 Chronicles 11:17). But afterwards he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord" (2 Chronicles 12:14). Abijah, in Chronicles, said many things that were right, and fought successfully against Jeroboam. Nevertheless the general verdict is against him. We read, in Kings, that "his heart was not perfect with the Lord His God" (1 Kings 15:3). Amaziah, we are expressly told, "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart" (2 Chronicles 25:2). Jehu, King of Israel, was raised up, by God's command, to put down idolatry. He was a man of special zeal in doing God's work. But unhappily it is written of him, "he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin" (2 Kings 10:31). In short, one general remark applies to all these Kings. They were all wrong inwardly. They were rotten at heart.

There are places of worship at this very day, where all the outward things of religion are done to perfection. The building is beautiful. The service is beautiful. The singing is beautiful. The forms of devotion are beautiful. There is everything to gratify the senses. Eye, and ear, and natural sentimentality are all pleased. But all this time God is not pleased. One thing is lacking, and the want of that one thing spoils all. What is that one thing? It is heart! God sees, under all this fair outward show, the form of religion put in the place of the substance; and when He sees that He is displeased. He sees nothing with an eye of favour in the building, the service, the priest, or the people, if He does not see converted, renewed, broken, penitent hearts. Bowed heads, bended knees, loud amens, crossed hands, faces turned to the east,-all, all are nothing in God's sight, without right hearts.

When the heart is right, God can look over many things that are defective. There may be faults in judgment, and infirmities in practice. There may be many deviations from the best course in the outward things of religion. But if the heart is sound in the main, God is not extreme to mark that

which is amiss. He is merciful and gracious, and will pardon much that is imperfect, when He sees a true heart and a single eye.

Jehoshaphat and Asa were Kings of Judah, who were defective in many things. Jehoshaphat was a timid, irresolute man, who did not know how to say "No," and joined affinity with Ahab, the wickedest king that ever reigned over Israel. Asa was an unstable man, who at one time trusted in the King of Syria more than in God, and at another time was wroth with God's prophet for rebuking him (2 Chronicles 16:10). Yet both of them had one great redeeming point in their characters. With all their faults they had right hearts.

The passover kept by Hezekiah was one at which there were many irregularities. The proper forms were not observed by many. They ate the passover "otherwise than the commandment" ordered. But they did it with true and honest hearts. And we read that Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people" (2 Chronicles 30:18-20).

The passover kept by Josiah must have been far smaller and worse attended than scores of passovers in the days of David and Solomon, or even in the reign of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah. How then can we account for the strong language used in Scripture about it? "There was no passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the Kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present" (2 Chronicles 35:18). There is but one explanation. There never was a passover at which the hearts of the worshippers were so truly in the feast. The Lord does not look at the quantity of worshippers so much as the quality. The glory of Josiah's passover was the state of people's hearts.

There are many assemblies of Christian worshippers on earth, at this very day, in which there is literally nothing to attract the natural man. They meet in miserable dirty chapels, so-called, or in wretched upper rooms and cellars. They sing unmusically. They hear feeble prayers, and more feeble sermons. And yet the Holy Ghost is often in the midst of them! Sinners are often converted in them, and the kingdom of God prospers far more than in any Roman Catholic cathedral, or than many gorgeous Protestant churches. How is this? How can it be explained? The cause is simply thus: that in these humble assemblies heart-religion is taught and held. Heart-work is aimed at. Heart-work is honoured. And the consequence is, that God is pleased and grants His blessing.

Reader, I leave this part of my subject here. I ask you to weigh well the things that I have been saying: I believe that they will bear examination, and are all true. Resolve this day, whatever Church you belong to, to be a Christian in heart. Whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Baptist or Independent, be not content with a mere form of godliness. without the power. Settle it down firmly in your minds that formal religion is not saving religion, and that heart-religion is the only religion that leads to heaven.

I only give you one word of caution. Do not suppose because formal religion will not save, that forms of religion are of no use at all. Beware of any such senseless extreme. The misuse of a thing is no argument against the right use of it. The blind idolatry of forms which prevails in some quarters, is no reason why you should throw all forms aside. The ark, when made an idol of by

Israel and put in the place of God, was unable to save them from the Philistines. And yet the same ark, when irreverently and profanely handled, brought death on Uzza; and when honoured and reverenced, brought a blessing on the house of Obed Edom. The words of Bishop Hall are strong, but true: "He that hath but a form is a hypocrite; but he that hath not a form is an Atheist" (Hall's sermons, No. 28). Forms cannot save us, but they are not therefore to be despised. A lantern is not a man's home, and yet it is a help to a man if he travels towards his home in a dark night. Use the forms of Christianity diligently, and you will find them a blessing. Only remember, in all your use of forms, the great principle, that the first thing in religion is the state of the heart.

III. I come now to the last thing which I proposed to consider. I said that true religion must never expect to be popular. It will not have the praise of man, but of God.

Reader, I dare not turn away from this part of my subject, however painful it may be. Anxious as I am to commend heart-religion to every one who reads this tract, I will not try to conceal what heart-religion entails. I will not gain a recruit for my Master's army under false pretences. I will not promise anything which the Scripture does not warrant. The words of St. Paul are clear and unmistakable. Heart-religion is a religion "whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:29).

God's truth and Scriptural Christianity are never really popular. They never have been. They never will be as long as the world stands. No one can calmly consider what human nature is, as described in the Bible, and reasonably expect anything else. As long as man is what man is, the majority of mankind will always like a religion of form far better than a religion of heart.

Formal religion just suits an unenlightened conscience. Some religion a man will have. Atheism and downright infidelity, as a general rule, are never very popular. But a man must have a religion which does not require much,-trouble his heart much,-interfere with his sins much. Formal Christianity satisfies him. It seems the very thing that he wants.

Formal religion gratifies the secret self-righteousness of man. We are, all of us, more or less Pharisees. We all naturally cling to the idea that the way to be saved is to do so many things, and go through so many religious observances, and that at last we shall get to heaven. Formalism meets us here. It seems to show us a way by which we can make our own peace with God.

Formal religion pleases the natural indolence of man. It attaches an excessive importance to that which is the easiest part of Christianity,-the shell and the form.- Man likes this. He hates trouble in religion. He wants something which will not meddle with his conscience and inner life. Only leave conscience alone, and, like Herod, he will "do many things." Formalism seems to open a wider gate, and a more easy way to heaven (Mark 6:20). Facts speak louder than assertions. Facts are stubborn things. Look over the history of religion in every age of the world, and observe what has always been popular. Look at the history of Israel from the beginning of Exodus to the end of the Acts of the Apostles, and see what has always found favour. Formalism was one main sin against which the Old Testament prophets were continually protesting. Formalism was the great plague which had overspread the Jews, when our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world. Look at the history of the Church of Christ after the days of the Apostles. How soon formalism ate out the life and vitality of the primitive Christians -Look at the middle ages, as they are called. Formalism so completely covered the face of Christendom that the Gospel lay as one dead. Look, lastly, at the history of Protestant Churches in the three last centuries. How few are the places where religion is

a living thing! How many are the countries where Protestantism is nothing more than a form! There is no getting over these things. They speak with a voice of thunder. They all show that formal religion is a popular thing. It has the praise of man.

But why should we look at facts in history! Why should we not look at facts under our own eyes, and by our own doors? Can any one deny that a mere outward religion, a religion of downright formality, is the religion which is popular in England at the present day? Only say your prayers,-and go to church with tolerable regularity,-and receive the sacrament occasionally,-and the vast majority of Englishmen will set you down as an excellent Christian. "What more would you have?" they say: "If this is not Christianity, what is?" To require more of anyone is thought bigotry, illiberality, fanaticism, and enthusiasm! To insinuate a doubt whether such a man as this will go to heaven, is called the height of uncharitableness! Reader, when these things are so, it is vain to deny that formal religion is popular. It is popular. It always was popular. It always will be popular, till Christ comes again. It always has had, and always will have the praise of man.

Turn now to the religion of the heart, and you will hear a very different report. As a general rule, it has never had the good word of mankind. It has entailed on its professors laughter, mockery, ridicule, scorn, contempt, enmity, hatred, slander, persecution, imprisonment, and even death. Its lovers have been faithful and ardent,-but they have always been few. It has never had, comparatively, the praise of man.

Heart-religion is too humbling to be popular. It leaves natural man no room to boast. It tells him that he is a guilty, lost, hell-deserving sinner, and that he must flee to Christ for salvation. It tells him that he is dead, and must be made alive again, and born of the Spirit. The pride of man rebels against such tidings as these. He hates to be told that his case is so bad.

Heart-religion is too holy to be popular. It will not leave natural man alone. It interferes with his worldliness and his sins. It requires of him things that he loathes and abominates,-conversion, faith, repentance, spiritual-mindedness, Bible reading, prayer. It bids him give up many things that he loves and clings to, and cannot make up his mind to lay aside. It would be strange indeed if he liked it. It crosses his path as a kill-joy and a mar-plot, and it is absurd to expect that he will be pleased.

Was heart-religion popular in Old Testament times? We find David complaining,-"They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards" (Psalms 69:12). We find the prophets persecuted and ill-treated, because they preached against sin, and required men to give their hearts to God. Elijah, Micaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, are all cases in point. To formalism and ceremonialism the Jews never seem to have made objection. What they did dislike was serving God with their hearts.

Was heart-religion popular in New Testament times? The whole history of our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry, and the lives of His apostles, are a sufficient answer. The Scribes and Pharisees would have willingly received a Messiah who encouraged formalism, and a Gospel which exalted ceremonialism. But they could not tolerate a religion of which the first principles were humiliation and sanctification of heart.

Has heart-religion ever been popular in the professing Church of Christ during the last eighteen centuries? Never hardly, except in the early centuries when the primitive Church had not left her

first love. Soon, very soon, the men who protested against formalism and sacramentalism were fiercely denounced as "troublers of Israel." Long before the Reformation, things came to this pass, that any one who cried up heart holiness and cried down formality, was treated as a common enemy. He was either silenced, excommunicated, imprisoned, or put to death, like John Huss. -In the time of the Reformation itself, the work of Luther and his companions was carried on under an incessant storm of calumny and slander. And what was the cause? It was because they protested against formalism, ceremonialism, monkery, and priestcraft, and taught the necessity of heart-religion.

Has heart-religion ever been popular in our own land in days gone by? Never, excepting for a little season. It was not popular in the days of Queen Mary, when Latimer and his brother-martyrs were burned.-It was not popular in the days of the Stuarts, when to be a Puritan was worse for a man than to get drunk or swear.-It was not popular in the middle of last century, when Wesley and Whitfield were shut out of the Established Church. The cause of our martyred Reformers, of the early Puritans, and of the Methodists, was essentially one and the same. They were all hated because they preached the uselessness of formalism, and the impossibility of salvation without repentance, faith, regeneration, and holiness of heart.

Is heart-religion popular in England at this very day? I answer sorrowfully that I do not believe it! Look at the followers of it among the laity. They are always comparatively few in number. They stand alone in their respective congregations and parishes. They have to put up with many hard things, hard words, hard imputations, hard treatment, laughter, ridicule, slander, and petty persecution. This is not popularity! Look at the teachers of heart-religion in the pulpit. They are loved and liked, no doubt, by the few hearers who agree with them. They are sometimes admired for their talents and eloquence by the many who do not agree with them. They are even called popular preachers, because of the crowds who listen to their preaching. But none know so well as the faithful teachers of heart-religion that few really like them. Few really help them. Few sympathize with them. Few stand by them in any time of need. They find, like their Divine Master, that they must work almost alone. I write these things with sorrow, but I believe they are true. Real heart-religion at this day, no less than in days gone by, has not "the praise of man."

But after all it signifies little what man thinks, and what man praises. He that judgeth us is the Lord. Man will not judge us at the last day. Man will not sit on the great white throne, examine our religion, and pronounce our eternal sentence. Those only whom God commends will be commended at the bar of Christ. Here lies the value and glory of heart-religion. It may not have the praise of man, but it has "the praise of God."

God approves and honours heart-religion in the life that now is. He looks down from heaven, and reads the hearts of all the children of men. Wherever He sees heart-repentance for sin,-heart-faith in Christ,-heart holiness of life,-heart-love to His Son, His law, His will, and His word, wherever God sees these things He is well pleased. He writes a book of remembrance for that man, however poor and unlearned he may be. He gives His angels special charge over him. He maintains in him the work of grace, and gives him daily supplies of peace, hope, and strength. He regards him as a member of His own dear Son, as one who is witnessing for the truth, as His Son did. Weak as the man's heart may seem to himself, it is the living sacrifice which God loves, and the heart which He has solemnly declared He will not despise. Reader, such praise is worth more

than the praise of man!

God will proclaim His approval of heart religion before the assembled world at the last day. He will command His angels to gather together His saints, from every part of the globe, into one glorious company. He will raise the dead and change the living, and place them at the right hand of His beloved Son's throne. Then all that have served Christ with the heart shall hear Him say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: you were faithful over few things, and I will make you rulers over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord. Ye confessed Me before men, and I will confess you before My Father and His holy angels. Ye are they who continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom as My Father hath appointed unto Me." Reader, these words will be addressed to none but those who have given Christ their hearts! They will not be addressed to the formalist, the hypocrite, the wicked, and the ungodly. They will, indeed, stand by, and see the fruits of heart-religion, but they will not eat of them. We shall never know the full value of heart-religion until the last day. Then, and only then, we shall fully understand how much better it is to have the praise of God than the praise of man.

Reader, if you take up heart-religion, I cannot promise you the praise of man. Pardon, peace, hope, guidance, comfort consolation, grace according to your need, strength according to your day, joy which the world can neither give nor take away,-all this I can boldly promise to the man who comes to Christ, and serves Him with his heart. But I cannot promise him that his religion will be popular with man. I would rather warn him to expect mockery and ridicule, slander and unkindness, opposition and persecution. There is a cross belonging to heart-religion, and we must be content to carry it. "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom."-"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12). But if the world hates you, God will love you. If the world forsakes you, Christ has promised that He will never forsake and never fail. Reader, whatever you may lose by heart-religion, be sure that the praise of God will make up for all.

And now I close this tract with three plain words of application. I want it to strike and stick to the conscience of every one into whose hands it falls. May God make it a blessing to many a soul, both in time and eternity!

1. Reader, is your religion a matter of form and not of heart? Answer this question honestly, and as in the sight of God. If it is, consider solemnly the immense danger in which you stand.

You have got nothing to comfort your soul in the day of trial, nothing to give you hope on your death-bed, nothing to save you at the last day. Formal religion never took any man to heaven. Like base metal, it will not stand the fire. Continuing in your present state, you are in imminent peril of being lost for ever.

Reader, I earnestly beseech you this day to know your danger, to open your eyes and repent. Churchman or Dissenter, high church or low church, if you have only a name to live, and a form of godliness without the power, awake and repent. Awake, above all, if you are an Evangelical formalist. "There is no devil," said the quaint old Puritans, "like a white devil." There is no formalism so dangerous as Evangelical formalism.

I can only warn you. I do so with all affection. God alone can apply the warning to your soul. Oh, that you would see the folly as well as the danger of a heartless Christianity! It was sound advice which a dying man, in Suffolk, once gave to his son. "Son," he said, "whatever religion you have, never be content with wearing a cloak."

2. Reader, if your heart condemns you, and you wish to know what to do, consider seriously the only course that you can safely take.

Apply to the Lord Jesus Christ without delay, and spread before Him the state of your soul. Confess before Him your formality in time past, and ask Him to forgive it. Seek from Him the promised grace of the Holy Ghost, and entreat Him to quicken and renew your inward man.

The Lord Jesus is appointed and commissioned to be the Physician of man's soul. There is no case too hard for Him. There is no condition of soul He cannot cure. Seared and hardened as the heart of a formalist may be, there is balm in Gilead which can heal him, and a Physician who is mighty to save. Reader, go and call on the Lord Jesus Christ this very day. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9).

3. Reader, if your heart condemns you not, and you have real well-grounded confidence towards God, consider seriously the many responsibilities of your position.

Praise Him daily who hath called you out of darkness into light, and made you to differ. Praise Him daily, and ask Him never to forsake the work of His own hands.

Watch with a jealous watchfulness every part of your inward man. Formality is ever ready to come in upon us, like the Egyptian plague of frogs, even into the king's chamber. Watch, and be on your guard.-Watch over your Bible-reading, your praying,-your temper and your tongue, your family life and your Sunday religion. There is nothing so good and spiritual that we may not fall into formal habits about it. There is none so spiritual but that he may have a heavy fall. Watch, therefore, and be on your guard.

Look forward, finally, and hope for the coming of the Lord. Your best things are yet to come. The second coming of Christ will soon be here. The time of temptation will soon be past and gone. The judgment and reward of the saints shall soon make amends for all. Rest in the hope of that day. Work, watch, and look forward.-One thing, at any rate, that day will make abundantly clear. It will show that there was never an hour in our lives in which we gave our hearts too thoroughly to Christ.

Going to Table

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

BEING PLAIN PAPERS

ON THE DAILY DUTIES, EXPERIENCE, DANGERS, AND

PRIVILEGES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. BY JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

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GOING TO THE TABLE.

“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and

drink of that cup.”- 1 Corinthians 11:28. THE words which form the title of this paper refer to a subject of vast importance. That subject is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Perhaps no part of the Christian religion is so thoroughly misunderstood as the Lord's Supper. On no point have there been so many disputes, strifes, and controversies for almost 1800 years. On no point have mistakes done so much harm. Even at this very day the battle is still raging, and Christians seem hopelessly divided. The very ordinance which was meant for our peace and profit has become the cause of discord and the occasion of sin. These things ought not to be so!

I make no excuse for including the Lord's Supper among the leading points of practical Christianity. I believe firmly that ignorant views or false doctrine about this sacrament lie at the root of half the present divisions of professing Christians. Some neglect it altogether; some completely misunderstand it; some exalt it to a position it was never meant to occupy, and turn it into an idol. If I can throw a little light on it, and clear up the doubts of some minds, I shall feel very thankful. It is hopeless, I fear, to expect that the controversy about the Lord's Supper will ever be finally closed until the Lord comes. But it is not too much to hope that the fog and mystery and obscurity with which it is surrounded in some minds, may be cleared away by plain Bible truth.

In examining the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper I shall content myself with asking four practical questions, and offering answers to them.

I. Why was the Lord's Supper ordained?

II. Who ought to go to the Table and be communicants?

III. What may communicants expect from the Lord's Supper?

IV. Why do many so-called Christians never go to the Lord's Table?

I think it will be impossible to handle these four questions fairly, honestly, and impartially, without seeing the subject of this paper more clearly, and getting some distinct and practical ideas about some leading errors of our day. I say “practical” emphatically. My chief aim in this volume is to promote practical Christianity.

I. In the first place, why was the Lord's Supper ordained?

I answer that question in the words of the Church Catechism. I am sure I cannot mend them. It was ordained “for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.”-The bread which in the Lord's Supper is broken, given, and eaten, is meant to remind us of Christ's body given on the cross for our sins. The wine which is poured out and received, is meant to remind us of Christ's blood shed on the cross for our sins. He that eats that bread and drinks that wine is reminded, in the most striking and forcible manner, of the benefits Christ has obtained for his soul, and of the death of Christ as the hinge and turning point on which all those benefits depend.

Now is the view here stated the doctrine of the New Testament? If it is not, for ever let it be rejected, cast aside, and refused by men. If it is, let us never be ashamed to hold it fast, profess our belief in it, pin our faith on it, and steadfastly refuse to hold any other view, no matter by whom it is taught. In subjects like this we must call no man master. It signifies little what great Bishops and learned divines have thought fit to put forth about the Lord's Supper. If they teach more than the Word of God contains they are not to be believed.

I take down my Bible and turn to the New Testament. There I find no less than four separate accounts of the first appointment of the Lord's Supper. St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. Paul, all four describe it: all four agree in telling us what our Lord did on this memorable occasion.-Two only tell us the reason which our Lord assigned why His disciples were to eat the bread and drink the cup. St. Paul and St. Luke both record the remarkable words, “Do this in remembrance of Me.”-St. Paul adds his own inspired comment: “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew (or declare or proclaim) the Lord's death till He come.” (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:25-26) When Scripture speaks so plainly, why cannot men be content with it? Why should we mystify and confuse a subject which in the New Testament is so simple? The “continual remembrance of Christ's death” was the one grand object for which the Lord's Supper was ordained. He that goes further than this is adding to God's Word, and does so to the great peril of his soul.

Now, is it reasonable to suppose that our Lord would appoint an ordinance for so simple a purpose as the “keeping his death in remembrance”? Most certainly it is. Of all the facts in His earthly ministry none are equal in importance to that of His death. It was the great satisfaction for man's sin, which had been appointed in God's covenant from the foundation of the world. It was the great atonement of almighty power, to which every sacrifice of animals, from the fall of man, continually

pointed. It was the grand end and purpose for which Messiah came into the world. It was the corner-stone and foundation of all man's hopes of pardon and peace with God. In short, Christ would have lived, and taught, and preached, and prophesied, and wrought miracles in vain, if He had not crowned all by dying for our sins as our Substitute! His death was our life. His death was the payment of our debt to God. Without His death we should have been of all creatures most miserable. No wonder that an ordinance was specially appointed to remind us of our Saviour's death. It is the very one thing of which poor, weak, sinful man needs to be continually reminded.

Does the New Testament warrant men in saying that the Lord's Supper was ordained to be a sacrifice, and that in it Christ's body and blood are present under the forms of bread and wine? Most certainly not! When the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, “This is my Body,” and “this is my Blood,” He evidently meant, “This bread in my hand is an emblem of my Body, and this cup of wine in my hand contains an emblem of my Blood.” The disciples were accustomed to hear Him use such language. They remembered His saying, “The field is the world,” “The good seed are the children of the kingdom.” (Matthew 13:38) It never entered into their minds that He meant to say He was holding His own body and His own blood in His hands, and literally giving them His literal body and blood to eat and drink. Not one of the writers of the New Testament ever speaks of the sacrament as a sacrifice, or calls the Lord's Table an altar, or even hints that a Christian minister is a sacrificing priest. The universal doctrine of the New Testament is that after the one offering of Christ there remains no more need of sacrifice.1

Does the English Prayer-book warrant any Churchman in saying that the Lord's Supper was meant to be a sacrifice, and that Christ's body and blood are present under the forms of bread and wine? Once more I reply, Most certainly not! Not once is the word altar to be found in the Prayer-book: not once is the Lord's Supper called a sacrifice. Throughout the Communion Service the one idea of the ordinance continually pressed on our attention is that of a “remembrance” of Christ's death. As to any presence of Christ's natural body and blood under the forms of bread and wine, the rubric at the end of the Service gives the most flat and distinct contradiction to the idea. That rubric expressly asserts that “the natural body and blood of Christ are in heaven, and not here.” Those many Churchmen, so-called, who delight in talking of the “altar,” the “sacrifice,” the “priest,” and the “real presence” in the Lord's Supper, would do well to remember that they are using language which is entirely unused by the Church of England.

The point before us is one of vast importance. Let us lay hold upon it firmly, and never let it go. It is the very point on which our Reformers had their sharpest controversy with the Romanists, and went to the stake, rather than give way. Sooner than admit that the Lord's Supper was a sacrifice, they cheerfully laid down their lives. To bring back the doctrine of the “real presence,” and to turn the good old English communion into the Romish “mass,” is to pour contempt on our Martyrs, and to upset the first principles of the Protestant Reformation. Nay, rather, it is to ignore the plain teaching of God's Word, and do dishonour to the priestly office of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches expressly that the Lord's Supper was ordained to be “a remembrance of Christ's body and blood,” and not an offering. The Bible teaches that Christ's vicarious death on the cross was the one perfect sacrifice for sin, which never needs to be repeated. Let us stand fast in these two great principles of the Christian faith. A clear view of the intention of the Lord's Supper is one of the soul's best safeguards against the delusions of modern days.

II. In the second place, let me try to show who ought to be communicants? What kind of persons were meant to go to the Table and receive the Lord's Supper

It will clear the ground if I first show who ought not to be partakers of this ordinance. The ignorance which prevails on this, as well as on every part of the subject, is vast, lamentable, and appalling. If I can contribute anything that may throw light upon it, I shall feel very thankful. The principal giants whom John Bunyan describes, in “Pilgrim's Progress,” as dangerous to Christian pilgrims, were two, Pope and Pagan. If the good old Puritan had foreseen the times we live in, he would have said something about the giant Ignorance.

(a) It is not right to urge all baptized persons to become communicants. There is such a thing as fitness and preparedness for the ordinance. It does not work like a medicine, independently of the state of mind of those who receive it. The teaching of those who press all their congregation to come to the Lord's Table, as if the coming must necessarily do every one good, is entirely without warrant of Scripture. Nay, rather, it is teaching which is calculated to do immense harm to men's souls, and to turn the reception of the sacrament into a mere form. Ignorance can never be the mother of acceptable worship, and an ignorant communicant who comes to the Lord's Table without knowing why he comes, is altogether in the wrong place.-“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.”-“To discern the Lord's body,”-that is to understand what the elements of bread and wine represent, and why they are appointed, and what is the particular use of remembering Christ's death,-is an essential qualification of a true communicant. God “commands all men everywhere to repent” and believe the Gospel (Acts 17:30); but He does not in the same way, or in the same manner, command everybody to come to the Lord's Table. No, this thing is not to be taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, or carelessly! It is a solemn ordinance, and solemnly it ought to be used.

(b) But this is not all. Sinners living in open sin, and determined not to give it up, ought on no account to come to the Lord's Table. To do so is a positive insult to Christ, and to pour contempt on His Gospel. It is nonsense to profess we desire to remember Christ's death, while we cling to the accursed thing which made it needful for Christ to die. The mere fact that a man is continuing in sin, is plain evidence that he does not care for Christ, and feels no gratitude for redemption. The ignorant Papist, who goes to the priest's confessional and receives absolution, may think he is fit to go to the Popish mass, and after mass may return to his sins. He never reads the Bible, and knows no better! But the Englishman who habitually breaks any of God's commandments, and yet goes to the Sacrament, as if it would do him good and wipe away his sins, is very guilty indeed. So long as he chooses to continue his wicked habits he cannot receive the slightest benefit from Christ's ordinances, and is only adding sin to sin. To carry unrepented sin up to the Communion Rail, and there receive the bread and wine, knowing in our own hearts that we and wickedness are yet friends, is one of the worst things a man can do, and one of the most hardening to conscience. If a man must have his sins, and cannot give them up, let him by all means stay away from the Lord's Supper. There is such a thing as “eating and drinking unworthily,” and to our own “condemnation.” To no one do these words apply so thoroughly as to an open sinner.

(c) But I have not done yet. Self-righteous people, who think that they are to be saved by their own works, have no business to come to the Lord's Table. Strange as it may sound at first, these persons are the least qualified of all to receive the Sacrament. They may be outwardly correct,

moral and respectable in their lives, but so long as they trust in their own goodness for salvation, they are entirely in the wrong place at the Lord's Supper. For what do we declare at the Lord's Supper? We publicly profess that we have no goodness, righteousness, or worthiness of our own, and that all our hope is in Christ. We publicly profess that we are guilty, sinful, and corrupt, and naturally deserve God's wrath and condemnation. We publicly profess that Christ's merit and not our's, Christ's righteousness and not our's, is the alone cause why we look for acceptance with God. Now what has a self-righteous man to do with an ordinance like this? Clearly nothing at all. One thing, at any rate, is very plain: a self-righteous man has no business to receive the sacrament in the Church of England. The Communion Service of the Church bids all communicants declare that “they do not presume to come to the Table trusting in their own righteousness, but in God's manifold and great mercies.”-It tells them to say,-“We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table,”-“the remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable.”-How any self-righteous Church-man can ever go to the Lord's Table, and take these words into his mouth, passes my understanding! It only shows that many professing Christians use excellent “forms” of worship without taking the trouble to consider what they mean.

The plain truth is that the Lord's Supper was not meant for dead souls, but for living ones. The careless, the ignorant, the wilfully wicked, the self-righteous, are no more fit to come to the Communion rail than a dead corpse is fit to sit down at a king's feast. To enjoy a spiritual feast we must have a spiritual heart, and taste, and appetite. To suppose that Christ's ordinances can do good to an unspiritual man, is as foolish as to put bread and wine into the mouth of a dead person. The careless, the ignorant, and the wilfully wicked, so long as they continue in that state, are utterly unfit to be communicants. To urge them to attend is not to do them good but harm. The Lord's Supper is not a converting or justifying ordinance. If a man goes to the Table unconverted or unforgiven, he will come away no better at all.

But, after all, the ground having been cleared of error, the question still remains to be answered,-Who are the sort of persons who ought to be communicants? I answer that question in the words of the Church Catechism. I there find the inquiry made, “What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?” In reply I find it taught that people should “examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life;”-whether they “have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death;”-and whether they “are in charity with all men.”-In a word, I find that a worthy communicant is one who possesses three simple marks and qualifications,-repentance, faith, and charity. Does a man truly repent of sin and hate it? Does a man put his trust in Jesus Christ as his only hope of salvation? Does a man live in charity towards others? He that can truly say to each of these questions, “I do,” he is a man that is Scripturally qualified for the Lord's Supper. Let him come boldly. Let no barrier be put in his way. He comes up to the Bible standard of communicants. He may draw near with confidence, and feel assured that the great Master of the banquet is not displeased.

Such a man's repentance may be very imperfect. Never mind! Is it real? Does he truly repent at all?-His faith in Christ may be very weak. Never mind! Is it real? A penny is as truly the current coin of the realm, and as really stamped with the Queen's image as a sovereign. His charity may be very defective in quantity and degree. Never mind! Is it genuine? The grand test of a man's

Christianity is not the quantity of grace he has got, but whether he has any grace at all. The first twelve communicants, when Christ Himself gave the bread and wine, were weak indeed,-weak in knowledge, weak in faith, weak in courage, weak in patience, weak in love! But eleven of them had that about them which outweighed all defects: they were real, genuine, sincere, and true.

For ever let this great principle be rooted in our minds,-the only worthy communicant is the man who is experimentally acquainted with repentance toward God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and practical love toward others. Are you that man? Then you may draw near to the table, and take the sacrament to your comfort. Lower than this I dare not pitch my standard of a communicant. I will never help to crowd a communion rail with careless, ignorant, self-righteous attendants.-Higher than this I will not pitch my standard. I will never tell any one to keep away till he is perfect, and to wait till his heart is as unruffled as an angel's. I will not do so, because I believe that neither my Master nor His Apostles would have done so. Show me a man that really feels his sins, really leans on Christ, really struggles to be holy, and I will bid him welcome in my Master's name. He may feel weak, erring, empty, feeble, doubting, wretched, and poor. What matter? St. Paul, I believe, would have received him as a right communicant, and I will do likewise.

III. In the third place, let us consider what benefit communicants may expect to get by going to the Table and attending the Lord's Supper. This is a point of grave importance, and one on which vast mistakes abound. On no point, perhaps, connected with this ordinance, are the views of Christians so vague and misty and undefined.

One common idea among men is that “taking the sacrament must do them good.” Why, they cannot explain. What good, they cannot exactly say. But they have a loose general notion that it is the right thing to be a communicant, and that somehow or other it is of service to their souls! This is of course nothing better than ignorance. It is unreasonable to suppose that such communicants can please Christ, or receive any real benefit from what they do. If there is any principle clearly laid down in the Bible about any act of religious worship, it is this, that it must be intelligent. The worshipper must at least understand something about what he is doing. Mere bodily worship, unaccompanied by mind or heart, is utterly worthless. The man who walks up to a communion rail, and eats the bread and drinks the wine, as a mere matter of form, because his minister tells him, without any clear idea of what it all means, derives no benefit. He might just as well stay at home!

Another common idea among men is that, “taking the sacrament will help them to heaven, and take away their sins.” To this delusive idea you may trace up the habit in some parishes of going to the sacrament once a year, in order, as an old farmer once said, “to wipe off the year's sins.” To this idea again, you may trace the too common practice of sending for a minister in time of sickness, in order to receive the sacrament before death. Alas, how many take comfort about their relatives, after they have lived a most ungodly life, for no better reason than this,-that they took the sacrament when they were dying! Whether they repented and believed and had new hearts, they neither seem to know or care. All they know is that “they took the sacrament before they died.” My heart sinks within me when I hear people resting on such evidence as this.

Ideas like these are mournful proofs of the ignorance that fills the minds of men about the Lord's Supper. They are ideas for which there is not the slightest warrant either in Scripture or the Prayer-book. The sooner they are cast aside and given up, the better for the Church and the world.

Let us settle it firmly in our minds that the Lord's Supper was not given to be a means either of justification or of conversion. It was never meant to give grace where there is no grace already, or to provide pardon when pardon is not already enjoyed. It cannot possibly supply the absence of repentance to God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an ordinance for the penitent, not for the impenitent,-for the believing, not for the unbelieving,-for the converted, not for the unconverted. The unconverted man, who fancies that he can find a short-cut road to heaven by taking the sacrament, without treading the well-worn steps of repentance and faith, will find to his cost one day, that he is totally deceived. The Lord's Supper was meant to increase and help the grace that a man has, but not to impart the grace that he has not. It was certainly never intended to make our peace with God, to justify, or to convert.

The simplest statement of the benefit which a true-hearted communicant may expect to receive from the Lord's Supper, is that which is supplied by the Church Catechism,-“The strengthening and refreshing of our souls.”-Clearer views of Christ and His atonement, clearer views of all the offices which Christ fills as our Mediator and Advocate, clearer views of the complete redemption Christ has obtained for us by His vicarious death on the cross, clearer views of our full and perfect acceptance in Christ before God, fresh reasons for deep repentance for sin, fresh reasons for lively faith,-these are among the leading returns which a believer may confidently expect to get from his attendance at the Lord's Table. He that eats the bread and drinks the wine in a right spirit, will find himself drawn into closer communion with Christ, and will feel to know Him more, and understand Him better.

(a) Right reception of the Lord's Supper has a humbling effect on the soul. The sight of these emblems of Christ's body and blood, reminds us how sinful sin must be, if nothing less than the death of God's own Son could make satisfaction for it, or redeem us from its guilt. Never surely ought we to be so “clothed with humility,” as when we kneel at the Communion rail.

(b) Right reception of the Lord's Supper has a cheering effect on the soul. The sight of the bread broken, and the wine poured out, reminds us how full, perfect, and complete is our salvation. Those lively emblems remind us what an enormous price has been paid for our redemption. They press on us the mighty truth, that believing on Christ, we have nothing to fear, because a sufficient payment has been made for our debt. The “precious blood of Christ” answers every charge that can be brought against us. God can be a “just God, and yet the justifier of every one that believeth on Jesus.” (Romans 3:26)

(c) Right reception of the Lord's Supper has a sanctifying effect on the soul. The bread and wine remind us how great is our debt of gratitude to our Lord, and how thoroughly we are bound to live for Him who died for our sins. They seem to say to us, “Remember what Christ has done for you, and ask yourself whether there is anything too great to do for Him.”

(d) Right reception of the Lord's Supper into hearts, has a restraining effect on the soul. Every time a believer goes up to the Communion rail he is reminded what a serious thing it is to be a Christian, and what an obligation is laid on him to lead a consistent life. Bought with such a price as that bread and wine call to his recollection, ought he not to glorify Christ in body and spirit, which are His? The man that goes regularly and intelligently to the Lord's Table finds it increasingly hard to yield to sin and conform to the world.

Such is a brief account of the benefits which a right-hearted communicant may expect to receive from the Lord's Supper. In eating that bread and drinking that cup, such a man will have his repentance deepened, his faith increased, his knowledge enlarged, his habit of holy living strengthened. He will realize more of the “real presence” of Christ in his heart. Eating that bread by faith, he will feel closer communion with the body of Christ. Drinking that wine by faith, he will feel closer communion with the blood of Christ. He will see more clearly what Christ is to him, and what he is to Christ. He will understand more thoroughly what it is to be “one with Christ, and Christ one with him.” He will feel the roots of his soul's spiritual life watered, and the work of grace in his heart stablished, built up, and carried forward. All these things may seem and sound foolishness to a natural man, but to a true Christian these things are light, and health, and life, and peace. No wonder that a true Christian finds the Lord's Supper a source of blessing!

Remember, I do not pretend to say that all Christians experience the full blessing of the Lord's Supper, which I have just attempted to describe. Nor yet do I say that the same believer will always find his soul in the same spiritual frame, and always receive the same amount of benefit from the sacrament. But this I will boldly say: you will rarely find a true believer who will not say that he reckons the Lord's Supper one of his best helps and highest privileges. He will tell you that if he were deprived of the Lord's Supper he should find the loss of it a great drawback to his soul. There are some things of which we never know the value till they are taken from us. So I believe it is with the Lord's Supper. The weakest and humblest of God's children gets a blessing from this sacrament, to an extent of which he is not aware.

IV. In the last place, I have to consider why it is that many so-called Christians never come to the Lord's Supper.

It is a simple matter of fact, that myriads of baptized persons never come to the Table of the Lord. They would not endure to be told that they deny the faith, and are practically not in communion with Christ. When they worship, they attend a place of Christian worship; when they hear religious teaching, it is the teaching of Christianity; when they are married, they use a Christian service when their children are baptized, they ask for the Sacrament of Baptism. Yet all this time they never come to the Lord's Supper! They often live on in this state of mind for many years, and to all appearance are not ashamed. They often die in this condition without ever having received the sacrament, and yet profess to feel hope at the last, and their friends express a hope about them. And yet they live and die in open disobedience to a plain command of Christ! These are simple facts. Let any one look around him, and deny them if he can, I challenge any one to deny that the non-communicants in all English congregations form the majority, and the communicants the minority of the worshippers.

Now how is this? What account can we give of it? Our Lord Jesus Christ's last injunctions to His disciples are clear, plain, and unmistakable. He says to all, “Eat, drink: do this in remembrance of Me.” Did He leave it to our discretion whether we would attend to His injunction or not? Did He mean that it did not signify whether His disciples did or did not keep up the ordinance He had just established? Certainly not. The very idea is absurd, and one certainly never dreamed of in apostolic times.-St. Paul evidently takes it for granted that every Christian is a communicant. A class of Christian worshippers who never came to the Table, was a class whose existence was unknown to him. What, then, are we to say of that large multitude of non-communicants which

walks out of our churches every sacrament Sunday, unabashed, unhumbled, not afraid, not the least ashamed? Why is it? How is it? What does it all mean? Let us look these questions fairly in the face, and endeavour to give an answer to them.

(1) For one thing, many are not communicants because they are utterly careless and thoughtless about religion, and ignorant of the very first principles of Christianity. They go to church, as a matter of form, because other people go; but they neither know, nor care anything about what is done at church! The faith of Christ has no place either in their hearts, or heads, or consciences, or wills, or understandings. It is a mere affair of “words and names,” about which they know no more than Festus or Gallio. There were very few such Christians in St. Paul's times, if indeed there were any. There are far too many in these last days of the world, when everything seems to be wearing out and running to seed. They are the dead-weight of the Churches, and the scandal of Christianity. What such people need is light, knowledge, grace, a renewed conscience, a changed heart. In their present state they have no part or lot in Christ; and dying in this state they are unfit for heaven. Do I wish them to come to the Lord's Supper? Certainly not, till they are converted. Except a man be converted he will never enter the kingdom of God.

(2) For another thing, many are not communicants because they know they are living in the habitual practice of some sin, or in the habitual neglect of some Christian duty. Their conscience tells them that so long as they live in this state, and do not break off from their sins, they are unfit to come to the Table of the Lord. Well, they are so far quite right! I wish no man to be a communicant if he cannot give up his sins. But I warn these people not to forget that if they are unfit for the Lord's Supper they are unfit to die, and that if they die in their present condition they will be lost eternally. The same sins which disqualify them for the sacrament, most certainly disqualify them for heaven. Do I want them to come to the Lord's Supper as they are? Certainly not! But I do want them to repent and be converted, to cease to do evil, and to break off from their sins. For ever let it be remembered that the man unfit for the Lord's Supper is unfit to die.

(3) For another thing, some are not communicants because they fancy it will add to their responsibility. They are not, as many, ignorant and careless about religion. They even attend regularly on the means of grace, and like the preaching of the Gospel. But they say they dread coming forward and making a profession. They fear that they might afterwards fall away, and bring scandal on the cause of Christianity. They think it wisest to be on the safe side, and not commit themselves at all. Such people would do well to remember that if they avoid responsibility of one kind by not coming to the Lord's Table, they incur responsibility of another kind, quite as grave, and quite as injurious to the soul. They are responsible for open disobedience to a command of Christ. They are shrinking from doing that which their Master continually enjoins on His disciples,-from confessing Him before men. No doubt it is a serious step to come forward and receive the sacrament. It is a step that none should take lightly and without self-examination. But it is no less a serious step to walk away and refuse the ordinance, when we remember Who invites us to receive it, and for what purpose it was appointed! I warn the people I am now dealing with to take heed what they are doing. Let them not flatter themselves that it can ever be a wise, a prudent, a safe line of conduct to neglect a plain command of Christ. They may find at length, to their cost, that they have only increased their guilt and forsaken their mercies.

(4) For another thing, some are not communicants because they fancy they are not yet worthy. They wait and stand still, under the mistaken notion that no one is qualified for the Lord's Supper unless he feels within him something like perfection. They pitch their idea of a communicant so high that they despair of attaining to it. Waiting for inward perfection they live, and waiting for it too often they die. Now such persons would do well to understand that they are completely mistaken in their estimate of what “worthiness” really is. They are forgetting that the Lord's Supper was not intended for unsinning angels, but for men and women compassed with infirmity, dwelling in a world full of temptations, and needing mercy and grace every day they live. A sense of our own utter unworthiness is the best worthiness we can bring to the Communion rail. A deep feeling of our own entire indebtedness to Christ for all we have and hope for, is the best feeling we can bring with us. The people I now have in view ought to consider seriously whether the ground they have taken up is tenable, and whether they are not standing in their own light. If they are waiting till they feel in themselves perfect hearts, perfect motives, perfect feelings, perfect repentance, perfect love, perfect faith, they will wait for ever. There never were such communicants in any age,-certainly not in the days of our Lord and of the Apostles,-there never will be as long as the world stands. Nay, rather, the very thought that we feel literally worthy, is a symptom of secret self-righteousness, and proves us unfit for communion in God's sight. Sinners we are when we first come to the throne of grace,-sinners we shall be till we die; converted, changed, renewed, sanctified, but sinners still. In short, no man is a really worthy communicant who does not deeply feel that he is a “miserable sinner.”

(5) In the last place, some object to be communicants because they see others coming to the Lord's Table who are not worthy, and not in a right state of mind. Because others eat and drink unworthily, they refuse to eat and drink at all. Of all the grounds taken up by non-communicants to justify their own neglect of Christ's ordinance, I must plainly say, I know none which seems to me so foolish, so weak, so unreasonable, and so unscriptural as this. It is as good as saying that we will never receive the Lord's Supper at all! When shall we ever find a body of communicants on earth of which all the members are converted?-It is setting up ourselves in the most unhealthy attitude of judging others. “Who art thou that judgest another?” “What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.”-It is depriving ourselves of a great privilege merely because others profane it and make a bad use of it.-It is pretending to be wiser than our Master Himself. If the words of St. Luke mean anything, Judas Iscariot was present at the first Communion, and received the bread and wine among others.-It is taking up ground for which there is no warrant in Scripture. St. Paul rebukes the Corinthians sharply for the irreverent behaviour of some of the communicants; but I cannot find him giving a single hint that when some came to the Table unworthily, others ought to draw back or stay away. Let me advise the non-communicants I have now in view to beware of being wise above that which was written. Let them study the parable of the Wheat and Tares, and mark how both were to “grow together till the harvest.” (Matthew 13:30) Perfect Churches, perfect congregations, perfect bodies of communicants, are all unattainable in this world of confusion and sin. Let us covet the best gifts, and do all we can to check sin in others; but let us not starve our own selves because others are ignorant sinners, and turn their meat into poison. If others are foolish enough to eat and drink unworthily, let us not turn our backs on Christ's ordinance, and refuse to eat and drink at all.

Such are the five common excuses why myriads in the present day, though professing themselves Christians, never come to the Lord's Supper. One common remark may be made about them: there is not a single reason among the five which deserves to be called “good,” and which does not condemn the man who gives it. I challenge any one to deny this. I have said repeatedly that I want no one to be a communicant who is not properly qualified. But I ask those who stay away never to forget that the very reasons they assign for their conduct are their condemnation. I tell them that they stand convicted before God of either being very ignorant of what a communicant is, and what the Lord's Supper is; or else of being persons who are not living rightly, and are unfit to die. In short, to say, I am a non-communicant, is as good as saying one of three things:-“I am living in sin, and cannot come;-I know Christ commands me, but I will not obey Him;-I am an ignorant man, and do not understand what the Lord's Supper means.”

I know not in what state of mind this book may find the reader of this paper, or what his opinions may be about the Lord's Supper. But I will conclude the whole subject by offering to all some warnings, which I venture to think are peculiarly required by the times.

(1) In the first place, do not neglect the Lord's Supper. The man who coolly and deliberately refuses to use an ordinance which the Lord Jesus Christ appointed for his profit, may be very sure that his soul is in a very wrong state. There is a judgment yet to come; there is an account to be rendered of all our conduct on earth. How any one can look forward to that day, and expect to meet Christ with comfort and in peace, if he has refused all his life to meet Christ in His own ordinance, is a thing that I cannot understand. Does this come home to you? Mind what you are doing.

In the second place; do not receive the Lord's Supper carelessly, irreverently, and as a matter of form. The man who walks up to the Communion rail, and eats the bread and drinks the wine, while his heart is far away, is committing a great sin, and robbing himself of a great blessing. In this, as in every other means of grace, everything depends on the state of mind in which the ordinance is used. He that draws near without repentance, faith, and love, and with a heart full of sin and the world, will certainly be nothing better, but rather worse. Does this come home to you? Mind what you are about.

In the third place, do not make an idol of the Lord's Supper. The man who tells you that it is the first, foremost, chief, and principal ordinance in Christianity, is telling you that which he will find it hard to prove. In the great majority of the books of the New Testament the Lord's Supper is not even named. In the letter to Timothy and Titus, about a minister's duties, the subject is not even mentioned. To repent and be converted, to believe and be holy, to be born again and have grace in our hearts,-all these things are of far more importance than to be a communicant. Without them we cannot be saved. Without the Lord's Supper we can. The penitent thief was not a communicant, and Judas Iscariot was. Are you tempted to make the Lord's Supper override and overshadow everything in Christianity, and place it above prayer and preaching? Take care. Mind what you are about.

In the fourth place, do not use the Lord's Supper irregularly. Never be absent when this ordinance is administered. Make every sacrifice to be in your place. Regular habits are essential to the maintenance of the health of our bodies. Regular use of every means of grace is essential to the prosperity of our souls. The man who finds it a weariness to attend on every occasion when the

Lord's Table is spread, may well doubt whether all is right within him, and whether he is ready for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. If Thomas had not been absent when the Lord appeared the first time to the assembled disciples, he would not have said the foolish things he did. Absence made him miss a blessing. Does this come home to you? Mind what you are about.

In the fifth place, do not do anything to bring discredit on your profession as a communicant. The man who after attending the Lord's Table runs into sin, does more harm perhaps than any sinner. He is a walking sermon on behalf of the devil. He gives occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. He helps to keep people away from Christ. Lying, drinking, adulterous, dishonest, passionate communicants are the helpers of the devil, and the worst enemies of the Gospel. Does this come home to you? Mind what you are about.

In the last place, do not despond and be cast down, if with all your desires you do not feel to get great good from the Lord's Supper. Very likely you are expecting too much. Very likely you are a poor judge of your own state. Your soul's roots may be strengthening and growing, while you think you are not getting on. Very likely you are forgetting that earth is not heaven, and that here we walk by sight and not by faith, and must expect nothing perfect. Lay these things to heart. Do not write bitter things against yourself without cause.

To every reader into whose hands this paper may fall, I commend the whole subject of it as deserving of serious and solemn consideration. I am nothing better than a poor fallible man myself. But if I have made up my mind on any point it is this,-that there is no truth which demands such plain speaking as truth about the Lord's Supper.

NOTE.

I ask the special attention of my readers to the following extracts from the last Charge of the late Dr. Longley, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The office held by the Archbishop, the remarkable gentleness and mildness of his character, the fact that this Charge contains his last sentiments, and that it was not made public till after his death,-all this appears to me to invest these extracts about the Lord's Supper with peculiar interest.

“It is a far from my intention to impute to all those who have taken the ill-advised step of adopting the Sacrificial Vestments (in administering the Lord's Supper) any sympathy with Roman error; but I am constrained to avow that there are plain indications in some of the publications which have been issued as manifestoes of the opinions of that section of our Church, that some of its professed members, yea, even of her ministers, think themselves at liberty to hold the doctrines of the Church of Rome in relation to the Sacrifice of the Mass, and yet retain their position within the pale of the Anglican Church with the avowed purpose of eliminating from its formularies every trace of the Reformation, as regards its protest against Romish error. The language they hold with respect to it is entirely incompatible with loyalty to the Church to which they profess to belong. They call it 'a Communion deeply tainted with Protestant heresy:' 'Our duty,' they say, 'is the expulsion of the evil, not flight from it.' It is no want of charity, therefore, to declare that they remain with us in order that they may substitute the Mass for the Communion; the obvious aim of our Reformers having been to substitute the Communion for the Mass. Doubtless the Church of England admits of considerable latitude in the views that may be taken of that most mysterious of

all mysteries, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And so long as those solemn words of its original institution, 'This is my Body,' 'This is my Blood,' shall remain in the sentence of consecration (and they never can be erased from it), so long will there be varieties of interpretation of these words, all of which may be consistent with a true allegiance to our Church, provided these three conditions be observed,

“1. That they be not construed to signify that the Natural Body of Christ is present in the Sacrament:

“2. Nor to admit of any adoration either of the Sacramental bread and wine there bodily received, or of any corporal presence of Christ's Natural Body and Blood:

“3. Nor to justify the belief that the Body and Blood are again offered as a satisfaction for sin; seeing that the offering of Christ once made was a perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, original and actual.

“These are the limits which our Church imposes upon the liberty of interpretation of the words of our blessed Lord.

“The use of these sacrificial vestments is in the minds of many intimately connected with the idea that an essential element in the Holy Communion is the offering to God a Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, which abide with the elements in a mysterious manner after the act of Consecration. The minister wears the vestments at that time as a sacrificing priest. According to this view it would seem that the most important part of this Holy Sacrament is what we offer to God, not what we receive from Him.

“This view is not recognised by the Church of England in her formularies. The general definition in the XXVth Article states that Sacraments are 'certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, by the which [God] doth work invisibly in us;' and it is said specifically of the Lord's Supper (Art. XXVIII.), that it 'is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.' The idea of the Sacrifice of that Body and Blood finds no place in either of these strict definitions. The Catechism speaks the same language when it defines a Sacrament to be 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us.' Nor will an examination of the Office of the Holy Communion itself give any countenance to the idea in question. The only distinct oblation or offering mentioned in that Office is previous to the Consecration of the elements, in the Prayer for the Church Militant, and therefore cannot be an offering or sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ; and the only sacrifice which we are spoken of as making, is the offering of 'ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice.'2

Our Church seems most studiously to have avoided any expression which could countenance the notion of a perpetual Sacrifice of Christ, while on the other hand it speaks of Christ's death upon the cross as 'His own oblation of Himself once offered as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.' No room is left for the repetition of that sacrifice, or for the admission of any other sacrifice for sin.

FOOTNOTES

1 If any one fancies that St. Paul's words to the Hebrews, “We have an altar,” are a proof that the Lord's table is au altar, I advise him to read what Waterland, no mean theologian, says on the subject:-"Christians have an altar whereof they partake. That altar is Christ our Lord, who is Altar, Priest, and Sacrifice, all in One.”-Waterland's Works, Vol. V., 263. Oxford edition.

2 See Proctor on the Common Prayer, p. 320.

Chapter 36

Gospel Treasures

GOSPEL TREASURES!

by

Bishop J. C. Ryle

READER,

I dare be sure this paper will be read by some one who feels that his sins are not yet forgiven. Reader, are you that man?

My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you may seek forgiveness without delay. There is forgiveness in Jesus Christ for every one that is willing to receive it. There is every encouragement that your soul can need, to confess your sins and lay hold on this forgiveness this very day.

Reader, listen to me while I try to exhibit to you the treasure of Gospel forgiveness. I cannot describe its fulness as I ought. Its riches are indeed unsearchable (Ephesians 3:8). But if you will turn away from it you shall not be able to say in the day judgment, you did not at all know what it was.

Consider, then, for one thing, that the forgiveness set before you is a great and broad forgiveness. Hear what the Prince of Peace Himself declares: "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme" (Mark 3:28); "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). Yes! though your trespasses be more in number than the hairs of your head, the stars in heaven, the leaves of the forest, the blades of grass, the grains of sand on the sea shore, still they can all be pardoned. As the waters of Noah's flood covered over and hid the tops of the highest hills, so can the blood of Jesus cover over and hide your mightiest sins. "His blood cleanseth from' all sin" (1 John 1:7). Though to you they seem written with the point of a diamond, they can all be effaced from the book of God's remembrance by that precious blood. Paul names a long list of abominations which the Corinthians had committed, and then says: "Such were some of' you: but ye are washed" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Furthermore, it is a full and complete forgiveness. It is not like David's pardon to Absalom,-a permission to return home, but not a full restoration to favour (2 Samuel 14:24). It is not, as some fancy, a mere letting off, and letting alone. It is a pardon so complete, that he who has it is reckoned as righteous as if he had never sinned at all. His iniquities are blotted out. They are removed from him as far as the east from the west (Psalms 103:12). There remains no condemnation for him. The Father sees him joined to Christ, and is well pleased. The Son beholds him clothed with 'His own righteousness, and says, "Thou art all fair, . . . there is no spot in thee" (Son_4:7). Blessed be God that it is so. I verily believe if the best of us all had only one blot left for himself to wipe out, he would miss eternal life. If the holiest child of Adam were in heaven all but his little finger, and to get in depended on himself, I am sure he would never enter the kingdom. If

Noah, Daniel, and Job had had but one day's sin to wash away, they would never have been saved. Praised be God that in the matter of our pardon there is nothing left for man to do. Jesus does all, and man has only to hold out an empty hand and to receive.

Furthermore, it is a free and unconditional forgiveness. It is not burdened with an "if," like Solomon's pardon to Adonijah: "If he will show himself a worthy man (1 Kings 1:52). Nor yet are you obliged to carry a price in your hand, or bring a character with you to prove yourself deserving of mercy. Jesus requires but one character, and that is that you should feel yourself a sinful, bad man. He invites you to "buy wine and milk without money and without price," and declares, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17) 'Like David in the cave of Adullam, He receives everyone that feels in distress and a debtor, and rejects none (1 Samuel 22:2). Are you a sinner? Do you want a Saviour? Then come to Jesus just as you are, and your soul shall live.

Again, it is an offered forgiveness I have read of earthly kings who knew not how to show mercy,-of Henry the Eighth of England, who spared neither man nor woman; of James the Fifth of Scotland, who would never show favour to a Douglas. The King of kings is not like them. He calls on man to come to Him, and be pardoned. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men" (Proverbs 8:4). "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 4:1) "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John 7:37). "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Oh, reader, it ought to be a great comfort to you and me to hear of any pardon at all; but to hear Jesus Himself inviting us, to see Jesus Himself holding out His hand to us,-the Saviour seeking the sinner before the sinner seeks the Saviour,-this is encouragement, this is strong consolation indeed!

Again, it is a willing forgiveness. I have heard of pardons granted in reply to long entreaty, and wrung out by much importunity. King Edward the Third of England would not spare the citizens of Calais till they came to him with halters round their necks, and his own Queen interceded for them on her knees. But Jesus is "good and ready to forgive" (Psalms 86:5). He delighteth in mercy (Micah 7:18) Judgment is His strange work. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). He would fain have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4) He wept over unbelieving Jerusalem. "As I live;" He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways: why will ye die?" (Ezekiel 33:11). Ah, reader, you and I may well come boldly to the throne of grace! He who sits there is far more willing and ready to give mercy than you and I are to receive it.

Besides this, it is a tried forgiveness. Thousands and tens of thousands have sought for pardon at the mercy-seat of Christ, and not one has ever returned to say that he sought in vain; sinners of every name and nation,-sinners of every sort and description, have knocked at the door of the fold, and none have ever been refused admission. Zacchæus the extortioner, Magdalene the harlot, Saul the persecutor, Peter the denier of his Lord, the Jews who crucified the Prince of Life, the idolatrous Athenians, the adulterous Corinthians, the ignorant Africans, the bloodthirsty New Zealanders,-all have ventured their souls on Christ's promises of pardon, and none have ever found them fail. Ah, reader, if the way I set before you were a new and untravelled way, you might well feel faint-hearted! But it is not so. It is an old path. It is a path worn by the feet of many pilgrims, and a path in which the footsteps are all one way. The treasury of Christ's mercies has

never been found empty. The well of living waters has never proved dry.

Beside this, it is a present forgiveness. All that believe in Jesus are at once justified from all things (Acts 13:38). The very day the younger son returned to his father's house he was clothed with the best robe, had the ring put on his hand, and shoes on his feet (Luke 15). The very day Zacchæus received Jesus he heard these comfortable words "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:9). The very day that David 'said, "I have sinned against the Lord," he was told by Nathan, "The Lord hath also put away thy sin" (2 Samuel 12:13). The very day you first flee to Christ, your sins are all removed. Your pardon is not a thing far away, to be obtained only after many years. It is nigh at hand. It is close to you, within your reach, all ready to be bestowed. Believe, and that very moment it is your own. "He that believeth is not condemned" (John 3:18). It is not said, "he shall not be," or "will not be," but "is not." From the time of his believing, condemnation is gone. "He that believeth hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). It is not said, "he shall have," or "will have," it is "hath" It is his own as surely as if he was in heaven, though not so evidently so to his own eyes. Ah, reader, you must not think forgiveness will be nearer to a believer in the day of judgment than it was in the hour he first believed! His complete salvation from the power of sin is every year nearer and nearer to him; but as to his forgiveness and justification, it is a finished work from the very minute he first commits himself to Christ.

Last, and best of all, it is an everlasting forgiveness. It is not like Shimei's pardon, a pardon that may sometime be revoked and taken away (1 Kings 2:9). Once justified you are justified forever. Once written down in the book of life, your name shall never be blotted out. The sins of God's children are said to be cast into the depths of the sea,-to be sought for and not found,-to be remembered no more,-to be cast behind God's back (Micah 7:19; Jeremiah 50:20; Jeremiah 31:34; Isaiah 38:17). Some people fancy they may be justified one year and condemned another,-children of adoption at one time and strangers by and by,-heirs of the kingdom in the beginning of their days, and yet servants of the devil in their end. I cannot find this in the Bible. As the New Zealander told the Romish priest, "I do not see it in the Book." It seems to me to overturn the good news of the Gospel altogether, and to tear up its comforts by the roots. I believe the salvation Jesus offers is an everlasting salvation, and a pardon once sealed with His blood shall never be reversed.

Reader, I have set before you the nature of the forgiveness offered to you. I have told you but little of it, for my words are weaker than my will. The half of it remains untold. The greatness of it is far more than any report of mine. But I think I have said enough to show you it is worth the seeking, and I can wish you nothing better than that you may strive to make it your own.

Great Battle

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short "Helmingham Series" tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you these three exactly word for word as they were first published about the middle of the last century, while J. C. Ryle was a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk. THE GREAT BATTLE.

READER,

All men ought to love peace. War is an immense evil, though it is a necessary evil sometimes. Battles are bloody and distressing events, though sometimes nations cannot maintain their rights without them. But all men ought to love peace. All ought to pray for a quiet life.

All this is very true, and yet there is one war which it is a positive duty to carry on; there is one battle which we ought to be always fighting. The battle I speak of is the battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. With these enemies we never ought to be at peace; from this warfare no man ought ever to seek to be discharged, while he is alive.

Reader, give me your attention for a few minutes, and I will tell you something about the great battle.

Every professing Christian is the soldier of Christ. He is bound by his baptism to fight Christ's battle against sin, the world, and the devil. The man that does not do this, breaks his vow: he is a spiritual defaulter; he does not fulfil the engagement made for him. The man that does not do this, is practically renouncing his Christianity. The very fact that he belongs to a Church, attends a Christian place of worship, and calls himself a Christian, is a public declaration that he desires to be reckoned a soldier of Jesus Christ.

Armour is provided for the professing Christian, if he will only use it. "Take unto you," says Paul to the Ephesians, "the whole armour of God." "Stand, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness." "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." "Above all, take the shield of faith" (Ephesians 6:13-17). And not least, the professing Christian has the best of leaders, -Jesus the Captain of salvation, through whom he may be more than conqueror; the best of provisions,-the bread and water of life; and the best of pay promised to him,-an eternal weight of glory.

All these are ancient things. I will not be drawn off to dwell on them now.

The one point I want to impress on your soul just now is this,-that if you want to be saved, you must not only be a soldier, but a victorious soldier. You must not only profess to fight on Christ's side against sin, the world, and the devil, but you must actually fight and overcome.

Now this is one grand distinguishing mark of true Christians. Other men perhaps like to be numbered in the ranks of Christ's army; other men may have lazy wishes, and languid desires

after the crown of glory: but it is the true Christian alone who does the work of a soldier. He alone fairly meets the enemies of his soul, really fights with them, and in that fight overcomes them.

Reader, one great lesson I wish you to learn this day is this,-that if you would prove you are born again and going to heaven, you must be a victorious soldier of Christ. If you would make it clear that you have any title to Christ's precious promises, you must fight the good fight in Christ's cause, and in that fight you must conquer.

Victory is the only satisfactory evidence that you have a saving religion. You like good sermons, perhaps; you respect the Bible, and read it occasionally; you say your prayers night and morning; you have family prayers, and give to religious societies. I thank God for this: it is all very good. But how goes the battle? How does the great conflict go on all this time? Are you overcoming the love of the world and the fear of man? Are you overcoming the passions, tempers, and lusts of your own heart? Are you resisting the devil, and making him flee from you? How is it in this matter? My dear brother or sister, you must either rule or serve sin, and the devil, and the world. There is no middle course. You must either conquer or be lost.

I know well it is a hard battle that you have to fight, and I want you to know it too. You must fight the good fight of faith, and endure hardships, if you would lay hold of eternal life; you must make up your mind to a daily struggle, if you would reach heaven. There may be short roads to heaven invented by man; but ancient Christianity,-the good old way,-is the way of the cross: the way of conflict. Sin, the world, and the devil must be actually mortified, resisted, and overcome.

This is the road that saints of old have trodden in, and left their record on high.

When Moses refused the pleasures of sin in Egypt, and chose affliction with the people of God,-this was overcoming: he overcame the love of pleasure.

When Micaiah refused to prophesy smooth things to king Ahab, though he knew he would be persecuted if he spoke the truth,-this was overcoming: he overcame the love of ease.

When Daniel refused to give up praying, though he knew the den of lions was prepared for him,-this was overcoming: he overcame the fear of death.

When Matthew rose from the receipt of custom at our Lord's bidding, left all and followed Him,-this was overcoming: he overcame the love of money.

When Peter and John stood up boldly before the Council and said, "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard"-this was overcoming: they overcame the fear of man.

When Saul the Pharisee gave up all his prospects of preferment among the Jews, and preached that Jesus whom he had once persecuted,-this was overcoming: he overcame the love of man's praise.

Reader, the same kind of thing which these men did you must also do, if you would be saved. They were men of like passions with yourself, and yet they overcame: they had as many trials as any you can possibly have, and yet they overcame. They fought, they wrestled, they struggled: you must do the same.

What was the secret of their victory? -their faith. They believed on Jesus, and believing were made strong. They believed on Jesus, and believing were held up. In all their battles they kept their eyes on Jesus, and He never left them or forsook them. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of His testimony, and so may you.

Reader, I set these truths before you: I ask you to lay them to heart. Resolve, by the grace of God, to be an OVERCOMING Christian.

I do fear much for many professing Christians: I see no sign of fighting in them, much less of victory; they never strike one stroke on the side of Christ. They are at peace with His enemies: they have no quarrel with sin. Reader, I warn you this is not Christianity: this is not the way to heaven.

Men and women who hear the Gospel regularly, I often fear much for you. I fear lest you become so familiar with the sounds of its doctrines, that insensibly you become dead to its power. I fear lest your religion should sink down into a little vague talk about your own weakness and corruption, and a few sentimental expressions about Christ, while real practical fighting on Christ's side is altogether neglected. Oh, beware of this state of mind! "Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only." No victory,-no crown! Fight and overcome!

Young men and women, and especially those who have been brought up in religious families, I fear much for you. I fear lest you get a habit of giving way to every temptation. I fear lest you be afraid of saying "No!" to the world and the devil,-and when sinners entice you, think it least trouble to consent. Beware, I do beseech you, of giving way. Every concession will make you weaker. Go into the world resolved to fight Christ's battle,-and fight your way on.

Believers in the Lord Jesus, of every Church and rank in life, I feel much for you. I know your course is hard: I know it is a sore battle you have to fight; I know you are often tempted to say, "It is of no use, and to lay down your arms altogether."

Cheer up, dear brethren and sisters: take comfort, I entreat you; look at the bright side of your position. Be encouraged to fight on: the time is short, the Lord is at hand, the night is far spent. Millions as weak as you have fought the same fight; not one of all those millions has been finally led captive by Satan. Mighty are your enemies,-but the Captain of your salvation is mightier still: His arm, His grace, and His Spirit shall hold you up. Cheer up: be not cast down.

What though you lose a battle or two? You shall not lose all. What though you faint sometimes? You shall not be quite cast down. What though you fall seven times? You shall not be destroyed. Watch against sin, and sin shall not have dominion over you. Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you. Come out boldly from the world and the world shall be obliged to let you go. You shall find yourselves in the end more than conquerors: you shall overcome.

Reader, let me draw from the whole subject a few words of application, and then I have done.

For one thing, let me warn all formalists and self-righteous people to take heed that they are not deceived. You fancy you will go to heaven because you go regularly to church; you indulge an expectation of eternal life, because you are always at the Lord's table, and are never missing in your pew. But where is your repentance? Where is your faith? Where are your evidences of a new heart? Where is the work of the Spirit? Where are the proofs that you are fighting the great battle?

Oh, formal Christian, consider these questions! Tremble: tremble, and repent.

For another thing, let me warn all careless members of Churches to beware lest they trifle their souls into hell. You live on year after year as if there was no battle to be fought with sin, the world, and the devil; you pass through life a smiling, laughing, gentleman-like or ladylike person, and behave as if there was no devil, no heaven, and no hell. Oh, careless Churchman, or careless Dissenter, careless Episcopalian, careless Presbyterian, careless Independent, careless Baptist, awake and see eternal realities in their true light! Awake, and put on the armour of God! Awake, and fight hard for life! Tremble: tremble, and repent.

Reader, the great battle must be fought by all who want to be saved. And more than this, it must be won.

Happiness

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

BEING PLAIN PAPERS

ON THE DAILY DUTIES, EXPERIENCE, DANGERS, AND

PRIVILEGES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. BY

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X. HAPPINESS.

“Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”- Psalms 144:15. AN infidel was once addressing a crowd of people in the open air. He was trying to persuade them that there was no God and no devil no heaven, and no hell, no resurrection, no judgment, and no life to come. He advised them to throw away their Bibles, and not to mind what parsons said. He recommended them to think as he did, and to be like him. He talked boldly. The crowd listened eagerly. It was “the blind leading the blind.” Both were falling into the ditch. (Matthew 15:14)

In the middle of his address a poor old woman suddenly pushed her way through the crowd, to the place where he was standing. She stood before him. She looked him full in the face. “Sir,” she said, in a loud voice, “Are you happy?” The infidel looked scornfully at her, and gave her no answer. “Sir,” she said again, “I ask you to answer my question. Are you happy? You want us to throw away our Bibles. You tell us not to believe what parsons say about religion. You advise us to think as you do, and be like you. Now before we take your advice we have a right to know what good we shall get by it. Do your fine new notions give you much comfort? Do you yourself really feel happy?”

The infidel stopped, and attempted to answer the old woman's question. He stammered, and shuffled, and fidgeted, and endeavoured to explain his meaning. He tried hard to turn the subject. He said, he “had not come there to preach about happiness.” But it was of no use. The old woman stuck to her point. She insisted on her question being answered, and the crowd took her part. She

pressed him hard with her inquiry, and would take no excuse. And at last the infidel was obliged to leave the ground, and sneak off in confusion. He could not reply to the question. His conscience would not let him: he dared not say that he was happy.

The old woman showed great wisdom in asking the question that she did. The argument she used may seem very simple, but in reality it is one of the most powerful that can be employed. It is a weapon that has more effect on some minds than the most elaborate reasoning of Butler, or Paley, or Chalmers. Whenever a man begins to take up new views of religion, and pretends to despise old Bible Christianity, thrust home at his conscience the old woman's question. Ask him whether his new views make him feel comfortable within. Ask him whether he can say, with honesty and sincerity, that he is happy. The grand test of a man's faith and religion is, “Does it make him happy?”

Let me now affectionately invite every reader to consider the subject of this paper. Let me warn you to remember that the salvation of your soul, and nothing less, is closely bound up with the subject. The heart cannot be right in the sight of God which knows nothing of happiness. That man or woman cannot be in a safe state of soul who feels nothing of peace within.

There are three things which I purpose to do, in order to clear up the subject of happiness. I ask special attention to each one of them. And I pray the Spirit of God to apply all to the souls of all who read this paper.

I. Let me point out some things which are absolutely essential to all happiness.

II. Let me expose some common mistakes about the way to be happy.

III. Let me show the way to be truly happy.

I. First of all I have to point out some things which are absolutely essential to all true happiness.

Happiness is what all mankind want to obtain: the desire of it is deeply planted in the human heart. All men naturally dislike pain, sorrow, and discomfort. All men naturally like ease, comfort, and gladness. All men naturally hunger and thirst after happiness. Just as the sick man longs for health, and the prisoner of war for liberty, just as the parched traveller in hot countries longs to see the cooling fountain, or the ice-bound polar voyager the sun rising above the horizon, just in the same way does poor mortal man long to be happy. But, alas, how few consider what they really mean when they talk of happiness! How vague and indistinct and undefined the ideas of most men are upon the subject! They think some are happy who in reality are miserable: they think some are gloomy and sad who in reality are truly happy. They dream of a happiness which in reality would never satisfy their nature's wants. Let me try this day to throw a little light on the subject.

True happiness is not perfect freedom from sorrow and discomfort. Let that never be forgotten. If it were so there would be no such thing as happiness in the world. Such happiness is for angels who have never fallen, and not for man. The happiness I am inquiring about is such as a poor, dying, sinful creature may hope to attain. Our whole nature is defiled by sin. Evil abounds in the world. Sickness, and death, and change are daily doing their sad work on every side. In such a state of things the highest happiness man can attain to on earth must necessarily be a mixed thing. If we expect to find any literally perfect happiness on this side of the grave, we expect what we shall not find.

True happiness does not consist in laughter and smiles. The face is very often a poor index of the inward man. There are thousands who laugh loud and are merry as a grasshopper in company, but are wretched and miserable in private, and almost afraid to be alone. There are hundreds who are grave and serious in their demeanour, whose hearts are full of solid peace. A poet of our own has truly told us that smiles are worth but little “A man may smile and smile and be a villain.” And the eternal Word of God teaches us that “even in laughter the heart is sorrowful.” (Proverbs 14:13) Tell me not merely of smiling and laughing faces: I want to hear of something more than that when I ask whether a man is happy. A truly happy man no doubt will often show his happiness in his countenance; but a man may have a very merry face and yet not be happy at all.

Of all deceptive things on earth nothing is so deceptive as mere gaiety and merriment. It is a hollow empty show, utterly devoid of substance and reality. Listen to the brilliant talker in society, and mark the applause which he receives from an admiring company: follow him to his own private room, and you will very likely find him plunged in melancholy despondency. Colonel Gardiner confessed that even when he was thought most happy he often wished he was a dog.-Look at the smiling beauty in the ball-room, and you might suppose she knew not what it was to be unhappy; see her next day at her own home, and you may probably find her out of temper with herself and everybody else besides.-Oh, no: worldly merriment is not real happiness! There is a certain pleasure about it, I do not deny. There is an animal excitement about it, I make no question. There is a temporary elevation of spirits about it, I freely concede. But call it not by the sacred name of happiness. The most beautiful cut flowers stuck into the ground do not make a garden. When glass is called diamond, and tinsel is called gold, then, and not till then, your people who can laugh and smile will deserve to be called happy men.1

To be truly happy the highest wants of a man's nature must be met and satisfied. The requirements of his curiously wrought constitution must all be filled up. There must be nothing about him that cries, “Give, give,” but cries in vain and gets no answer. The horse and the ox are happy as long as they are warmed and filled. And why? It is because they are satisfied. The little infant looks happy when it is clothed, and fed, and well, and in its mother's arms. And why? Because it is satisfied. And just so it is with man. His highest wants must be met and satisfied before he can be truly happy. All must be filled up. There must be no void, no empty places, no unsupplied cravings. Till then he is never truly happy.

And what are man's principal wants? Has he a body only? No: he has something more! He has a soul.

Has he sensual faculties only? Can he do nothing but hear, and see, and smell, and taste, and feel? No: he has a thinking mind and a conscience!-Has he no consciousness of any world but that in which he lives and moves? He has. There is a still small voice within him which often makes itself heard: “This life is not all! There is a world unseen: there is a life beyond the grave.” Yes! it is true. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. All men know it: all men feel it, if they would only speak the truth. It is utter nonsense to pretend that food and raiment and earthly good things alone can make men happy. There are soul-wants. There are conscience-wants. There can be no true happiness until these wants are satisfied.

To be truly happy a man must have sources of gladness which are not dependent on anything in this world. There is nothing upon earth which is not stamped with the mark of instability and

uncertainty. All the good things that money can buy are but for a moment: they either leave us or we are obliged to leave them. All the sweetest relationships in life are liable to come to an end: death may come any day and cut them off. The man whose happiness depends entirely on things here below is like him who builds his house on sand, or leans his weight on a reed.

Tell me not of your happiness if it daily hangs on the uncertainties of earth. Your home may be rich in comforts; your wife and children may be all you could desire; your means may be amply sufficient to meet all your wants. But oh, remember, if you have nothing more than this to look to, that you stand on the brink of a precipice! Your rivers of pleasure may any day be dried up. Your joy may be deep and earnest, but it is fearfully short-lived. It has no root. It is not true happiness.

To be really happy a man must be able to look on every side without uncomfortable feelings. He must be able to look back to the past without guilty fears; he must be able to look around him without discontent; he must be able to look forward without anxious dread. He must be able to sit down and think calmly about things past, present, and to come, and feel prepared. The man who has a weak side in his condition,-a side that he does not like looking at or considering, that man is not really happy.

Talk not to me of your happiness, if you are unable to look steadily either before or behind you. Your present position may be easy and pleasant. You may find many sources of joy and gladness in your profession, your dwelling-place, your family, and your friends. Your health may be good, your spirits may be cheerful. But stop and think quietly over your past life. Can you reflect calmly on all the omissions and commissions of by-gone years? How will they bear God's inspection? How will you answer for them at the last day?-And then look forward, and think on the years yet to come. Think of the certain end towards which you are hastening; think of death; think of judgment; think of the hour when you will meet God face to face. Are you ready for it? Are you prepared? Can you look forward to these things without alarm?-Oh, be very sure if you cannot look comfortably at any season but the present, your boasted happiness is a poor unreal thing! It is but a whitened sepulchre, fair and beautiful without, but bones and corruption within. It is a mere thing of a day, like Jonah's gourd. It is not real happiness.

I ask my readers to fix in their minds the account of things essential to happiness, which I have attempted to give. Dismiss from your thoughts the many mistaken notions which pass current on this subject, like counterfeit coin. To be truly happy, the wants of your soul and conscience must be satisfied; to be truly happy, your joy must be founded on something more than this world can give you; to be truly happy, you must be able to look on every side,-above, below, behind, before,-and feel that all is right. This is real, sterling, genuine happiness: this is the happiness I have in view when I urge on your notice the subject of this paper.

II. In the next place, let me expose some common mistakes about the way to be happy.

There are several roads which are thought by many to lead to happiness. In each of these roads thousands and tens of thousands of men and women are continually travelling. Each fancies that if he could only attain all he wants he would be happy. Each fancies, if he does not succeed, that the fault is not in his road, but in his own want of luck and good fortune. And all alike seem ignorant that they are hunting shadows. They have started in a wrong direction: they are seeking that which can never be found in the place where they seek it.

I will mention by name some of the principal delusions about happiness. I do it in love, and charity, and compassion to men's souls. I believe it to be a public duty to warn people against cheats, quacks, and impostors. Oh, how much trouble and sorrow it might save my readers, if they would only believe what I am going to say!

It is an utter mistake to suppose that rank and greatness alone can give happiness. The kings and rulers of this world are not necessarily happy men. They have troubles and crosses, which none know but themselves; they see a thousand evils, which they are unable to remedy; they are slaves working in golden chains, and have less real liberty than any in the world; they have burdens and responsibilities laid upon them, which are a daily weight on their hearts. The Roman Emperor Antonine often said, that “the imperial power was an ocean of miseries.” Queen Elizabeth, when she heard a milk-maid singing, wished that she had been born to a lot like her's. Never did our great Poet write a truer word than when he said, “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”

It is an utter mistake to suppose that riches alone can give happiness. They can enable a man to command and possess everything but inward peace. They cannot buy a cheerful spirit and a light heart. There is care in the getting of them, and care in the keeping of them, care in the using of them, and care in the disposing of them, care in the gathering, and care in the scattering of them. He was a wise man who said that “money” was only another name for “trouble,” and that the same English letters which spelt “acres” would also spell “cares.”

It is an utter mistake to suppose that learning and science alone can give happiness. They may occupy a man's time and attention, but they cannot really make him happy. They that increase knowledge often “increase sorrow:” the more they learn, the more they discover their own ignorance. (Ecclesiastes 1:18) It is not in the power of things on earth or under the earth to “minister to a mind diseased.” The heart wants something as well as the head: the conscience needs food as well as the intellect. All the secular knowledge in the world will not give a man joy and gladness, when he thinks on sickness, and death, and the grave. They that have climbed the highest, have often found themselves solitary, dissatisfied, and empty of peace The learned Selden, at the close of his life, confessed that all his learning did not give him such comfort as four verses of St. Paul. (Titus 2:11-14)

It is an utter mistake to suppose that idleness alone can give happiness. The labourer who gets up at five in the morning, and goes out to work all day in a cold clay ditch, often thinks, as he walks past the rich man's door, “What a fine thing it must be to have no work to do.' Poor fellow! he little knows what he thinks. The most miserable creature on earth is the man who has nothing to do. Work for the hands or work for the head is absolutely essential to human happiness. Without it the mind feeds upon itself, and the whole inward man becomes diseased. The machinery within will work, and without something to work upon, will often wear itself to pieces. There was no idleness in Eden. Adam and Eve had to “dress the garden and keep it.” There will be no idleness in heaven: God's “servants shall serve Him.” Oh, be very sure the idlest man is the man most truly unhappy! (Genesis 2:15; Revelation 22:3)

It is an utter mistake to suppose that pleasure-seeking and amusement alone can give happiness. Of all roads that men can take in order to be happy, this is the one that is most completely wrong. Of all weary, flat, dull and unprofitable ways of spending life, this exceeds all. To think of a dying creature, with an immortal soul, expecting happiness in feasting and revelling,-in dancing and

singing,-in dressing and visiting, in ball-going and card-playing,-in races and fairs,-in hunting and shooting,-in crowds, in laughter, in noise, in music, in wine! Surely it is a sight that is enough to make the devil laugh and the angels weep. Even a child will not play with its toys all day long. It must have food. But when grown up men and women think to find happiness in a constant round of amusement they sink far below a child.

I place before every reader of this paper these common mistakes about the way to be happy. I ask you to mark them well. I warn you plainly against these pretended short cuts to happiness, however crowded they may be. I tell you that if you fancy any one of them can lead you to true peace you are entirely deceived. Your conscience will never feel satisfied; your immortal soul will never feel easy: your whole inward man will feel uncomfortable and out of health. Take any one of these roads, or take all of them, and if you have nothing besides to look to, you will never find happiness. You may travel on and on and on, and the wished for object will seem as far away at the end of each stage of life as when you started. You are like one pouring water into a sieve, or putting money into a bag with holes. You might as well try to make an elephant happy by feeding him with a grain of sand a day, as try to satisfy that heart of your's with rank, riches, learning, idleness, or pleasure.

Do you doubt the truth of all I am saying? I dare say you do. Then let us turn to the great Book of human experience, and read over a few lines out of its solemn pages. You shall have the testimony of a few competent witnesses on the great subject I am urging on your attention.

A King shall be our first witness: I mean Solomon, King of Israel. We know that he had power, and wisdom, and wealth, far exceeding that of any ruler of his time. We know from his own confession, that he tried the great experiment how far the good things of this world can make man happy. We know, from the record of his own hand, the result of this curious experiment. He writes it by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, for the benefit of the whole world, in the book of Ecclesiastes. Never, surely, was the experiment tried under such favourable circumstances: never was any one so likely to succeed as the Jewish King. Yet what is Solomon's testimony? You have it in his melancholy words: “All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” (Ecclesiastes 1:14)

A famous French lady shall be our next witness: I mean Madam De Pompadour. She was the friend and favourite of Louis the Fifteenth. She had unbounded influence at the Court of France. She wanted nothing that money could procure. Yet what does she say herself? “What a situation is that of the great! They only live in the future, and are only happy in hope. There is no peace in ambition. I am always gloomy, and often so unreasonably. The kindness of the King, the regard of courtiers, the attachment of my domestics, and the fidelity of a large number of friends,-motives like these, which ought to make me happy, affect me no longer. I have no longer inclinations for all which once pleased me. I have caused my house at Paris to be magnificently furnished: well; it pleased for two days! My residence at Bellevue is charming; and I alone cannot endure it. Benevolent people relate to me all the news and adventures of Paris: they think I listen, but when they have done I ask them what they said. In a word, I do not live: I am dead before my time. I have no interest in the world. Everything conspires to embitter my life. My life is a continual death.” To such testimony I need not add a single word. (Sinclair's Anecdotes and Aphorisms, p. 33.)

A famous German writer shall be our next witness: I mean Goethe. It is well known that he was almost idolized by many during his life. His works were read and admired by thousands. His name

was known and honoured, wherever German was read, all over the world. And yet the praise of man, of which he reaped such an abundant harvest, was utterly unable to make Goethe happy. “He confessed, when about eighty years old, that he could not remember being in a really happy state of mind even for a few weeks together; and that when he wished to feel happy, he had to veil his self-consciousness.” (See Sinclair's Anecdotes and Aphorisms, p. 280.)

An English peer and poet shall be our next witness: I mean Lord Byron. If ever there was one who ought to have been happy according to the standard of the world, Lord Byron was the man. He began life with all the advantages of English rank and position. He had splendid abilities and powers of mind, which the world soon discovered and was ready to honour. He had a sufficiency of means to gratify every lawful wish, and never knew anything of real poverty. Humanly speaking, there seemed nothing to prevent him enjoying life and being happy. Yet it is a notorious fact that Byron was a miserable man. Misery stands out in his poems: misery creeps out in his letters. Weariness, satiety, disgust, and discontent appear in all his ways. He is an awful warning that rank, and title, and literary fame, alone, are not sufficient to make a man happy.

A man of science shall be our next witness: I mean Sir Humphrey Davy. He was a man eminently successful in the line of life which he chose, and deservedly so. A distinguished philosopher,-the inventor of the famous safety-lamp which bears his name, and has preserved so many poor miners from death by fire-damp,-a Baronet of the United Kingdom and President of the Royal Society;-his whole life seemed a continual career of prosperity. If learning alone were the road to happiness, this man at least ought to have been happy. Yet what was the true record of Davy's feelings? We have it in his own melancholy journal at the latter part of his life. He describes himself in two painful words: “Very miserable!”

A man of wit and pleasure shall be our next witness: I mean Lord Chesterfield. He shall speak for himself: his own words in a letter shall be his testimony. “I have seen the silly round of business and pleasure, and have done with it all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which in truth is very low; whereas those who have not experience always overrate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare; but I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machine, and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration, to the astonishment and admiration of the ignorant audience. When I reflect on what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I cannot persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry of bustle and pleasure of the world had any reality. I look on all that is past as one of those romantic dreams which opium occasions, and I do by no means wish to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream.” These sentences speak for themselves. I need not add to them one single word.

The Statesmen and Politicians who have swayed the destinies of the world, ought by good right to be our last witnesses. But I forbear, in Christian charity, to bring them forward. It makes my heart ache when I run my eye over the list of names famous in English history, and think how many have worn out their lives in a breathless struggle after place and distinction. How many of our greatest men have died of broken hearts,-disappointed, disgusted, and tried with constant failure! How many have left on record some humbling confession that in the plenitude of their power they were pining for rest, as the caged eagle for liberty! How many whom the world is applauding as

“masters of the situation,” are in reality little better than galley-slaves, chained to the oar and unable to get free! Alas, there are many sad proofs, both among the living and the dead, that to be great and powerful is not necessarily to be happy.

I think it very likely that men do not believe what I am saying. I know something of the deceitfulness of the heart on the subject of happiness. There are few things which man is so slow to believe as the truths I am now putting forth about the way to be happy. Bear with me then while I say something more.

Come and stand with me some afternoon in the heart of the city of London. Let us watch the faces of most of the wealthy men whom we shall see leaving their houses of business at the close of the day. Some of them are worth hundreds of thousands: some of them are worth millions of pounds. But what is written in the countenances of these grave men whom we see swarming out from Lombard Street and Cornhill, from the Bank of England and the Stock Exchange? What mean those deep lines which furrow so many a cheek and so many a brow? What means that air of anxious thoughtfulness which is worn by five out of every six we meet? Ah, these things tell a serious tale. They tell us that it needs something more than gold and bank notes to make men happy.

Come next and stand with me near the Houses of Parliament, in the middle of a busy session. Let us scan the faces of Peers and Commoners, whose names are familiar and well-known all over the civilized world. There you may see on some fine May evening the mightiest Statesmen in England hurrying to a debate, like eagles to the carcase. Each has a power of good or evil in his tongue which it is fearful to contemplate. Each may say things before to-morrow's sun dawns, which may affect the peace and prosperity of nations, and convulse the world. There you may see the men who hold the reins of power and government already; there you may see the men who are daily watching for an opportunity of snatching those reins out of their hands, and governing in their stead. But what do their faces tell us as they hasten to their posts? What may be learned from their care-worn countenances? What may be read in many of their wrinkled foreheads,-so absent-looking and sunk in thought? They teach us a solemn lesson. They teach us that it needs something more than political greatness to make men happy.

Come next and stand with me in the most fashionable part of London, in the height of the season. Let us visit Regent Street or Pall Mall, Hyde Park or May Fair. How many fair faces and splendid equipages we shall see! How many we shall count up in an hour's time who seem to possess the choicest gifts of this world,-beauty, wealth, rank, fashion, and troops of friends! But, alas, how few we shall see who appear happy! In how many countenances we shall read weariness, dissatisfaction, discontent, sorrow, or unhappiness, as clearly as if it was written with a pen! Yes: it is a humbling lesson to learn, but a very wholesome one. It needs something more than rank, and fashion, and beauty, to make people happy.

Come next and walk with me through some quiet country parish in merry England. Let us visit some secluded corner in our beautiful old father-land, far away from great towns, and fashionable dissipation and political strife. There are not a few such to be found in the land. There are rural parishes where there is neither street, nor public house, nor beer shop,-where there is work for all the labourers, and a church for all the population, and a school for all the children, and a minister of the Gospel to look after the people. Surely, you will say, we shall find happiness here! Surely

such parishes must be the very abodes of peace and joy!-Go into those quiet-looking cottages, one by one, and you will soon be undeceived. Learn the inner history of each family, and you will soon alter your mind. You will soon discover that backbiting, and lying, and slandering, and envy, and jealousy, and pride, and laziness, and drinking, and extravagance, and lust, and petty quarrels, can murder happiness in the country quite as much as in the town. No doubt a rural village sounds pretty in poetry, and looks beautiful in pictures; but in sober reality human nature is the same evil thing everywhere. Alas, it needs something more than a residence in a quiet country parish to make any child of Adam a happy man!

I know these are ancient things. They have been said a thousand times before without effect, and I suppose they will be said without effect again. I want no greater proof of the corruption of human nature than the pertinacity with which we seek happiness where happiness cannot be found. Century after century wise men have left on record their experience about the way to be happy. Century after century the children of men will have it that they know the way perfectly well, and need no teaching. They cast to the winds our warnings; they rush, every one, on his own favourite path; they walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain, and wake up when too late to find their whole life has been a grand mistake. Their eyes are blinded: they will not see that their visions are as baseless and disappointing as the mirage of the African desert. Like the tired traveller in those deserts, they think they are approaching a lake of cooling waters; like the same traveller, they find to their dismay that this fancied lake was a splendid optical delusion, and that they are still helpless in the midst of burning sands.

Are you a young person? I entreat you to accept the affectionate warning of a minister of the Gospel, and not to seek happiness where happiness cannot be found. Seek it not in riches; seek it not in power and rank; seek it not in pleasure; seek it not in learning. All these are bright and splendid fountains: their waters taste sweet. A crowd is standing round them, which will not leave them; but, oh, remember that God has written over each of these fountains, “He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” (John 4:13) Remember this, and be wise.

Are you poor? Are you tempted to fancy that if you had the rich man's place you would be quite happy? Resist the temptation, and cast it behind you. Envy not your wealthy neighbours: be content with such things as you have. Happiness does not depend on houses or land; silks and satins cannot shut out sorrow from the heart; castles and halls cannot prevent anxiety and care coming in at their doors. There is as much misery riding and driving about in carriages as there is walking about on foot: there is as much unhappiness in ceiled houses as in humble cottages. Oh, remember the mistakes which are common about happiness, and be wise!

III. Let me now, in the last place, point out the way to be really happy.

There is a sure path which leads to happiness, if men will only take it. There never lived the person who travelled in that path, and missed the object that he sought to attain.

It is a path open to all. It needs neither wealth, nor rank, nor learning in order to walk in it. It is for the servant as well as for the master: it is for the poor as well as for the rich. None are excluded but those who exclude themselves.

It is the one only path. All that have ever been happy, since the days of Adam, have journeyed on it. There is no royal road to happiness. Kings must be content to go side by side with their

humblest subjects, if they would be happy.

Where is this path? Where is this road? Listen, and you shall hear.

The way to be happy is to be a real, thorough-going, true-hearted Christian. Scripture declares it: experience proves it. The converted man, the believer in Christ, the child of God,-he, and he alone, is the happy man.

It sounds too simple to be true: it seems at first sight so plain a receipt that it is not believed. But the greatest truths are often the simplest. The secret which many of the wisest on earth have utterly failed to discover, is revealed to the humblest believer in Christ. I repeat it deliberately, and defy the world to disprove it: the true Christian is the only happy man.

What do I mean when I speak of a true Christian? Do I mean everybody who goes to church or chapel? Do I mean everybody who professes an orthodox creed, and bows his head at the belief? Do I mean everybody who professes to love the Gospel? No: indeed! I mean something very different. All are not Christians who are called Christians. The man I have in view is the Christian in heart and life. He who has been taught by the Spirit really to feel his sins,-he who really rests all his hopes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and His atonement,-he who has been born again and really lives a spiritual, holy life,-he whose religion is not a mere Sunday coat, but a mighty constraining principle governing every day of his life,-he is the man I mean, when I speak of a true Christian.

What do I mean when I say the true Christian is happy? Has he no doubts and no fears? Has he no anxieties and no troubles? Has he no sorrows and no cares? Does he never feel pain, and shed no tears? Far be it from me to say anything of the kind. He has a body weak and frail like other men; he has affections and passions like every one born of woman: he lives in a changeful world. But deep down in his heart he has a mine of solid peace and substantial joy which is never exhausted. This is true happiness.

Do I say that all true Christians are equally happy? No: not for a moment! There are babes in Christ's family as well as old men; there are weak members of the mystical body as well as strong ones; there are tender lambs as well as sheep. There are not only the cedars of Lebanon but the hyssop that grows on the wall. There are degrees of grace and degrees of faith. Those who have most faith and grace will have most happiness. But all, more or less, compared to the children of the world, are happy men.

Do I say that real true Christians are equally happy at all times? No: not for a moment! All have their ebbs and flows of comfort: some, like the Mediterranean sea, almost insensibly; some, like the tide at Chepstow, fifty or sixty feet at a time. Their bodily health is not always the same; their earthly circumstances are not always the same; the souls of those they love fill them at seasons with special anxiety: they themselves are sometimes overtaken by a fault, and walk in darkness. They sometimes give way to inconsistencies and besetting sins, and lose their sense of pardon. But, as a general rule, the true Christian has a deep pool of peace within him, which even at the lowest is never entirely dry.2

The true Christian is the only happy man, because his conscience is at peace. That mysterious witness for God, which is so mercifully placed within us, is fully satisfied and at rest. It sees in the blood of Christ a complete cleansing away of all its guilt. It sees in the priesthood and mediation of

Christ a complete answer to all its fears. It sees that through the sacrifice and death of Christ, God can now be just, and yet be the justifier of the ungodly. It no longer bites and stings, and makes its possessor afraid of himself. The Lord Jesus Christ has amply met all its requirements. Conscience is no longer the enemy of the true Christian, but his friend and adviser. Therefore he is happy.

The true Christian is the only happy man, because he can sit down quietly and think about his soul. He can look behind him and before him, he can look within him and around him, and feel, “All is well.”-He can think calmly on his past life, and however many and great his sins, take comfort in the thought that they are all forgiven. The righteousness of Christ covers all, as Noah's flood overtopped the highest hills.-He can think calmly about things to come, and yet not be afraid. Sickness is painful; death is solemn; the judgment day is an awful thing: but having Christ for him, he has nothing to fear.-He can think calmly about the Holy God, whose eyes are on all his ways, and feel, “He is my Father, my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. I am weak; I am unprofitable: yet in Christ He regards me as His dear child, and is well-pleased.” Oh, what a blessed privilege it is to be able to think, and not be afraid! I can well understand the mournful complaint of the prisoner in solitary confinement. He had warmth, and food, and clothing, and work, but he was not happy. And why? He said, “He was obliged to think.”

The true Christian is the only happy man, because he has sources of happiness entirely independent of this world. He has something which cannot be affected by sickness and by deaths, by private losses and by public calamities, the “peace of God, which passeth all under-standing.” He has a hope laid up for him in heaven; he has a treasure which moth and rust cannot corrupt; he has a house which can never be taken down. His loving wife may die, and his heart feel rent in twain; his darling children may be taken from him, and he may be left alone in this cold world; his earthly plans may be crossed; his health may fail: but all this time he has a portion which nothing can hurt. He has one Friend who never dies; he has possessions beyond the grave, of which nothing can deprive him: his nether springs may fail, but his upper springs are never dry. This is real happiness.

The true Christian is happy, because he is in his right position. All the powers of his being are directed to right ends. His affections are not set on things below, but on things above; his will is not bent on self-indulgence, but is submissive to the will of God; his mind is not absorbed in wretched perishable trifles. He desires useful employment: he enjoys the luxury of doing good. Who does not know the misery of disorder? Who has not tasted the discomfort of a house where everything and everybody are in their wrong places, the last things first and the first things last? The heart of an unconverted man is just such a house. Grace puts everything in that heart in its right position. The things of the soul come first, and the things of the world come second. Anarchy and confusion cease: unruly passions no longer do each one what is right in his eyes. Christ reigns over the whole man, and each part of him does his proper work. The new heart is the only really light heart, for it is the only heart that is in order.-The true Christian has found out his place. He has laid aside his pride and self-will; he sits at the feet of Jesus, and is in his right mind: he loves God and loves man, and so he is happy. In heaven all are happy because all do God's will perfectly. The nearer a man gets to this standard the happier he will be.

The plain truth is that without Christ there is no happiness in this world. He alone can give the Comforter who abideth for ever. He is the sun; without Him men never feel warm. He is the light;

without Him men are always in the dark. He is the bread; without Him men are always starving. He is the living water; without Him men are always athirst. Give them what you like,-place them where you please,-surround them with all the comforts you can imagine,-it makes no difference. Separate from Christ, the Prince of Peace, a man cannot be happy.

Give a man a sensible interest in Christ, and he will be happy in spite of poverty. He will tell you that he wants nothing that is really good. He is provided for: he has riches in possession, and riches in reversion; he has meat to eat that the world knows not of; he has friends who never leave him nor forsake him. The Father and the Son come to him, and make their abode with him: the Lord Jesus Christ sups with him, and he with Christ. (Revelation 3:20)

Give a man a sensible interest in Christ, and he will be happy in spite of sickness. His flesh may groan, and his body be worn out with pain, but his heart will rest and be at peace. One of the happiest people I ever saw was a young woman who had been hopelessly ill for many years with disease of the spine. She lay in a garret without a fire; the straw thatch was not two feet above her face. She had not the slightest hope of recovery. But she was always rejoicing in the Lord Jesus. The spirit triumphed mightily over the flesh. She was happy, because Christ was with her.3

Give a man a sensible interest in Christ, and he will be happy in spite of abounding public calamities. The government of his country may be thrown into confusion, rebellion and disorder may turn everything upside down, laws may be trampled under foot; justice and equity may be outraged; liberty may be cast down to the ground; might may prevail over right: but still his heart will not fail. He will remember that the kingdom of Christ will one day be set up. He will say, like the old Scotch minister who lived unmoved throughout the turmoil of the first French revolution: “It is all right: it shall be well with the righteous.”

I know well that Satan hates the doctrine which I am endeavouring to press upon you. I have no doubt he is filling your mind with objections and reasonings, and persuading you that I am wrong. I am not afraid to meet these objections face to face. Let us bring them forward and see what they are.

You may tell me that “you know many very religious people who are not happy at all.” You see them diligent in attending public worship. You know that they are never missing at the Sacrament of the Lord's supper. But you see in them no marks of the peace which I have been describing.

But are you sure that these people you speak of are true believers in Christ? Are you sure that, with all their appearance of religion, they are born again and converted to God? Is it not very likely that they have nothing but the name of Christianity, without the reality; and a form of godliness, without the power? Alas! you have yet to learn that people may do many religious acts, and yet possess no saving religion! It is not a mere formal, ceremonial Christianity that will ever make people happy. We want something more than going to Church, and going to sacraments, to give us peace. There must be real, vital union with Christ. It is not the formal Christian, but the true Christian, that is the happy man.

You may tell me that “you know really spiritually-minded and converted people who do not seem happy.” You have heard them frequently complaining of their own hearts, and groaning over their own corruption. They seem to you all doubts, and anxieties, and fears; and you want to know where is the happiness in these people of which I have been saying so much.

I do not deny that there are many saints of God such as these whom you describe, and I am sorry for it. I allow that there are many believers who live far below their privileges, and seem to know nothing of joy and peace in believing. But did you ever ask any of these people whether they would give up the position in religion they have reached, and go back to the world? Did you ever ask them, after all their groanings, and doubtings, and fearings, whether they think they would be happier if they ceased to follow hard after Christ? Did you ever ask those questions? I am certain if you did, that the weakest and lowest believers would all give you one answer, I am certain they would tell you that they would rather cling to their little scrap of hope in Christ, than possess the world. I am sure they would all answer, “Our faith is weak, if we have any; our grace is small, if we have any; our joy in Christ is next to nothing at all: but we cannot give up what we have got. Though the Lord slay us, we must cling to Him.” The root of happiness lies deep in many a poor weak believer's heart, when neither leaves nor blossoms are to be seen!

But you will tell me, in the last place, that “you cannot think most believers are happy, because they are so grave and serious.” You think that they do not really possess this happiness I have been describing, because their countenances do not show it. You doubt the reality of their joy, because it is so little seen.

I might easily repeat what I told you at the beginning of this paper,-that a merry face is no sure proof of a happy heart. But I will not do so. I will rather ask you whether you yourself may not be the cause why believers look grave and serious when you meet them? If you are not converted yourself, you surely cannot expect them to look at you without sorrow. They see you on the high road to destruction, and that alone is enough to give them pain: they see thousands like you, hurrying on to weeping and wailing and endless woe. Now, is it possible that such a daily sight should not give them grief? Your company, very likely, is one cause why they are grave. Wait till you are a converted man yourself, before you pass judgment on the gravity of converted people. See them in companies where all are of one heart, and all love Christ, and so far as my own experience goes, you will find no people so truly happy as true Christians.4

I repeat my assertion in this part of my subject. I repeat it boldly, confidently, deliberately. I say that there is no happiness among men that will at all compare with that of the true Christian. All other happiness by the side of his is moonlight compared to sunshine, and brass by the side of gold. Boast, if you will, of the laughter and merriment of irreligious men; sneer, if you will, at the gravity and seriousness, which appear in the demeanour of many Christians. I have looked the whole subject in the face, and am not moved. I say that the true Christian alone is the truly happy man, and the way to be happy is to be a true Christian.

And now I am going to close this paper by a few words of plain application. I have endeavoured to show what is essential to true happiness. I have endeavoured to expose the fallacy of many views which prevail upon the subject. I have endeavoured to point out, in plain and unmistakable words, where true happiness alone can be found. Suffer me to wind up all by an affectionate appeal to the consciences of all into whose hands this volume may fall.

(1) In the first place, let me entreat every reader of this paper to apply to his own heart the solemn inquiry, Are you happy?

High or low, rich or poor, master or servant, farmer or labourer, young or old, here is a question that deserves an answer,-Are you really happy?

Man of the world, who art caring for nothing but the things of time, neglecting the Bible, making a god of business or money, providing for everything but the day of judgment, scheming and planning about everything but eternity: are you happy? You know you are not.

Foolish woman, who art trifling life away in levity and frivolity, spending hours after hours on that poor frail body which must soon feed the worms, making an idol of dress and fashion, and excitement, and human praise, as if this world was all: are you happy? You know you are not.

Young man, who art bent on pleasure and self-indulgence, fluttering from one idle pastime to another, like the moth about the candle,-fancying yourself clever and knowing, and too wise to be led by parsons, and ignorant that the devil is leading you captive, like the ox that is led to the slaughter: are you happy? You know you are not.

Yes: each and all of you, you are not happy! and in your own consciences you know it well. You may not allow it, but it is sadly true. There is a great empty place in each of your hearts, and nothing will fill it. Pour into it money, learning, rank, and pleasure, and it will be empty still. There is a sore place in each of your consciences, and nothing will heal it. Infidelity cannot; free-thinking cannot; Romanism cannot: they are all quack medicines. Nothing can heal it, but that which at present you have not used,-the simple Gospel of Christ. Yes: you are indeed a miserable people!

Take warning this day, that you never will be happy till you are converted. You might as well expect to feel the sun shine on your face when you turn your back to it, as to feel happy when you turn your back on God and on Christ.

(2) In the next place, let me warn all who are not true Christians of the folly of living a life which cannot make them happy.

I pity you from the bottom of my heart, and would fain persuade you to open your eyes and be wise. I stand as a watchman on the tower of the everlasting Gospel. I see you sowing misery for yourselves, and I call upon you to stop and think, before it is too late. Oh, that God may show you your folly!

You are hewing out for yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water. You are spending your time, and strength, and affections on that which will give you no return for your labour.-“spending your money on that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not.” (Isaiah 55:2) You are building up Babels of your own contriving, and ignorant that God will pour contempt on your schemes for procuring happiness, because you attempt to be happy without Him.

Awake from your dreams, I entreat you, and show yourselves men. Think of the uselessness of living a life which you will be ashamed of when you die, and of having a mere nominal religion, which will just fail you when it is most wanted.

Open your eyes and look round the world. Tell me who was ever really happy without God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. Look at the road in which you are travelling. Mark the footsteps of those who have gone before you: see how many have turned away from it, and confessed they were

wrong.

I warn you plainly, that if you are not a true Christian you will miss happiness in the world that now is, as well as in the world to come. Oh, believe me, the way of happiness, and the way of salvation are one and the same! He that will have his own way, and refuses to serve Christ, will never be really happy. But he that serves Christ has the promise of both lives. He is happy on earth, and will be happier still in heaven.

If you are neither happy in this world nor the next, it will be all your own fault. Oh, think of this! Do not be guilty of such enormous folly. Who does not mourn over the folly of the drunkard, the opium eater, and the suicide? But there is no folly like that of the impenitent child of the world.

(3) In the next place, let me entreat all readers of this book, who are not yet happy, to seek happiness where alone it can be found.

The keys of the way to happiness are in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is sealed and appointed by God the Father, to give the bread of life to them that hunger, and to give the water of life to them that thirst. The door which riches and rank and learning have so often tried to open, and tried in vain, is now ready to open to every humble, praying believer. Oh, if you want to be happy, come to Christ!

Come to Him, confessing that you are weary of your own ways, and want rest, that you find you have no power and might to make yourself holy or happy or fit for heaven, and have no hope but in Him. Tell Him this unreservedly. This is coming to Christ.

Come to Him, imploring Him to show you His mercy, and grant you His salvation,-to wash you in His own blood, and take your sins away,-to speak peace to your conscience, and heal your troubled soul. Tell Him all this unreservedly. This is coming to Christ.

You have everything to encourage you. The Lord Jesus Himself invites you. He proclaims to you as well as to others, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30) Wait for nothing. You may feel unworthy. You may feel as if you did not repent enough. But wait no longer. Come to Christ.

You have everything to encourage you. Thousands have walked in the way you are invited to enter, and have found it good. Once, like yourself, they served the world, and plunged deeply into folly and sin. Once, like yourself, they became weary of their wickedness, and longed for deliverance and rest. They heard of Christ, and His willingness to help and save: they came to Him by faith and prayer, after many a doubt and hesitation; they found Him a thousand times more gracious than they had expected. They rested on Him and were happy: they carried His cross and tasted peace. Oh, walk in their steps.

I beseech you, by the mercies of God, to come to Christ. As ever you would be happy, I entreat you to come to Christ. Cast off delays. Awake from your past slumber: arise, and be free! This day come to Christ.

(4) In the last place, let me offer a few hints to all true Christians for the increase and promotion of their happiness.

I offer these hints with diffidence. I desire to apply them to my own conscience as well as to your's. You have found Christ's service happy. I have no doubt that you feel such sweetness in Christ's peace that you would fain know more of it. I am sure that these hints deserve attention.

Believers, if you would have an increase of happiness in Christ's service, labour every year to grow in grace. Beware of standing still. The holiest men are always the happiest. Let your aim be every year to be more holy,-to know more, to feel more, to see more of the fulness of Christ. Rest not upon old grace: do not be content with the degree of religion whereunto you have attained. Search the Scriptures more earnestly; pray more fervently; hate sin more; mortify self-will more; become more humble the nearer you draw to your end; seek more direct personal communion with the Lord Jesus; strive to be more like Enoch,-daily walking with God; keep your conscience clear of little sins; grieve not the Spirit; avoid wranglings and disputes about the lesser matters of religion: lay more firm hold upon those great truths, without which no man can be saved. Remember and practise these things, and you will be more happy.

Believers, if you would have an increase of happiness in Christ's service, labour every year to be more thankful. Pray that you may know more and more what it is to “rejoice in the Lord.” (Phil. iii. 1.) Learn to have a deeper sense of your own wretched sinfulness and corruption, and to be more deeply grateful, that by the grace of God you are what you are. Alas, there is too much complaining and too little thanksgiving among the people of God! There is too much murmuring and poring over the things that we have not. There is too little praising and blessing for the many undeserved mercies that we have. Oh, that God would pour out upon us a great spirit of thankfulness and praise!

Believers, if you would have an increase of happiness in Christ's service, labour every year to do more good. Look round the circle in which your lot is cast, and lay yourself out to be useful. Strive to be of the same character with God: He is not only good, but “doeth good.” (Psalms 119:68) Alas, there is far too much selfishness among believers in the present day! There is far too much lazy sitting by the fire nursing our own spiritual diseases, and croaking over the state of our own hearts. Up; and be useful in your day and generation! Is there no one in all the world that you can read to? Is there no one that you can speak to? Is there no one that you can write to? Is there literally nothing that you can do for the glory of God, and the benefit of your fellow-men? Oh I cannot think it! I cannot think it. There is much that you might do, if you had only the will. For your own happiness' sake, arise and do it, without delay. The bold, outspeaking, working Christians are always the happiest. The more you do for God, the more God will do for you.

The compromising lingering Christian must never expect to taste perfect peace. THE MOST DECIDED CHRISTIAN WILL ALWAYS BE THE HAPPIEST MAN.

FOOTNOTES

1 Cervantes, author of Don Quixote, at a time when all Spain was laughing at his humorous work, was overwhelmed with a deep cloud of melancholy.

Moliére, the first of French comic writers, carried into his domestic circle a sadness which the greatest worldly prosperity could never dispel.

Samuel Foote, the noted wit of the last century, died of a broken heart.

Theodore Hooke, the facetious novel writer, who could set everybody laughing, says of himself in his diary, “I am suffering under a constant depression of spirits, which no one who sees me in society dreams of.”

A wobegone stranger consulted a physician about his health. The physician advised him to keep up his spirits by going to hear the great comic actor of the day. “You should go and hear Matthews. He would make you well.” “Alas, sir,” was the monoply, “I am Matthews himself!”-Pictorial Pages.

2 I use the words, “as a general rule,” advisedly. When a believer falls into such a horrible sin as that of David, it would be monstrous to talk of his feeling inward peace a man professing to be a true Christian talked to me of being in such a case,-before giving any evidence of the deepest, most abasing repentance,-I should feel great doubts whether he ever had any grace at all.

3 John Howard, the famous Christian philanthropist, in his last journey said, “I hope I have sources of enjoyment that depend not on the particular spot I inhabit. A rightly cult “mind, under the power of religion and the exercises of beneficed dispositions, affords a ground of satisfaction little affected by heres and theres,” never missing at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But you see in them no marks of the peace which I have been describing.

4 When the infidel Hume asked Bishop Horne why religious people always looked melancholy, the learned prelate replied, “The sight of you, Mr. Hume, would make any Christian melancholy.”-Sinclair 's Aphorisms. Page 13.

Chapter 39

Having Spirit

[Taken from “Old Paths” as first published in 1878AD] HAVING THE SPIRIT.

by JOHN Charles Ryle D.D.

“Having not the Spirit.”- Jude 1:19.

I TAKE it for granted that every reader of this paper believes in the Holy Spirit. The number of people in this country who are infidels, deists, or Socinians, and openly deny the doctrine of the Trinity, is happily not very great. Most persons have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. There are few Churchmen, at any rate, who have not often heard the well-known words of our old Catechism, “I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.”

But, notwithstanding all this, it would be well for many if they would consider what they know of the Holy Spirit beyond His name. What experimental acquaintance have you with the Spirit's work? What has He done for you? What benefit have you received from Him? You can say of God the Father, “He made me and all the world;” you can say of God the Son, “He died for me and all mankind:” but can you say anything about the Holy Ghost? Can you say, with any degree of confidence, “He dwells in me, and sanctifies me”? In one word, Have you the Spirit? The text which heads this paper will tell you that there is such a thing as “not having the Spirit.” This is the point which I press upon your attention.

I believe the point to be one of vital importance at all seasons. I hold it to be one of special importance in the present day. I consider that clear views about the work of the Holy Spirit are among the best preservatives against the many false doctrines which abound in our times. Suffer me then, to lay before you a few things, which by God's blessing, may throw light on the subject of having the Spirit.

I. Let me explain the immense importance of “Having the Spirit.”

II. Let me point out the great general principle by which alone the question can be tried,-“Have you the Spirit?”

III. Let me describe the particular effects which the Spirit always produces on the souls in which He dwells.

I. Let me, in the first place, explain the immense importance of having the Spirit.

It is absolutely necessary to make this point clear. Unless you see this I shall appear like one beating the air all through this paper. Once let your mind lay hold on this, and half the work I want to do is already done for your soul.

I can easily fancy some reader saying, “I do not see the use of this question! Supposing I have not the Spirit, where is the mighty harm? I try to do my duty in this world: I attend my church regularly:

I receive the Sacrament occasionally: I believe I am as good a Christian as my neighbours. I say my prayers: I trust God will pardon my sins for Christ's sake. I do not see why I should not reach heaven at last, without troubling myself with hard questions about the Spirit."

If these are your thoughts, I entreat you to give me your attention for a few minutes, while I try to supply you with reasons for thinking differently. Believe me, nothing less than your soul's salvation depends on "Having the Spirit." Life or death, heaven or hell, eternal happiness or eternal misery, are bound up with the subject of this paper.

(a) Remember, for one thing, if you have not the Spirit, you have no part in Christ, and no title to heaven.

The words of St. Paul are express and unmistakable "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8:9) The words of St. John are no less clear: "Hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us." (1 John 3:24) The indwelling of God the Holy Spirit is the common mark of all true believers in Christ. It is the Shepherd's mark on the flock of the Lord Jesus, distinguishing them from the rest of the world. It is the goldsmith's stamp on the genuine sons of God, which separates them from the dross and mass of false professors. It is the King's own seal on those who are His peculiar people, proving them to be His own property. It is "the earnest" which the Redeemer gives to His believing disciples while they are in the body, as a pledge of the full and complete "redemption" yet to come in the resurrection morning. (Ephesians 1:14) This is the case of all believers. They all have the Spirit.

Let it be distinctly understood that he who has not the Spirit has not Christ. He who has not Christ has no pardon of his sins,-no peace with God,-no title to heaven,-no well-grounded hope of being saved. His religion is like the house built on the sand. It may look well in fine weather. It may satisfy him in the time of health and prosperity. But when the flood rises, and the wind blows,-when sickness and trouble come up against him, it will fall and bury him under its ruins. He lives without a good hope, and without a good hope he dies. He will rise again only to be miserable. He will stand in the judgment only to be condemned; he will see saints and angels looking on, and remember he might have been among them, but too late; he will see lost myriads around him, and find they cannot comfort him, but too late. This will be the end of the man who thinks to reach heaven without the Spirit.

Settle these things down in your memory, and let them never be forgotten. Are they not worth remembering? No Holy Spirit in you,-no part in Christ! No part in Christ,-no forgiveness of sins! No forgiveness of sins,-no peace with God! No peace with God,-no title to heaven! No title to heaven, no admission into heaven! No admission into heaven,-and what then? Aye: what then? You may well ask. Whither will you flee? Which way will you turn? To what refuge will you run? There is none at all. There remains nothing but hell. Not admitted into heaven, you must sink at last into hell.

I ask every reader of this paper to mark well what I say. Perhaps it startles you: but may it not be good for you to be startled? Have I told you anything more than simple scriptural truth? Where is the defective link in the chain of reasoning you have heard? Where is the flaw in the argument? I believe in my conscience there is none. From not having the Spirit to being in hell, there is but a long flight of downward steps. Living without the Spirit, you are already on the top; dying without

the Spirit, you will find your way to the bottom.

(b) Remember, for another thing, if you have not the Spirit you have no holiness of heart, and no meetness for heaven.

Heaven is the place to which all people hope to go after death. It would be well for many if they considered calmly what kind of dwelling-place heaven is. It is the habitation of the King of kings, who is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” and it must needs be a holy place. It is a place into which Scripture tells us there shall enter in nothing “that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination.” (Revelation 21:27) It is a place where there shall be nothing wicked, sinful, or sensual,-nothing worldly, foolish, frivolous, or profane. There, let the covetous man remember, shall be no more money; there, let the pleasure-seeker remember, shall be no more races, theatres, novel reading, or balls; there, let the drunkard and the gambler remember, shall be no more strong drink, no more dice, no more betting, no more cards. The everlasting presence of God, saints, and angels,-the perpetual doing of God's will,-the complete absence of everything which God does not approve,-these are the chief things which shall make up heaven. It shall be an eternal Sabbath day.

For this heaven we are all by nature utterly unfit. We have no capacity for enjoying its happiness; we have no taste for its blessings; we have no eye to see its beauty; we have no heart to feel its comforts. Instead of freedom, we should find it bondage; instead of glorious liberty, we should find it constant constraint; instead of a splendid palace, we should find it a gloomy prison. A fish on dry land, a sheep in the water, an eagle in a cage, a painted savage in a royal drawing room, would all feel more at ease and in their place than a natural man in heaven. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14)

For this heaven it is the special office of the Holy Ghost to prepare men's souls. He alone can change the earthly heart, and purify the worldly affections of Adam's children. He alone can can bring their minds into harmony with God, and tune them for the eternal company of saints, and angels, and Christ. He alone can make them love what God loves, and hate what God hates, and delight in God's presence. He alone can set the limbs of human nature, which were broken and dislocated by Adam's fall, and bring about a real unity between man's will and God's. And this He does for every one that is saved. It is written of believers that they are “saved according to God's mercy,” but it is, “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” They are chosen unto salvation, but it is “through sanctification of the Spirit,” as well as “belief of the truth.” (Titus 3:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13)

Let this also be written down on the tablet of your memory. No entrance into heaven without the Spirit first entering your heart upon earth! No admission into glory in the next life without previous sanctification in this life! No Holy Spirit in you in this world,-then no heaven in the world to come! You would not be fit for it; you would not be ready for it; you would not like it; you would not enjoy it. There is much use made in the present day of the word “holy.” Our ears are wearied with “holy church,” and “holy baptism,” and “holy days,” and holy water,” and “holy services,” and “holy priests.” But one thing is a thousand times more important: and that is, to be made a really holy man by the Spirit. We must be made partakers of the Divine nature, while we are alive. We must “sow to the Spirit,” if we would ever reap life everlasting. (2 Peter 1:4; Galatians 6:8)

(c) Remember, for another thing, if you have not the Spirit, you have no right to be considered a true Christian, and no will or power to become one.

It requires little to make a Christian according to the standard of the world. Only let a man be baptized and attend some place of worship, and the requirements of the world are satisfied. The man's belief may not be so intelligent as that of a Turk: he may be profoundly ignorant of the Bible. The man's practice may be no better than that of a heathen: many a respectable Hindoo might put him to shame.-But what of that? He is an Englishman! He has been baptized! He goes to church or chapel, and behaves decently when there! What more would you have? If you do not call him a Christian you are thought very uncharitable!

But it takes a great deal more than this to make a man a real Christian according to the standard of the Bible. It requires the co-operation of all the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The election of God the Father,-the blood and intercession of God the Son,-the sanctification of God the Spirit,-must all meet together on the soul that is to be saved. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost must unite to work the work of making any child of Adam a true Christian.

This is a deep subject, and one that must be handled with reverence. But where the Bible speaks with decision, there we may also speak with decision; and the words of the Bible have no meaning if the work of the Holy Spirit be not just as needful in order to make a man a true Christian, as the work of the Father or the work of the Son. “No man,” we are told, “can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” (1 Corinthians 12:3) True Christians, we are taught in Scripture, are “born of the Spirit” They live in the Spirit; they are led by the Spirit; by the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body; by one Spirit they have access through Jesus unto the Father. Their graces are all the fruit of the Spirit; they are the temple of the Holy Ghost; they are a habitation of God through the Spirit; they walk after the Spirit; they are strengthened by the Spirit. Through the Spirit they wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. (John 3:6; Galatians 5:25; Romans 8:13-14; Ephesians 2:18; Galatians 5:22; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Ephesians 2:22; Romans 8:4; Ephesians 3:16; Galatians 5:5) These are plain Scriptural expressions. Who will dare to gainsay them?

The truth is that the deep corruption of human nature would make salvation impossible if it were not for the work of the Spirit. Without Him the Father's love and the Son's redemption are set before us in vain. The Spirit must reveal them, the Spirit must apply them, or else we are lost souls.

Nothing less than the power of Him who moved on the face of the waters in the day of creation can ever raise us from our low estate. He who said, “Let there be light, and there was light,” must speak the word before any one of us will ever rise to newness of life. He who came down on the day of Pentecost, must come down on our poor dead souls, before they will ever see the kingdom of God. Mercies and afflictions may move the surface of our hearts, but they alone will never reach the inner man. Sacraments, and services, and sermons may produce outward formality, and clothe us with a skin of religion, but there will be no life. Ministers may make communicants, and fill churches with regular worshippers: the almighty power of the Holy Ghost alone can make true Christians, and fill heaven with glorified saints.

Let this also be written in your memory, and never forgotten. No Holy Spirit,-no true Christianity! You must have the Spirit in you, as well as Christ for you, if you are ever to be saved. God must be

your loving Father, Jesus must be your known Redeemer, the Holy Ghost must be your felt Sanctifier, or else it will be better for you never to have been born.

I press the subject on the serious consideration of all who read these pages. I trust I have said enough to show you that it is of vital importance to your soul to “have the Spirit.” It is no abstruse and mysterious point of divinity; it is no nice question of which the solution matters little one way or another. It is a subject in which is bound up the everlasting peace of your soul.

You may not like the tidings. You may call it enthusiasm, or fanaticism, or extravagance. I take my stand on the plain teaching of the Bible. I say that God must dwell in your heart by the Spirit on earth, or you will never dwell with God in heaven.

“Ah,” you may say, “I do not know much about it. I trust Christ will be merciful. I hope I shall go to heaven after all.” I answer, No man ever yet tasted of Christ's mercy who did not also receive of His Spirit.-No man was ever justified who was not also sanctified.-No man ever went to heaven who was not led there by the Spirit.

II. Let me, in the second place, point out the great general rule and principle by which the question may be decided, whether we have the Spirit.

I can quite understand that the idea of knowing whether we “have the Spirit” is disagreeable to many minds. I am not ignorant of the objections which Satan at once stirs up in the natural heart. “It is impossible to know it,” says one person: “it is a deep thing, and beyond our reach.”-” It is too mysterious a thing to inquire into,” says another: “we must be content to leave the subject in uncertainty.”-“It is wrong to pretend to know anything about it,” says a third: “we were never meant to look into such questions. It is only fit for enthusiasts and fanatics to talk of having the Spirit.”-I hear such objections without being moved by them. I say that it can be known whether a man has the Spirit. It can be known,-it may be known,-it ought to be known. It needs no vision from heaven, no revelation from an angel to discern it; it needs nothing but calm inquiry by the light of God's Word. Let us enter upon that inquiry.

All men have not the Holy Spirit. I regard the doctrine of an inward spiritual light enjoyed by all mankind as an unscriptural delusion. I believe the modern notion of universal inspiration to be a baseless dream. Without controversy, God has not left Himself without a witness in the heart of fallen man. He has left in every mind sufficient knowledge of right and wrong to make all men responsible and accountable. He has given to every child of Adam a conscience: but He has not given to every child of Adam the Holy Ghost. A man may have good wishes like Balaam, do many things like Herod, be almost persuaded like Agrippa, and tremble like Felix, and yet be as utterly destitute of the grace of the Spirit as these men were. St. Paul tells us that before conversion men may “know God” in a certain sense, and have “thoughts accusing or excusing one another.” But he also tells us that before conversion men are “without God “and “without Christ,” have “no hope,” and are “darkness” itself. (Romans 1:21; Romans 2:15; Ephesians 2:12; Ephesians 5:8) The Lord Jesus Himself says of the Spirit,” The world seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John 14:17)

All members of Churches and baptized persons have not the Spirit. I see no ground in Scripture for saying that every man who receives baptism receives the Holy Ghost, and that we ought to regard him as born of the Spirit. I dare not tell baptized people that they all have the Spirit, and that

they only need “stir up the gift of God” within them in order to be saved. I see, on the contrary, that Jude speaks of members of the visible Church in his day as “not having the Spirit.” Some of them probably had been baptized by the hands of apostles, and admitted into full communion with the professing Church. No matter! they “had not the Spirit.” (Jude 1:19.)

It is vain to attempt to evade the power of this single expression. It teaches plainly that “having the Spirit” is not the lot of every man, and not the portion of every member of the visible Church of Christ. It shows the necessity of finding out some general rule and principle by which the presence of the Spirit in a man may be ascertained. He does not dwell in every one. Baptism and churchmanship are no proofs of His presence. How, then, shall I know whether a man has the Spirit?

The presence of the Spirit in a man's soul can only be known by the effects which He produces. The fruits He causes to be brought forth in a man's heart and life, are the only evidence which can be depended on. A man's faith, a man's opinions, and a man's practice, are the witnesses we must examine, if we would find out whether a man has the Spirit. This is the rule of the Lord Jesus “Every tree is known by his own fruit.” (Luke 6:44)

The effects which the Holy Spirit produces may always be seen. The man of the world may not understand them: they may in many cases be feeble and indistinct; but where the Spirit is, He will not be hid. He is not idle when He enters the heart: He does not lie still; He does not sleep: He will make His presence known. He will shine out little by little through the windows of a man's daily habits and conversation, and manifest to the world that He is in him. A dormant, torpid, silent indwelling of the Spirit is a notion that pleases the minds of many. It is a notion for which I see no authority in the Word of God. I hold entirely with the Homily for Whit-Sunday: “As the tree is known by his fruit, so is also the Holy Ghost.”

In whomsoever I see the effects and fruits of the Spirit, in that man I see one who has the Spirit. I believe it to be not only charitable to think so, but presumption to doubt it. I do not expect to behold the Holy Ghost with my bodily eyes, or to touch Him with my bands. But I need no angel to come down to show me where He dwells; I need no vision from heaven to tell me where I may find Him. Only show me a man in whom the fruits of the Spirit are to be seen, and I see one who “has the Spirit.” I will not doubt the inward presence of the almighty cause, when I see the outward fact of an evident effect.

Can I see the wind on a stormy day? I cannot: but I can see the effects of its force and power. When I see the clouds driven before it, and the trees bending under it,-when I hear it whistling through doors and windows, or howling round the chimney tops, I do not for a moment doubt its existence. I say, “There is a wind.” Just so it is with the presence of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the dew of heaven as it falls on a summer evening? I cannot. It comes down softly and gently, noiseless and imperceptible. But when I go forth in the morning after a cloudless night, and see every leaf sparkling with moisture, and feel every blade of grass damp and wet, I say at once, “There has been a dew.” Just so it is with the presence of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the hand of the sower when I walk through the corn fields in the month of July? I cannot. I see nothing but millions of ears rich with grain, and bending to the ground with ripeness: but do I suppose that harvest came by chance, and grew of itself? I suppose nothing of the kind. I know

when I see those corn fields that the plough and the harrow were at work one day, and that a hand has been there which sowed the seed. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the magnetic fluid in the compass-needle I cannot. It acts in a hidden mysterious way: but when I see that little piece of iron always turning to the north, I know at once that it is under the secret influence of magnetic power. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the mainspring of my watch when I look upon its face? I cannot. But when I see the fingers going round and telling the hours and minutes of the day in regular succession, I do not doubt the mainspring's existence. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit.

Can I see the steersman of the homeward-bound ship, when she first comes in sight, and her sails whiten on the horizon? I cannot. But when I stand on the pier-head and see that ship working her course over the sea towards the harbour's mouth, like a thing of life, I know well there is one at the helm who guides her movements. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit.

I charge all my readers to remember this. Establish it as a settled principle in your mind, that if the Holy Ghost really is in a man, it will be seen in the effects He produces on his heart and life.

Beware of supposing that a man may have the Spirit when there is no outward evidence of His presence in the soul. It is a dangerous and unscriptural delusion to think so. We must never lose sight of the broad principles laid down for us in Scripture: “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”-“In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.” (1 John 1:6; 1 John 3:10)

You have heard, I doubt not, of a wretched class of Christians called Antinomians. They are persons who boast of having an interest in Christ, and say they are pardoned and forgiven, while at the same time they live in wilful sin and open breach of God's commandments. You have been told, I dare say, that such people are miserably deceived. They are going down to hell with a lie in their right hand. The true believer in Christ is “dead to sin.” Every man that has real hope in Christ “purifieth himself even as He is pure.” (1 John 3:3)

But I will tell you of a delusion quite as dangerous as that of the Antinomians, and far more specious. That delusion is,-to flatter yourself you have the Spirit dwelling in your heart, while there are no fruits of the Spirit to be seen in your life. I firmly believe that this delusion is ruining thousands, as surely as Antinomianism. It is just as perilous to dishonour the Holy Ghost, as it is to dishonour Christ. It is just as offensive to God to pretend to an interest in the work of the Spirit, as it is to pretend to an interest in the work of Christ.

Once for all, I charge my readers to remember that the effects which the Spirit produces are the only trustworthy evidences of His presence. To talk of the Holy Ghost dwelling in you and yet being unseen in your life, is wild work indeed. It confounds the first principles of the Gospel: it confounds light and darkness,-nature and grace,-conversion and unconversion,-faith and unbelief,-the children of God and the children of the devil.

There is only one safe position in this matter. There is only one safe answer to the question, “How shall we decide who have the Spirit?” We must take our stand on the old principle laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ “By their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matthew 7:20) Where the Spirit is there will

be fruit: he who has no fruit of the Spirit has not the Spirit. A work of the Spirit unfelt, unseen, inoperative, is a positive delusion. Where the Spirit really is He will be felt, seen, and known.

III. Let me, in the last place, describe the particular effects which the Spirit produces on the souls in which He dwells.

I regard this part of the subject as the most important of all. Hitherto I have spoken generally of the great leading principles which must guide us in inquiring about the work of the Holy Ghost. I must now come closer, and speak of the special marks by which the presence of the Holy Ghost in any individual heart may be discerned. Happily, with the Bible for our light, these marks are not hard to find out.

Some things I wish to premise before entering fully into the subject. It is needful in order to clear the way.

(a) I grant freely that there are some deep mysteries about the work of the Spirit. I cannot explain the manner of His coming into the heart. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8) I cannot explain why He comes into one heart and not into another.-why He condescends to dwell in this man and not in that. I only know that so it is. He acts as a sovereign. To use the words of the Church Catechism, He sanctifieth “the elect people of God.” But I remember also that I cannot explain why I was born in Christian England, and not in heathen Africa. I am satisfied to believe that all God's work is well done. It is enough for me to be in the King's court, without being of the King's counsel.

(b) I grant freely that there are great diversities in the operations by which the Spirit carries on His work in men's souls.-There are differences in the ages at which He begins to enter the heart. With some He begins young, as with John the Baptist and Timothy: with some he begins old, as with Manasseh and Zacchaeus.-There are differences in the feelings which He first stirs tip in the heart. He leads some by strong terror and alarm, like the jailer at Philippi. He leads some by gently opening their hearts to receive the truth, as Lydia, the purple-seller.-There are differences in the time occupied in effecting this complete change of character. With some the change is immediate and sudden, as it was with Saul when he journeyed to Damascus: with others it is gradual and slow, as it was with Nicodemus the Pharisee.-There are differences in the instruments He uses in first awakening the soul from its natural death. With some He uses a sermon, with others the Bible, with others a tract, with others a friend's advice, with others a sickness or affliction, with others no one particular thing that can be distinctly traced. All this is most important to understand. To require all persons to be squared down to one kind of experience is a most grievous mistake.

(c) I grant freely that the beginnings of the Spirit's work are often small and imperceptible. The seed from which the spiritual character is formed is often very minute at first. The fountain-head of the spiritual life, like that of many a mighty river, is frequently at its outset a little trickling stream. The beginnings therefore of the Spirit's work in a soul are generally overlooked by the world,-very frequently not duly valued and encouraged by other Christians,-and almost without exception thoroughly misunderstood by the soul itself which is the subject of them. Let that never be forgotten. The man in whom the Spirit begins to work is never hardly aware, till long afterwards, that his state of mind about the time of his conversion arose from the entrance of the Holy Spirit.

But still, after all these concessions and allowances, there are certain great leading effects which the Spirit produces on the soul in which He dwells, which are always one and the same. Those who have the Spirit may be led at first by different paths, but they are always brought, sooner or later, into one and the same narrow way. Their leading opinions in religion are the same; their leading desires are the same; their general walk is the same. They may differ from one another widely in their natural character, but their spiritual character, in its main features, is always one. The Holy Ghost always produces one general kind of effects. Shades and varieties there are no doubt in the experience of those on whose hearts He works, but the general outline of their faith and life is always the same.

What then are these general effects which the Spirit always produces on those who really have Him? What are the marks of His presence in the soul? This is the question which now remains to be considered. Let us try to set down these marks in order.

1. All who have the Spirit are quickened by Him, and made spiritually alive. He is called in Scripture, “The Spirit of life.” (Romans 8:3) “It is the Spirit,” says our Lord Jesus Christ, “that quickeneth.” (John 6:63) We are all by nature dead in trespasses and sins. We have neither feeling nor interest about religion; we have neither faith, nor hope, nor fear, nor love: our hearts are in a state of torpor; they are compared in Scripture to a stone. We may be alive about money, learning, politics, or pleasure, but we are dead towards God.-All this is changed when the Spirit comes into the heart. He raises us from this state of death, and makes us new creatures. He awakens the conscience, and inclines the will towards God. He causes old things to pass away, and all things to become new. He gives us a new heart; He makes us put off the old man, and put on the new. He blows the trumpet in the ear of our slumbering faculties, and sends us forth to walk the world as if we were new beings. How unlike was Lazarus shut up in the silent tomb, to Lazarus coming forth at our Lord's command! How unlike was Jairus' daughter lying cold on her bed amidst weeping friends, to Jairus' daughter rising and speaking to her mother as she was wont to do! Just as unlike is the man in whom the Spirit dwells to what he was before the Spirit came into him.

I appeal to every thinking reader. Can he whose heart is manifestly full of everything but God,-hard, cold, and insensible,-can he be said to “have the Spirit”? Judge for yourself.

2. All who have the Spirit are taught by Him. He is called in Scripture, “The Spirit of wisdom and revelation.” (Ephesians 1:17) It was the promise of the Lord Jesus, “He shall teach you all things;” “He shall guide you into all truth.” (John 14:26; John 16:13) We are all by nature ignorant of spiritual truth. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: they are foolishness to him.” (1 Corinthians 2:14) Our eyes are blinded. We neither know God, nor Christ, nor ourselves, nor the world, nor sin, nor heaven, nor hell, as we ought. We see everything under false colours.-The Spirit alters entirely this state of things. He opens the eyes of our understandings; He illumines us; He calls us out of darkness into marvellous light; He takes away the veil; He shines into our hearts, and makes us see things as they really are. No wonder that all true Christians are so remarkably agreed upon the essentials of true religion! The reason is that they have all learned in one school,-the school of the Holy Ghost. No wonder that true Christians can understand each other at once, and find common ground of communion! They have been taught the same language by One whose lessons are never forgotten.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who is ignorant of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and blind to his own state, can he be said to “have the Spirit”? Judge for yourself.

3. All who have the Spirit are led by Him to the Scriptures. This is the instrument by which He specially works on the soul. The Word is called “the sword of the Spirit.” Those who are born again are said to be “born by the Word.” (Ephesians 6:17; 1 Peter 1:23) All Scripture was written under His inspiration: He never teaches anything which is not therein written. He causes the man in whom He dwells to “delight in the law of the Lord.” (Psalms 1:2) Just as the infant desires the milk which nature has provided for it, and refuses all other food, so does the soul which has the Spirit desire the sincere milk of the Word. Just as the Israelites fed on the manna in the wilderness, so are the children of God taught by the Holy Ghost to feed on the contents of the Bible.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who never reads the Bible, or only reads it formally,-can he be said to “have the Spirit”? Judge for yourself.

4. All who have the Spirit are convinced by Him of sin. This is an especial office which the Lord Jesus promised He should fulfil. “When He is come, He shall reprove the world of sin.” (John 16:8) He alone can open a man's eyes to the real extent of His guilt and corruption before God. He always does this when He comes into the soul. He puts us in our right place; He shows us the vileness of our own hearts, and makes us cry with the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” He pulls down those proud, self-righteous, self-justifying notions with which we are all born, and makes us feel as we ought to feel,” I am a bad man, and I deserve to be in hell.” Ministers may alarm us for a little season; sickness may break the ice on our hearts; but the ice will soon freeze again if it is not thawed by the breath of the Spirit, and convictions not wrought by Him will pass away like the morning dew.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can the man who never feels the burden of his sins, and knows not what it is to be humbled by the thought of them,-can he “have the Spirit”? Judge for yourself.

5. All who have the Spirit are led by Him to Christ for salvation. It is one special part of His office to “testify of Christ,” to “take of the things of Christ, and to show them to us.” (John 15:26; John 16:15) By nature we all think to work our own way to heaven: we fancy in our blindness that we can make our peace with God. From this miserable blindness the Spirit delivers us. He shows us that in ourselves we are lost and hopeless, and that Christ is the only door by which we can enter heaven and be saved. He teaches us that nothing but the blood of Jesus can atone for sin, and that through His mediation alone God can be just and the justifier of the ungodly. He reveals to us the exquisite fitness and suitableness to our souls of Christ's salvation. He unfolds to us the beauty of the glorious doctrine of justification by simple faith. He sheds abroad in our hearts that mighty love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Just as the dove flies to the well-known cleft of the rock, so does the soul of him who has the Spirit flee to Christ and rest on Him. (Romans 5:5)

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who knows nothing of faith in Christ, be said to “have the Spirit”? Judge for yourself.

6. All who have the Spirit are by Him made holy. He is “the Spirit of holiness.” (Romans 1:4) When He dwells in men, He makes them follow after “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, faith, patience, temperance.” He makes it natural to them, through their new “Divine

nature," to count all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and to "hate every false way." (2 Peter 1:4; Psalms 119:128) Sin is no more pleasant to them: it is their sorrow when tempted by it; it is their shame when they are overtaken by it. Their desire is to be free from it altogether. Their happiest times are when they are enabled to walk most closely with God: their saddest times are when they are furthest oft from Him.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can those who do not even pretend to live strictly according to God's will, be said to "have the Spirit"? Judge for yourself.

7. All those who have the Spirit are spiritually minded. To use the words of the Apostle Paul, "They that are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit." (Romans 8:5) The general tone, tenor, and bias of their minds is in favour of spiritual things. They do not serve God by fits and starts, but habitually. They may be drawn aside by strong temptations; but the general tendency of their lives, ways, tastes, thoughts and habits, is spiritual. You see it in the way they spend their leisure time, the company they love to keep, and their conduct in their own homes. And all is the result of the spiritual nature implanted in them by the Holy Ghost. Just as the caterpillar when it becomes a butterfly can no longer be content to crawl on earth, but will fly upwards and use its wings, so will the affections of the man who has the Spirit be ever reaching upwards toward God.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can those whose minds are wholly intent on the things of this world be said to "have the Spirit"? Judge for yourself.

8. All that have the Spirit feel a conflict within them, between the old nature and the new. The words of St. Paul are true, more or less, of all the children of God: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Galatians 5:17) They feel a holy principle within their breasts, which makes them delight in the law of God: but they feel another principle within, striving hard for the mastery, and struggling to drag them downwards and backwards. Some feel this conflict more than others: but all who have the Spirit are acquainted with it; and it is a token for good. It is a proof that the strong man armed no longer reigns within, as he once did, with undisputed sway. The presence of the Holy Ghost may be known by inward warfare as well as by inward peace. He that has been taught to rest and hope in Christ, will always be one who fights and wars with sin.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who knows nothing of inward conflict, and is a servant to sin, the world, and his own self-will, can he be said to "have the Spirit"? Judge for yourself.

9. All who have the Spirit love others who have the Spirit. It is written of them by St. John, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14) The more they see of the Holy Ghost in any one, the more dear he is to them. They regard him as a member of the same family, a child of the same Father, a subject of the same King, and a fellow-traveller with themselves in a foreign country towards the same father-land. It is the glory of the Spirit to bring back something of that brotherly love which sin has so miserably chased out of the world. He makes men love one another for reasons which to the natural man are foolishness, for the sake of a common Saviour, a common faith, a common service on earth, and the hope of a common home. He raises up friendships independent of blood, marriage, interest, business, or any worldly motive. He unites men by making them feel they are united to one great centre, Jesus

Christ.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who finds no pleasure in the company of spiritually-minded persons, or even sneers at them as saints,-can he be said to “have the Spirit”? Judge for yourself.

10. Finally, all who have the Spirit are taught by Him to pray. He is called in Scripture, “The Spirit of grace and supplication.” (Zechariah 12:10) The elect of God are said to “cry to Him night and day.” (Luke 18:7) They cannot help it: their prayers may be poor, and weak, and wandering, but pray they must; something within them tells them they must speak with God and lay their wants before Him. Just as the infant will cry when it feels pain or hanger, because it is its nature, so will the new nature implanted by the Holy Ghost oblige a man to pray. He has the Spirit of adoption, and he must cry, “Abba, Father.” (Galatians 4:6)

Once more I appeal to every thinking reader. Can the man who never prays at all, or is content with saying a few formal heartless words, can he be said to “have the Spirit”? For the last time I say, Judge for yourself.

Such are the marks and signs by which I believe the presence of the Holy Ghost in a man may be discerned. I have set them down fairly as they appear to me to be laid before us in the Scriptures. I have endeavoured to exaggerate nothing, and to keep back nothing. I believe there are no true Christians in whom these marks may not be found. Some of them, no doubt, stand out more prominently in some, and others in others. My own experience is distinct and decided,-that I never saw a truly godly person, even of the poorest and humblest classes, in whom, on close observation, these marks might not be discovered.

I believe that marks such as these are the only safe evidence that we are travelling in the way that leads to everlasting life. I charge every one who desires to make his calling and election sure, to see that these marks are his own. There are high-flying professors of religion, I know, who despise the mention of “marks,” and call them “legal.” I care nothing for their being called legal, so long as I am satisfied they are scriptural. And, with the Bible before me, I give my opinion confidently, that he who is without these marks is without the Spirit of God.

Show me a man who has these marks about him, and I acknowledge him as a child of God. He may be poor and lowly in this world; he may be vile in his own eyes, and often doubt of his own salvation. But he has that within him which only comes from above, and will never be destroyed,-even the work of the Holy Ghost. God is his, Christ is his. His name is already written in the book of life, and before long heaven will be his own.

Show me a man in whom these marks are not to be found, and I dare not acknowledge him to be a true Christian. I dare not as an honest man; I dare not as a lover of his soul; I dare not as a reader of the Bible. He may make a great religious profession; he may be learned, high in the world, and moral in his life. It is all nothing if he has not the Holy Ghost. He is without God, without Christ, without solid hope, and, unless he changes, will at length be without heaven. And now let me finish this paper by a few practical remarks which arise naturally out of the matter which it contains.

(a) Would you know, first of all, what is your own immediate duty? Listen, and I will tell you.

You ought to examine yourself calmly about the subject which I have been trying to set before you. You ought to ask yourself seriously how the doctrine of the Holy Ghost affects your soul. Look away, I beseech you, for a few minutes, to higher things than the things of earth, and more important things than the things of time. Bear with me, while I ask you a plain question. I ask it solemnly and affectionately, as one who desires your salvation,-Have you the Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you think all I have been saying is true, and right, and good. I ask whether you yourself, who are reading these lines, have within you the Holy Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you believe that the Holy Ghost is given to the Church of Christ, and that all who belong to the Church are within reach of His operations. I ask whether you yourself have the Spirit in your own heart?

Remember, I do not ask whether you sometimes feel strivings of conscience, and good desires flitting about within you. I ask whether you have really experienced the quickening and reviving work of the Spirit upon your heart?

Remember, I do not ask you to tell me the day or month when the Spirit began His work in you. It is enough for me if fruit trees bear fruit, without inquiring the precise time when they were planted. But I do ask, Are you bringing forth any fruits of the Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you are a perfect person, and never feel anything evil within. But I do ask, gravely and seriously, whether you have about your heart and life the marks of the Spirit?

I hope you will not tell me you do not know what the marks of the Spirit are. I have described them plainly. I now repeat them briefly, and press them on your attention. 1. The Spirit quickens men's hearts. 2. The Spirit teaches men's minds. 3. The Spirit leads to the Word. 4. The Spirit convinces of sin. 5. The Spirit draws to Christ. 6. The Spirit sanctifies. 7. The Spirit makes men spiritually. ,minded. 8. The Spirit produces inward conflict, 9. The Spirit makes men love the brethren. 10. The Spirit teaches to pray. These are the great marks of the Holy Ghost's presence. Put the question to your conscience like a man,-Has the Spirit done anything of this kind for your soul?

I charge you not to let many days pass away without trying to answer my question. I summon you, as a faithful watchman knocking at the door of your heart, to bring the matter to an issue. We live in an old, worn. out, sin-laden world. Who can tell what “a day may bring forth? “Who shall live to see another year? Have you the Spirit? (Proverbs 27:1)

(b) Would you know, in the next place, what is the grand defect of the Christianity of our times? Listen to me, and I will tell you.

The grand defect I speak of is simply this,-that the Christianity of many people is not real Christianity at all. I know that such an opinion sounds hard and shockingly uncharitable. I cannot help that: I am satisfied that it is sadly true. I only want people's Christianity to be that of the Bible; but I doubt exceedingly, in many cases, whether it is so.

There are multitudes of English people, I believe, who go to church or chapel every Sunday merely as a form. Their fathers or mothers went, and so they go; it is the fashion of the country to go, and so they go; it is the custom to attend a religious service and hear a sermon, and so they go. But as to real, vital, saving religion, they neither know nor care anything about it. They can give no

account of the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel. Justification, and regeneration, and sanctification, are “words and names” which they cannot explain. They may have a sort of vague idea that they ought to go to the Lord's Table, and may be able to say a few vague words about Christ, but they have no intelligent notion of the way of salvation. As to the Holy Ghost, they can scarcely say more about Him than that they have heard His name, and repeated it in the Belief.

Now, if any reader of this paper is conscious that his religion is such as I have described, I will only warn him affectionately to remember that such religion is utterly-useless. It will neither save, comfort, satisfy, nor sanctify his soul. And the plain advice I give him is to change it for something better without delay. Remember my words. It will not do at the last.

(c) Would you know, in the next place, one truth in the Gospel about which we need to be specially jealous in this day. Listen, and I will tell you.

The truth which I have in view is the truth about the work of the Holy Ghost. All truth no doubt is constantly assailed by Satan. I have no desire for a moment to exaggerate the office of the Spirit, and to exalt Him above the Sun and Centre of the Gospel,-Jesus Christ. But I do believe that, next to the priestly office of Christ, no truth in the present day is so frequently lost sight of, and so cunningly assailed, as the work of the Spirit. Some injure it by ignorant neglect: their talk is all about Christ. They can tell you something about “the Saviour;” but if you ask them about that inward work of the Spirit which all who really know the Saviour experience, they have not a word to say.-Some injure the work of the Spirit by taking it all for granted. Membership of the Church, participation of the Sacraments, become their substitutes for conversion and spiritual regeneration.-Some injure the work of the Spirit by confounding it with the action of natural conscience. According to this low view, none but the most hardened and degraded of mankind are destitute of the Holy Ghost.-Against all such departures from the truth let us watch and be on our guard. Let us beware of leaving the proportion of Gospel statements. Let one of our chief watchwords in the present day be,-No salvation without the inward work of the Spirit! No inward work of the Holy Spirit unless it can be seen, felt, and known! No saving work of the Spirit which does not show itself in repentance towards God, and living faith towards Jesus Christ!

(d) Would you know, in the next place, the reason why we, who are ministers of the Gospel, never despair of any one who hears us so long as he lives? Listen, and I will tell you.

We never despair, because we believe the power of the Holy Ghost. We might well despair when we look at our own performances: we are often sick of ourselves. We might well despair when we look at some who belong to our congregations: they seem as hard and insensible as the nether mill-stone. But we remember the Holy Ghost, and what He has done; we remember the Holy Ghost, and consider that He has not changed. He can come down like fire and melt the hardest hearts; He can convert the worst man or woman among our hearers, and mould their whole character into a new shape. And so we preach on. We hope, because of the Holy Ghost. Oh, that our hearers would understand that the progress of true religion depends “not on might or on power,” but on the Lord's Spirit! Oh, that many of them would learn to lean less on ministers, and to pray more for the Holy Spirit! Oh, that all would learn to expect less from schools, and tracts, and ecclesiastical machinery, and, while using all means diligently, would seek more earnestly for the outpouring of the Spirit. (Zechariah 4:6)

(e) Would you know, in the next place, what you ought to do, if your conscience tells you you have not the Spirit? Listen, and I will tell you.

If you have not the Spirit, you ought to go at once to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and beseech Him to have mercy on you, and send you the Spirit. I have not the slightest sympathy with those who tell men to pray for the Holy Spirit in the first place, in order that they may go to Christ in the second place. I see no warrant of Scripture for saying so. I only see that if men feel they are needy, perishing sinners, they ought to apply first and foremost, straight and direct, to Jesus Christ. I see that He Himself says, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” (John 7:37) I know that it is written, “He hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” (Psalms 68:18) I know it is His special office to baptize with the Holy Ghost, and that “in Him all fulness dwells.” I dare not pretend to be more systematic than the Bible. I believe that Christ is the meeting place between God and the soul, and my first advice to any one who wants the Spirit must always be, “Go to Jesus, and tell your want to Him.” (Colossians 1:19)

Furthermore I would say, if you have not the Spirit, you must be diligent in attending those means of grace through which the Spirit works. You must regularly hear that Word, which is His sword; you must habitually attend those assemblies where His presence is promised; you must, in short, be found in the way of the Spirit, if you want the Spirit to do you good. Blind Bartimeus would never have received sight had he sat lazily at home, and not come forth to sit by the wayside. Zacchaeus might never have seen Jesus and become a son of Abraham, if he had not run before and climbed up into the sycamore tree. The Spirit is a loving and good Spirit. But he who despises means of grace resists the Holy Ghost.

Remember these two things. I firmly believe that no man ever acted honestly and perseveringly on these two pieces of advice who did not, sooner or later, have the Spirit.

(f) Would you know, in the next place, what you ought to do, if you stand in doubt about your own state, and cannot tell whether you have the Spirit? Listen, and I twill tell you.

If you stand in doubt whether you have the Spirit, you ought to examine calmly whether your doubts are well-founded. There are many true believers, I fear, who are destitute of any firm assurance as to their own state: doubting is their life. I ask such persons to take their Bibles down, and consider quietly the grounds of their anxiety. I ask them to consider whence came their sense of sin, however feeble,-their love to Christ, however faint,-their desire after holiness, however weak,-their pleasure in the company of God's people,-their inclination to prayer and the Word? Whence came these things, I say? Did they come from your own heart? Surely not! Nature bears no such fruit.-Did they come from the devil? Surely not! Satan does not war against Satan. Whence then, I repeat, did these things come? I warn you to beware lest you grieve the Holy Ghost by doubting the truth of His operations. I tell you it is high time for you to reflect whether you have not been expecting an inward perfection which you had no right to expect, and at the same time thanklessly undervaluing a real work which the Holy Ghost has actually wrought in your souls.

A great statesman once said that if a foreigner visited England, for the first time, with his eyes bandaged and his ears open, hearing everything, but seeing nothing,-he might well suppose that England was on the road to ruin; so many are the murmurings of the English people. And yet if that same foreigner came to England with his ears stopped and his eyes open,-seeing everything and

hearing nothing,-he would probably suppose that England was the most wealthy and flourishing country in the world, so many are the signs of prosperity that he would see.

I am often disposed to apply this remark to the case of doubting Christians. If I believed all they say of themselves I should certainly think they were in a bad state. But when I see them living as they do,-hungering and thirsting after righteousness, poor in spirit, desiring holiness, loving the name of Christ, keeping up habits of Bible reading and prayer,-when I see these things I cease to be afraid. I trust my eyes more than my ears. I see manifest marks of the Spirit's presence, and I only grieve that they should refuse to see them themselves. I see the devil robbing them of their peace, by instilling these doubts into their minds, and I mourn that they should injure themselves by believing him. Some professors, without controversy, may well doubt whether they “have the Spirit,” for they have no signs of grace about them. But many nurse up a habit of doubt in their minds for which they have no cause, and of which they ought to be ashamed.

(g) Would you know, last of all, what you ought to do if you really have the Spirit. Listen to me, and I will tell you.

If you have the Spirit, seek to be “filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18) Drink deep of the living waters. Do not be content with a little religion. Pray that the Spirit may fill every corner and chamber of your heart, and that not an inch of room may be left in it for the world and the devil.

If you have the Spirit, “grieve not the Spirit.” (Ephesians 4:30) It is easy for believers to weaken their sense of His presence, and deprive themselves of His comfort. Little sins not mortified, little bad habits of temper or of tongue not corrected, little compliances with the world,-are all likely to offend the Holy Ghost. Oh, that believers would remember this! There is far more of “heaven on earth” to be enjoyed than many of them attain to: and why do they not attain to it? They do not watch sufficiently over their daily ways,-and so the Spirit's work is damped and hindered. The Spirit must be a thoroughly sanctifying Spirit if He is to be a comforter to your soul.

If you have the Spirit, labour to bring forth all “the fruits of the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:22) Read over the list which the Apostle has drawn out, and see that no one of these fruits is neglected. Oh, that believers would seek for more “love,” and more “joy!” Then would they do more good to all men; then would they feel happier themselves; then would they make religion more beautiful in the eyes of the world!

I commend the things that I have written to the serious attention of every reader of these pages. Let them not have been written in vain. Join with me in praying that the Spirit may be poured out from on high with more abundant influence than He has ever been yet. Pray that He may be poured out on all believers, at home and abroad that they may be more united and more holy. Pray that He may be poured out on Jews, Mahometans, and Heathen, that many of them may be converted.

Pray that He may be poured out on Roman Catholics, and especially in Italy and Ireland. Pray that He may be poured out on your own country, and that it may be spared the judgments it deserves. Pray that He may be poured out on all faithful ministers and missionaries, and that their numbers may be increased an hundredfold.

Pray, above all, that He may be poured out, in abundant power, on your own soul, that if you know not the truth, you may be taught to know it,-and that if you know it, you may Know it better.

Heaven

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short “Helmingham Series” tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you this tract exactly word for word as it was first published when J. C. Ryle was a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk.

HEAVEN. by

J. C. Ryle

READER

There is a glorious dwelling place provided by Jesus Christ for all His believing people. The world that now is, is not their rest: they are pilgrims and strangers in it. Heaven is their home.

There will be a place in heaven for all sinners who have fled to Christ by faith, and trusted in Him: for the least as well as the greatest. Abraham took care to provide for all his children, and God takes care to provide for His. None will be disinherited; none will be cast out; none will be cut off. Each shall stand in his lot, and have a portion in the day when the Lord brings many sons to glory. In our Father's house are many mansions.

Reader, I want you to go to heaven after this life is over. I want heaven to be very full, and I want you to be one of its inhabitants. Listen to me for a few moments, while I tell you something about the manner of the place.

I can tell you a little of the blessedness of heaven, but not all. What mortal man can explain the full nature of the inheritance of the saints in light? Who can describe the glory which is yet to be revealed and given to the children of God? Words fail, language falls short. Mind cannot conceive fully, and tongue cannot express perfectly, the things which are comprised in the glory yet to come upon the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Oh, it is indeed a true saying of the Apostle John: “It doth not yet appear what we shall be” (1 John 3:2).

The very Bible itself only lifts the veil a little, which hangs over this subject. How could it do more? We could not thoroughly understand more, if more had been told us. Our constitution is as yet too earthly. Our understanding is as yet too carnal to appreciate more if we had it. The Bible generally deals with the subject in negative terms, and not in positive assertions. It describes what there will not be in the glorious inheritance, that thus we may get some faint idea of what there will be. It paints the absence of certain things, in order that we may drink in a little the blessedness of the things present. It tells us that the inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. It tells us that the devil is to be bound,-that there shall be no more night and no more curse,-that death shall be cast into the lake of fire,-that all tears shall be wiped away, and that the inhabitant shall no more say, “I am sick.” And these are glorious things indeed! No corruption!-No fading!-No withering!-No devil!-No curse of sin!-No sorrow!-No tears!-No sickness!-No death! Surely the cup

of the children of God will indeed run over!

But reader, there are positive things told us about the glory yet to come upon the heirs of God, which ought not to be kept back. There are many sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comforts in their future inheritance, which all true Christians would do well to consider. There are cordials for fainting pilgrims in many words and expressions of Scripture, which you and I ought to lay up against the time of need.

Is knowledge pleasant to us now? Is the little that we know of God, and Christ, and in the Bible, precious to our souls, and do we long for more? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture?-Then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Blessed be God, there will be no more disagreements among believers! Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Calvinists and Arminians, Millenarians and Anti-Millenarians, friends of Establishments and friends of the Voluntary system, advocates of infant baptism and advocates of adult baptism,-all will at length be of one mind. The former ignorance will have passed away. We shall marvel to find how childish and blind we have been.

Is holiness pleasant to us now? Is sin the burden and bitterness of our lives? Do we long for entire conformity to the image of God? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What says the Scripture?-"Christ gave Himself for the Church, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27). Oh, the blessedness of an eternal good-bye to sin! Oh, how little the best of us do at present! Oh, what unutterable corruption sticks, like birdlime, to all our motives, all our thoughts, all our words, all our actions! Oh, how many of us, like Naphtali, are godly in our words, but, like Reuben, unstable in our works! Thank God, all this shall be changed!

Is rest pleasant to us now? Do we often feel faint though pursuing? Do we long for a world in which we need not be always watching and warring? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What saith the Scripture?-"There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). The daily, hourly conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, shall at length be at an end: the enemy shall be bound; the warfare shall be over; the wicked shall at last cease from troubling; the weary shall at length be at rest. There shall be a great calm.

Is service pleasant to us now? Do we find it sweet to work for Christ, and yet groan, being burdened by a feeble body? Is our spirit often willing, but hampered and clogged by the poor weak flesh? Have our hearts burned within us when we have been allowed to give a cup of cold water for Christ's sake; and have we sighed to think what unprofitable servants we are? Let us take comfort. We shall be able to serve perfectly in glory, and without weariness. What saith the Scripture?-"They serve Him day and night in His temple" (Revelation 7:15).

Is satisfaction pleasant to us now? Do we find the world empty? Do we long for the filling up of every void place and gap in our hearts? We shall have it perfectly in glory. We shall no longer have to mourn over cracks in all our earthen vessels, and thorns in all our roses, and bitter dregs in all our sweet cups. We shall no longer lament, with Jonah, over withered gourds. We shall no longer say, with Solomon, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." We shall no longer cry, with aged David, "I have seen an end of all perfection." What saith the Scripture?-"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalms 17:15).

Is communion with the saints pleasant to us now? Do we feel that we are never so happy as when we are with the excellent of the earth? Are we never so much at home as in their company? We shall have it perfectly in glory. What saith the Scripture?-“The Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which work iniquity.” “He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds” (Matthew 13:41; Matthew 24:31). Praised be God, we shall see all the saints of whom we have read in the Bible, and in whose steps we have tried to walk.

We shall see apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, reformers, missionaries, and ministers, of whom the world was not worthy. We shall see the faces of those we have known and loved in Christ on earth, and over whose departure we shed bitter tears.

We shall see them more bright and glorious than they ever were before. And, best of all, we shall see them without hurry and anxiety, and without feeling that we only meet to part again. In glory there is no death, no parting, no farewell!

Is communion with Christ pleasant to us now? Do we find His name precious to us? Do we feel our hearts burn within us at the thought of His dying love? We shall have perfect communion with Him in glory. “We shall ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). We shall be with Him in paradise: we shall see His face in the kingdom. These eyes of ours will behold those hands and feet which were pierced with nails, and that head which was crowned with thorns. Where He is, there will the sons of God be. When He comes, they will come with Him: when He sits down in His glory, they shall sit down by His side. Blessed prospects indeed! I am a dying man in a dying world; all before me is unseen: the world to come is a harbour unknown! But Christ is there, and that is enough. Surely if there is rest and peace in following Him by faith on earth, there will be far more rest and peace when you see Him face to face. If we have found it good to follow the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, we shall find it a thousand times better to sit down in our eternal inheritance with our Joshua, in the promised land.

Ah, reader, if you are not yet among the heirs of glory, I do pity you with all my heart. How much you are missing! How little true comfort you are enjoying! There you are, struggling on, and toiling in the fire, and wearying yourself for mere earthly ends,-seeking rest and finding none,- chasing shadows and never catching them-wondering why you are not happy, and yet refusing to see the cause,-hungry, and thirsty, and empty, and yet blind to the plenty within your reach,-your expectations all perishing, and none to look forward to beyond the grave. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you would hear the voice of Jesus, and learn of Him.

Reader, if you are one of those who are heirs of glory, you may well rejoice and be happy. You may well wait, like the boy Patience in Pilgrim's Progress: your best things are as yet to come.-You may well bear crosses without murmuring: your light affliction is but for a moment; the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which is to be revealed. When Christ our life appears, then you also shall appear with Him in glory.-You may well not envy the transgressor and his prosperity: you are the truly rich.

Well said a dying believer, in my own parish, “I am more rich than I ever was in my life.” You may say, as Mephibosheth said to David, “Let the world take all: my King is coming again in peace.” You may say, as Alexander said when he gave all his riches away, and was asked what he kept

for himself: “I have hope.” You may well not be cast down by sickness: the eternal part of you is safe, and provided for, whatever happens to your body. You may well look calmly on death: it opens a door between you and your inheritance. You may well not sorrow excessively over the things of the world,-over partings and bereavements,-over losses and crosses: the day of gathering is before you; your treasure is beyond reach of harm. Heaven is becoming every year more full of those you love, and earth more empty. Glory in your inheritance. It is all yours by faith, if you are a son of God: it shall soon be yours in possession.

HYMN.

I'm going to leave all my sadness,

I'm going to change earth for heaven;

There, there all is peace, all is gladness,

There pureness and glory are given.

Friends, weep not in sorrow of spirit,

But joy that my time here is o'er;

I go, the good part to inherit,

Where sorrow and sin are no more. The shadows of evening are fleeing,

Morn breaks from the city of light;

This moment day starts into being,

Eternity bursts on my sight:

The first-born redeemed from all trouble,

The lamb that was slain in the throng,

Their ardour in praising redouble:

Breaks not on the ear the new song?

I'm going to tell their glad story,

To share in their transports of praise:

I'm going, in garments of glory,

My voice to unite with their lays.

Ye fetters corrupted, then leave me;

Thou body of sin, droop and die;

Pains of earth, cease ye ever to grieve me,

From you ´tis for ever I fly.

Hold Fast

HOLD FAST.

by

Bishop J. C. Ryle.

READER,

There are few things in religion which men are so ready to forget as the duty of “contending earnestly for the faith,” and holding fast the truth.

Controversy is seldom popular. Most men like a quiet life in religion. They dislike anything like strife, trouble, contest, and exertion. They will give up much for the specious pretext of securing peace. They are apt to forget that peace procured at the expense of truth is not worth having. In short, they need reminding of St. Paul’s golden words: “Hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. v. 21).

Reader, when St. Paul said, “Hold fast,” he wrote as one who knew what the hearts of all Christians are. He knew that our grasp of the Gospel, at our best, is very cold,-that our love soon waxes feeble,-that our faith soon wavers,-that our zeal soon flags,-that familiarity with Christ’s truth often brings with it a species of contempt,-that, like Israel, we are apt to be discouraged by the length of our journey,-and like Peter, ready to sleep one moment and fight the next,-but like Peter, not ready to “watch and pray.” All this St. Paul remembered, and, like a faithful watchman, he cries, by the Holy Ghost, “Hold fast that which is good.”

He wrote as if he foresaw by the Spirit that the good tidings of the Gospel would soon be corrupted, spoiled, and plucked away from the Church. He wrote as one who foresaw that Satan and all his agents would labour hard to cast down Christ’s truth. He wrote as if he would forewarn men of this danger, and he cries, “Hold fast that which is good.”

Reader, the advice is always needed-needed as long as the world stands. There is a tendency to decay in the very best of human institutions. The best visible Church of Christ is not free from this liability to degenerate. It is made up of fallible men. There is always in it a tendency to decay. We see the leaven of evil creeping into many a Church, even in the Apostle’s time. There were evils in the Corinthian Church, evils in the Ephesian Church, evils in the Galatian Church. All these things are meant to be our warnings and beacons in these latter times. All show the great necessity laid upon the Church to remember the Apostle’s word: “Hold fast that which is good.”

Many a Church of Christ since then has fallen away for the want of remembering this principle. Their ministers and members forgot that Satan is always labouring to bring in false doctrine. They forgot that he can transform himself into an angel of light,-that he can make darkness appear light, and light darkness; truth appear falsehood, and falsehood truth. If he cannot destroy Christianity, he ever tries to spoil it. If he cannot prevent the form of godliness, he endeavours to rob Churches

of the power. No Church is ever safe that forgets these things, and does not bear in mind the Apostle's injunction, "Hold fast that which is good."

Reader, if ever there was a time in the world when Churches were put upon their trial, whether they would hold fast the truth or not, that time is the present time, and those Churches are the Protestant Churches of our own land. Popery, that old enemy of our nation, is coming in upon us in this day like a flood. We are assaulted by open enemies without, and betrayed continually by false friends within. Roman Catholic churches, and chapels, and schools, and conventual and monastic establishments are continually increasing around us. Month after month brings tidings of some new defection from the ranks of the Church of England to the ranks of the Church of Rome. Already the Pope has parcelled our country into bishoprics, and speaks like one who fancies that by and by he shall divide the spoil. Already he seems to foresee a time when England shall be as the patrimony of St. Peter's, when London shall be as Rome, when St. Paul's shall be as St. Peter's, and Lambeth Palace shall be as the Vatican itself. Surely now, or never, we ought all of us to awake, and "hold fast that which is good."

We supposed, some of us, in our blindness, that the power of the Church of Rome was ended. We dreamed, some of us, in our folly, that the Reformation had ended the Popish controversy, and that if Romanism did survive, Romanism was altogether changed. If we did think so, we have lived to learn that we made a most grievous mistake. Rome never changes. It is her boast that she is always the same. The snake is not killed. He was scotched at the time of the Reformation, but was not destroyed. The Romish Antichrist is not dead. He was cast down for a little season, like the fabled giant buried under Ætna, but his deadly wound is healed, the grave is opening once more, and Antichrist is coming forth. The unclean spirit of Popery is not laid in his own place. Rather he seems to say, "My house in England is now swept and garnished for me; let me return to the place from whence I came forth."

And, reader, the question is now, whether we are going to abide quietly, sit still and fold our hands, and do nothing to resist the assault. Are we really men of understanding of the times? Do we know the day of our visitation? Surely this is a crisis in the history of our Churches and of our land. It is a time which will soon prove whether we know the value of our privileges, or whether, like Amalek, "the first of the nations," our "latter end shall be that we perish for ever." It is a time which will soon prove whether we intend to allow our candlestick to be quietly removed, or to repent and do our first works. If we love the open Bible,-if we love the preaching of the Gospel,-if we love the freedom of reading that Bible, no man letting or hindering us, and the opportunity of hearing that Gospel, no man forbidding us,-if we love civil liberty,-if we love religious liberty,-if these are precious to our souls, we must all make up our minds to "hold fast," lest by and by we lose all.

Reader, if we mean to hold fast, every parish, every congregation, every Christian man, and every Christian woman, must do their part in contending for the truth. Each should work, and each should pray, and each should labour as if the preservation of the pure Gospel depended upon himself or herself, and upon no one else at all. The bishops must not leave the matter to the priests, nor the priests leave the matter to the bishops. The clergy must not leave the matter to the laity, nor the laity to the clergy. The Parliament must not leave the matter to the country, nor the country to the Parliament. The rich must not leave the matter to the poor, nor the poor to the rich. We must all work. Every living soul has a sphere of influence. Let him see to it that he fills it. Every

living soul can draw some weight into the scale of the Gospel. Let him see to it that he casts it in. Let every one know his own individual responsibility in this matter, and all, by God's help, will be well.

If we would hold fast that which is good, we must not tolerate or countenance any doctrine that is not the pure doctrine of Christ's Gospel. There is a hatred that is downright charity: that is the hatred of erroneous doctrine. There is an intolerance which is downright praiseworthy: that is the intolerance of false teaching in the pulpit. Who would ever think of tolerating a little poison given to him day by day? If men come among you who do not preach "all the counsel of God," who do not preach of Christ, and sin, and holiness, of ruin, and redemption, and regeneration,-or do not preach of these things in a Scriptural way, you ought to cease to hear them. You ought to act upon the injunction given by the Holy Ghost in the Old Testament: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Proverbs 19:27). You ought to carry out the spirit shown by the Apostle Paul, in Galatians 1:8 : "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." If we can bear to hear Christ's truth mangled or adulterated,-and can see no harm in listening to that which is another Gospel,-and can sit at ease while sham Christianity is poured into our ears,-and can go home comfortably afterwards and not burn with holy indignation,-if this be the case, there is little chance of our ever doing much to resist Rome. If we are content to hear Jesus Christ not put in His rightful place, we are not men and women who are likely to do Christ much service, or fight a good fight on His side. He that is not zealous against error, is not likely to be zealous for truth.

If we would hold fast the truth, we must be ready to unite with all who hold the truth, and love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We must be ready to lay aside all minor questions as things of subordinate importance. Establishment or no establishment, liturgy or no liturgy, surplice or no surplice, bishops or presbyters,-all these points of difference, however important they may be in their place and in their proportion, all ought to be regarded as subordinate questions. I ask no man to give up his private opinions about them. I wish no man to do violence to his conscience. All I say is, that these questions are wood, hay, and stubble, when the very foundations of the faith are in danger. The Philistines are upon us. Can we make common cause against them, or can we not? This is the one point for our consideration. Surely it is not right to say that we expect to spend eternity with men in heaven, and yet cannot work for a few years with them in this world. It is nonsense to talk of alliance and union, if, in a day like this, there is to be no co-operation. The presence of a common foe ought to sink minor differences. We must hold together: depend upon it, all Protestants must hold together, if they mean to "hold fast that which is good."

Last of all, if it be right to "hold fast that which is good," let us make sure that we have each laid hold personally upon Christ's truth for ourselves. Reader, it will not save you and me to know all controversies, and to be able to detect everything that is false. Head knowledge will never bring you and me to heaven. It will not save us to be able to argue and reason with Roman Catholics, or to detect the errors of Pope's bulls, or pastoral letters. Let us see that we each lay hold upon Jesus Christ for ourselves by our own personal faith. Let us see to it that we each flee for refuge and lay hold upon the hope set before us in His glorious Gospel. Let us do this, and all shall be well with us, whatever else may go ill. Let us do this, and then all things are ours. The Church may fail. The State may go to ruin. The foundations of all establishments may be shaken. The enemies of truth may for a season prevail; but as for us, all shall be well. We shall have in this world peace, and in

the world which is to come life everlasting, for we shall have Christ.

Reader, if you have not yet laid hold on this hope in Christ, seek it at once. Call on the Lord Jesus to give it to you. Give Him no rest till you know and feel that you are His.

If you have laid hold on this hope, hold it fast. Prize it highly, for it will stand by you when everything else fails.

Chapter 42

How do you do?

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

HOW DO YOU DO?

"Let us go again and visit our brethren, . . . and see how they do." - Acts 15:36. THE question, which forms the title of this paper, is one of the commonest questions that Englishmen ever ask. Millions of people, I doubt not, have said to one another this very day, "How do you do?"

The question in most cases is asked formally, and answered hastily. It is a mere civil form of speech, which means little, and goes for little. Yet, there is a sense in which the question is one of vast importance. That sense is the spiritual sense:-"How do you do in the matter of your soul?"-This is what St. Paul meant when he said to Barnabas, in the Acts of the Apostles, "Let us go again and visit our brethren, . . . and see how they do."-That is what I meant when I wrote the title of this tract. I want, as a friend, to make a friendly inquiry about your soul. I ask in Christ's name, this day,-"How are you in spiritual things? Is your soul in health? Does it prosper? (3 John 1:2). How do you do?"-Give me your attention for a few minutes, and I will try to show you that the question is not to be despised. Listen to me, and I will show you reasons why it is good to have the inquiry pressed home on your attention,-"How do you do about your soul?"

We live in an age of peculiar spiritual privileges. Since the world began, there never was such an opportunity for a man's soul to be saved as there is in England at this time. There never were so many signs of religion in the land, so many sermons preached, so many services held in churches and chapels, so many Bibles sold, so many religious books and tracts printed, so many societies for evangelising mankind supported, so much outward respect paid to Christianity.

Things are done everywhere now-a-days which a hundred years ago would have been thought impossible. Bishops support the boldest and most aggressive efforts to reach the unconverted. Some of them are not ashamed to preach in warehouses and railway stations, and speak openly - of the necessity of conversion. Deans and Chapters throw open the naves of cathedrals for Sunday evening sermons, and even York Minster admits a revival preacher! Clergy of the narrowest High Church Schools advocate special missions, and vie with their Evangelical brethren in proclaiming that going to church on Sunday is not enough to take a man to heaven.

An American lay preacher comes over to our country and carries the attention of myriads by storm. Armed with nothing but his Bible, and the simplest elements of the Gospel, without any special gifts of eloquent language, like Whitefield, Guthrie, Chalmers, or M'Neile, he gathers masses of people to hear him at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin, Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester,

Birmingham, such as were never known to come together before. He comes up to London at last, and excites the attention of such multitudes that even the daily press is taken by surprise. The scenes under his preaching at Islington and the Opera House, were scenes that no one anticipated, and no one seems able to explain.

In short, there is a stir about religion now-a-days to which there has been nothing like since England was a nation, and which the cleverest sceptics and infidels cannot deny. If Romaine, and Venn, and Berridge, and Rowlands, and Grimshaw, and Hervey, had been told that such things would come to pass about a century after their deaths, they would have been tempted to say, with the Samaritan nobleman,-"If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be" (2 Kings 7:19). But the Lord has opened the windows of heaven. There is more taught now-a-days in England of the real Gospel and of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ in one week, than there was in a year in Romaine's time. Surely, I have a right to say that we live in an age of spiritual privileges. But, reader, are you any better for it? In an age like this, it is well to ask, "How do you do about your soul?"

We live in an age of peculiar spiritual danger. Never, perhaps since the world began, was there such an immense amount of mere outward profession of religion as there is in the present day. A painfully large proportion of all the congregations in the land consists of unconverted people, who know nothing of heart-religion, never come to the Lord's Table, and never confess Christ in their daily lives. Myriads of those who are always running after preachers, and crowding to hear special sermons, are nothing better than empty tubs, tinkling cymbals, the stony-ground hearers, without a jot of real vital Christianity at home.

The parable of the sower is continually receiving most vivid and painful illustrations. The wayside hearts, the stony-ground hearts, the thorny-ground hearts abound on every side. The religious life of many, I fear, in this age, is nothing better than a continual course of spiritual dram-drinking. They are always morbidly craving fresh excitement; and they seem to care little what it is if they only get it.

Worst of all, there are hundreds of young unestablished believers who are so infected with the same love of excitement, that they actually think it a duty to be always seeking it. Insensibly almost to themselves, they take up a kind of hysterical, sensational, sentimental Christianity, until they are never content with the "old paths," and, like the Athenians, are always running after something new. To see a calm-minded young believer, not stuck up, not self-confident, not self-conceited, and not more ready to teach than learn, but content with a daily steady effort to grow up into Christ's likeness, and to do Christ's work quietly and unostentatiously, at home, is really becoming quite a rarity.

Too many young professors, alas, behave like young recruits who have not spent all their bounty money. They show how little deep root they have, and how little knowledge of their own hearts, by noise, forwardness, demonstrativeness, readiness to contradict and set down old Christians, and over-weening trust in their own fancied soundness and wisdom! Surely in times like these there is great need for self-examination.

Reader, when you look around you, you will not wonder that I ask, "How do you do about your soul?"

In handling this question, I think the shortest plan will be to suggest a list of subjects for self-inquiry and to go through them in order. By so doing I shall hope to meet the case of every one into whose hands this paper may fall. Reader, give me your attention for a few short minutes. I approach you not as an enemy, but as a friend. My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you may be saved. (Rom. x. 1). Bear with me if I say things which at first sight look harsh and severe. Believe me, he is your best friend who tells you the most truth.

(1) Let me ask, in the first place, Do you ever think about your soul at all? Thousands of English people, I fear, cannot answer that question satisfactorily. They never give the subject of religion any place in their thoughts. From the beginning of the year to the end they are absorbed in the pursuit of business, pleasure, politics, money, or self-indulgence of some kind or another. Death, and judgment, and eternity, and heaven, and hell, and a world to come, are never calmly looked at and considered. They just live on as if they were never going to die, or rise again, or stand at the bar of God, or receive an eternal sentence! They do not openly oppose religion, for they have not sufficient reflection about it to do so;-but they eat, and drink, and sleep, and get money, and spend money, as if religion was a mere fiction and not a reality. They are neither Romanists, nor Socinians, nor infidels, nor High Church, nor Low Church, nor Broad Church. They are just nothing at all, and do not take the trouble to have opinions.

A more senseless and unreasonable life cannot be conceived; but they do not pretend to reason about it. They simply never think about God, unless frightened for a few minutes by sickness, death in their families, or an accident. Barring such interruptions, they appear to ignore religion altogether, and hold on their way cool and undisturbed as if there were nothing worth thinking of except this world. It is hard to imagine a life more unworthy of an immortal creature, for it reduces a man to the level of a beast. But it is literally and truly the life of multitudes in England; and as they pass away, their place is taken by multitudes like them. The picture, no doubt, is horrible, distressing and revolting: but, unhappily, it is only too true.

In every large town, in every market, on every stock exchange, in every club, you may see specimens of this class by scores,-men who think of everything under the sun except the one thing needful,-the salvation of their souls. Like them of old, they do not "consider their ways," they do not "consider their latter end; " they do not "consider that they do evil." (Isaiah 1:3; Haggai 1:7; Deuteronomy 32:29; Ecclesiastes 5:1). Like Gallio they "care for none of these things: they are not in their way. (Acts 18:17). If they prosper in the world, get rich, and succeed in their line of life, they are praised, and admired by their contemporaries. Nothing succeeds in England like success! But for all this, they cannot live forever. They will have to die and appear before the bar of God, and be judged; and then what will the end be?

Reader, when a large class of this kind exists in our country, you will not wonder that I ask you whether you belong to it. If you do, you ought to have a mark set on your door, as there used to be a mark on a plague-stricken house two centuries ago, and the words, "Lord have mercy on us," written on it. Look at the class I have been describing, and then look at the title of this tract,-"How do you do about your soul?"

(2) Let me ask, in the second place, whether you ever do anything about your soul? There are multitudes in England who think occasionally about religion, but unhappily never get beyond thinking. After a stirring sermon,-or after a funeral,-or under the pressure of illness,-or on Sunday

evening,-or when things are going on badly in their families,-or when they meet some bright example of a Christian,-or when they fall in with some striking religious book or tract,-they will at the time think a good deal, and even talk a little about religion in a vague way.

But they stop short, as if thinking and talking were enough to save them. They are always meaning, and intending, and purposing, and resolving, and wishing, and telling us that they know what is right, and hope to be found right at last, but they never attain to any action. There is no actual separation from the service of the world and sin, no real taking up the cross and following Christ, no positive doing in their Christianity. Their life is spent in playing the part of the son in our Lord's parable, to whom the father said, "Go, work to-day in my vineyard . . . and he answered and said, I go, Sir; and went not" (Matthew 21:28).

They are like those whom Ezekiel describes, who liked his preaching, but never practised what he preached:-"They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them. . . And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (Ezekiel 33:31-32).

Reader, in a day like this, when hearing and thinking, without doing, is so common, you cannot wonder that I press upon you the absolute need of self-examination. Once more, then, I ask you to consider the question of my text,-"How do you do about your soul?"

(3) Let me ask you, in the third place, whether you are trying to satisfy your conscience with a mere formal religion? There are myriads in England at this moment, who are making shipwreck on this rock. Like the Pharisees of old, they make much ado about the outward part of Christianity, while the inward and spiritual part is totally unknown. They are careful to attend all the services of their church or chapel, and regular in using all its forms and ordinances. They are never absent from Communion when the Lord's Supper is administered. Sometimes they are most strict in observing Lent, and attach great importance to saints' days. They are often keen partisans of their own Church, or sect, or congregation, and ready to contend with any one who does not agree with them.

Yet, all this time there is no heart in their religion. Any one who knows them intimately can see with half an eye that their affections are set on things below, and not on things above; and that they are trying to make up for the want of inward Christianity, by an excessive quantity of outward form. And this formal religion does them no real good. They are not satisfied. Beginning at the wrong end, by making the outward things first, they know nothing of inward joy and peace, and pass their lives in a constant struggle, secretly conscious that there is something wrong, and yet not knowing why. Well if they do not go on from one stage of formality to another, until in despair they take a fatal plunge, and fall into Popery!

Reader, when professing Christians of this kind are so painfully numerous, you cannot wonder if I press upon you the paramount importance of close self-examination. If you love life, do not be content with the husk and shell and scaffolding of religion. Remember our Saviour's words about the Jewish formalists of His day: "This people draweth nigh with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship" (Matthew 15:8-9). It needs something more than going diligently to Church, and receiving the Lord's Supper, to take

our souls to heaven. Means of grace and forms of religion are useful in their way, and God seldom does anything for His Church without them. But beware of making shipwreck on the very lighthouse which helps to show the channel into the harbour. Once more, I ask, "How do you do about your soul?"

(4) Let me ask, in the fourth place, whether you have received the forgiveness of your sins? Few reasonable Englishmen would think of denying that they are sinners. Many would probably say that they are not so bad as many, and that they have not been so very wicked, and so forth. But few, I repeat, would pretend to say that they had always lived like angels, and never done, or said, or thought a wrong thing all their days. In short, all of us must confess that we are more or less "sinners," and, as sinners, are guilty before God, and, as guilty, must be forgiven, or lost and condemned for ever at the last day.

Now it is the glory of the Christian religion that it provides for us the very forgiveness that we need,-full, free, perfect, eternal, and complete. It is a leading article in that well-known creed which most Englishmen learn when they are children. They are taught to say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." This forgiveness of sins has been purchased for us by the eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has purchased it for us by coming into the world to be our Saviour, and by living, dying, and rising again, as our Substitute, in our behalf. He has bought it for us at the price of His own most precious blood, by suffering in our stead on the cross, and making satisfaction for our sins.

But this forgiveness, great, and full, and glorious as it is, does not become the property of every man and woman as a matter of course. It is not a privilege which every member of a church possesses merely because he is a churchman. It is a thing which each individual must receive for himself by faith, lay hold on by faith, appropriate by faith, and make his own by faith, or else, so far as he is concerned, Christ will have died in vain. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

No terms can be imagined more simple and suitable to man. As good old Latimer said, in speaking of the matter of justification, "It is but believe and have." It is only faith that is required; and faith is nothing more than the humble, heartfelt trust of the soul which desires to be saved. Jesus is able and willing to save; but man must come to Jesus and believe. All that believe are at once justified and forgiven: but without believing there is no forgiveness at all.

And here is exactly the point, I am afraid, where multitudes of English people fail, and are in imminent danger of being lost forever. They know that there is no forgiveness of sin excepting in Christ Jesus. They can tell you that there is no Saviour for sinners, no Redeemer, no Mediator, excepting Him who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, dead, and buried. But here they stop and get no further. They never come to the point of actually laying hold on Christ by faith, and becoming one with Christ and Christ in them. They can say, He is a Saviour, but not "my Saviour,"-a Redeemer, but not "my Redeemer,"-a Priest, but not "my Priest,"-an Advocate, but not "my Advocate": and so they live and die unforgiven! No wonder that Martin Luther said, "Many are lost because they cannot use possessive pronouns."

Reader, when this is the state of many in this day, you will not wonder that I ask if you have received the forgiveness of your sins. An eminent Christian lady once said, in her old age,-

"The beginning of eternal life in my soul was a conversation I had with an old gentleman, who came to visit my father when I was only a little girl. He took me by the hand one day, and said, 'My dear child, my life is nearly over, and you will probably live many years after I am gone. But never forget two things. One is, that there is such a thing as having our sins forgiven while we live. The other is, that there is such a thing as knowing and feeling that we are forgiven.' I thank God I have never forgotten his words."

Reader, how is it with you? Rest not till you "know and feel," as the Prayer-book says, that you are forgiven. Once more, I ask, in the matter of forgiveness of sins, "How do you do?"

(5) Let me ask you, in the fifth place, whether you know anything by experience of conversion to God. Without conversion there is no salvation. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." -"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. "-"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."-"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." (Matthew 18:3; John 3:8; Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 5:17). We are all by nature so weak, so worldly, so earthly-minded, so inclined to sin, that without a thorough change we cannot serve God in life, and could not enjoy Him after death. Just as ducks, as soon as they are hatched, take naturally to water, so do children, as soon as they can do anything, take to selfishness, lying and deceit, and none pray or love God unless they are taught.

High or low, rich or poor, gentle or simple, we all need a complete change,-a change which it is the special office of the Holy Ghost to give us. Call it what you please,-new birth, regeneration, renewal, new creation, quickening, repentance,-the thing must be had if we are to be saved: and if we have the thing it will be seen. Sense of sin and deep hatred to it, faith in Christ and love to Him, delight in holiness and longing after more of it, love to God's people and distaste for the things of the world,-these, these are the signs and evidences which always accompany conversion. Myriads, it may be feared, around us know nothing about it: they are, in Scripture language, dead, and asleep, and blind, and unfit for the kingdom of God. Year after year, perhaps, they go on repeating the words of the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost; " but they are utterly ignorant of His changing operations on the inward man. Sometimes they flatter themselves they are born again, because they have been baptized, and go to church, and receive the Lord's Supper; while they are totally destitute of the marks of the new birth, as described by St. John in his first Epistle. And all this time the words of Scripture are clear and plain: "Except ye be converted, . . . ye shall not enter into the kingdom" (Matthew 18:3).

Reader, in times like these you will not wonder that I press the subject of conversion on your soul. No doubt there are plenty of sham conversions in such a day of religious excitement as this. But bad coin is no proof that there is no good money: nay, rather it is a sign that there is some money current which is valuable, and is worth imitation. The devil's sham Christians are indirect evidence that there is such a thing as real grace among men. Search your own heart then, and see how it is with you. Once more, I ask, in the matter of conversion, "How do you do?"

(6) Let me ask, in the sixth place, whether you know anything of practical Christian holiness? It is as certain as anything in the Bible that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews

12:14). It is equally certain that it is the invariable fruit of saving faith, the real test of regeneration, the only sound evidence of indwelling grace, the certain consequence of vital union with Christ.

Holiness is not absolute perfection and freedom from all faults. Nothing of the kind! The wild words of some who talk of enjoying "unbroken communion with God" for many months are greatly to be deprecated, because they raise unscriptural expectations in the minds of young believers, and so do harm. Absolute perfection is for heaven, and not for earth, where we have a weak body, a wicked world, and a busy devil continually near our souls. Nor is real Christian holiness ever attained, or maintained, without a constant fight and struggle. The great Apostle, who said I fight,-I labour,-"I keep under

my body, and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor ix. 27), would have been amazed to hear of sanctification without personal exertion, and to be told that believers only need to sit still, and everything will be done for them!

Yet, weak and imperfect as the holiness of the best saints may be, it is a real true thing, and has a character about it as unmistakable as light and salt. It is not a thing which begins and ends with noisy profession: it will be seen much more than heard. Genuine Scriptural holiness will make a man do his duty at home and by the fireside, and adorn his doctrine in the little trials of daily life. It will exhibit itself in passive graces as well as in active. It will make a man humble, kind, gentle, unselfish, good tempered, considerate for others, loving, meek, and forgiving. It will not constrain him to go out of the world, and shut himself up in a cave, like a hermit. But it will make him do his duty in that state to which God has called him, on Christian principles, and after the pattern of Christ. Such holiness, I well know, is not common. It is a style of practical Christianity which is painfully rare in these days. But I can find no other standard of holiness in the Word of God,-no other which comes up to the pictures drawn by our Lord and His Apostles.

Reader, in an age like this you cannot wonder if I press this subject, also, on your attention. Once more I ask, in the matter of holiness, how is it with your soul? "How do you do?"

(7) Let me ask you, in the seventh place, whether you know anything of enjoying the means of grace? When I speak of the means of grace, I have in my mind's eye five principal things,-the reading of the Bible, private prayer, public worship, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the rest of the Lord's day. They are means which God has graciously appointed, in order to convey grace to man's heart by the Holy Ghost, and to keep up the spiritual life, after it has begun.

As long as the world stands the state of a man's soul will always depend greatly on the manner and spirit in which he uses means of grace. The manner and spirit, I say deliberately and of purpose. Many English people use the means of grace regularly and formally, but know nothing of enjoying them: they attend to them as a matter of duty, but without a jot of feeling, interest, or affection. Yet surely common sense might tell us that this formal, mechanical use of holy things, is utterly worthless and unprofitable. Our feeling about them is just one of the many tests of the state of our souls.

How can that man be thought to love God who reads about Him and His Christ as a mere matter of duty, content and satisfied if he has just moved his mark on so many chapters?-How can that man suppose he is ready to meet Christ, who never takes any trouble to pour out his heart to Him in private as a Friend, and is satisfied with saying over a string of words every morning and evening,

under the name of "prayer," scarcely thinking what he is about?- How could that man be happy in heaven for ever, who finds the Sunday a dull, gloomy, tiresome day,-who knows nothing of hearty prayer and praise, and cares nothing whether he hears truth or error from the pulpit, or scarcely listens to the sermon?-What can be the spiritual condition of that man whose heart never "burns within him," when he receives that bread and wine which specially remind us of Christ's death on the cross, and the atonement for sin?

Reader, these inquiries are very serious and important. If means of grace had no other use, and were not mighty helps toward heaven, they would be useful in supplying a test of our real state in the sight of God. Tell me what a man does in the matter of Bible-reading and praying, in the matter of Sunday, public worship, and the Lord's Supper, and I will soon tell you what he is, and on which road he is travelling. Reader, how is it with you? Once more I ask, in the matter of means of grace, "How do you do?"

(8) Let me ask you, in the eighth place, whether you ever try to do any good in the world? Our Lord Jesus Christ was continually "going about doing good" while He was on earth. (Acts 10:38). The Apostles, and all the disciples in Bible times, were always striving to walk in His steps. A Christian who was content to go to heaven himself, and cared not what became of others, whether they lived happy and died in peace or not, would have been regarded as a kind of monster in primitive times, who had not the Spirit of Christ. Why should we suppose for a moment that a lower standard will suffice in the present day? Why should fig trees which bear no fruit be spared in the present day, when in our Lord's time they were to be cut down as "cumberers of the ground?" (Luke 13:7). These are serious inquiries and demand serious answers.

There is a generation of professing Christians now-a-days who seem to know nothing of caring for their neighbours, and are wholly swallowed up in the concerns of number one,-that is, their own and their family's. They eat, and drink, and sleep, and dress, and work, and get money, and spend money, year after year; and whether others are happy or miserable, well or ill, converted or unconverted, travelling toward heaven or toward hell, appear to be questions about which they are supremely indifferent. Can this be right? Can it be reconciled with the religion of Him who spoke the parable of the good Samaritan, and bade us "go and do likewise?" (Luke 10:37). I doubt it altogether. There is much to be done on every side. There is not a place in England where there is not a field for work, and an open door for being useful, if any one is willing to enter it. There is not a Christian in England who cannot find some good thing to do for others, if he has only a heart to do it. The poorest man or woman, without a single penny to give, can always show his deep sympathy to the sick and sorrowful, and by simple good nature and tender helpfulness, can lessen the misery and increase the comfort of somebody in this troubled world.

But alas, the vast majority of professing Christians, whether rich or poor, Churchmen or Dissenters, seem possessed with a devil of detestable selfishness, and know not the luxury of doing good. They can argue by the hour about baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and the forms of worship, and the union of Church and State, and such like dry-bone questions. But all this time they seem to care nothing for their neighbours. The plain practical point, whether they love their neighbour as the Samaritan loved the traveller in the parable, and can spare any time and trouble to do him good, is a point they never touch with one of their fingers. In too many English parishes in short, both in town and country, true love seems almost dead, and wretched party-spirit and

controversy are the only fruits that Christianity appears able to produce.

Reader, in a day like this you must not wonder if I press this plain old subject on your conscience. Do you know anything of genuine Samaritan love to others? Do you ever try to do any good to any one beside your own friends and relatives, and your own party or cause? Are you living like a disciple of Him who always "went about doing good," and commanded His disciples to take Him for their "example?" (John xiii. 15). If not, with what face will you meet Him in the judgment day? In this matter also, how is it with your soul? Once more I ask, "How do you do?"

(9) Let me ask you, in the ninth place, whether you know anything of living the life of habitual communion with Christ? By "communion," I mean that habit of "abiding in Christ" which our Lord speaks of in the fifteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, as essential to Christian fruitfulness. (John 15:4-8). Let it be distinctly understood that union with Christ is one thing, and communion is another. There can be no communion with the Lord Jesus without union first; but unhappily there may be union with the Lord Jesus, and afterwards little or no communion at all.

The difference between the two things is not the difference between two distinct steps, but the difference between the higher and lower ends of an inclined plane. Union is the common privilege of all who feel their sins, and truly repent, and come to Christ by faith, and are accepted, forgiven, and justified in Him. Too many believers, it may be feared, never get beyond this stage! Partly from ignorance, partly from laziness, partly from fear of man, partly from secret love of the world, partly from some unmortified besetting sin, they are content with a little faith, and a little hope, and a little peace, and a little measure of holiness. And they live on all their lives in this condition-doubting, weak, halting, and bearing fruit only "thirty-fold" to the very end of their days!

Communion with Christ is the privilege of those who are continually striving to grow in grace, and faith, and knowledge, and conformity to the mind of Christ in all things,-who do not look to the things behind, and count not themselves to have attained, but "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Php_3:14). Union is the bud, but communion is the flower: union is the babe, but communion is the strong man. He that has union with Christ does well; but he that enjoys communion with Him does far better. Both have one life, one hope, one heavenly seed in their hearts,-one Lord, one Saviour, one Holy Spirit, one eternal home: but union is not so good as communion!

The grand secret of communion with Christ is to be continually "living the life of faith in Him," and drawing out of Him every hour the supply that every hour requires. "To me," said St. Paul, "to live is Christ."-"I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Galatians 2:20; Php_1:21)-Communion like this is the secret of the abiding "joy and peace in believing" which eminent saints like Bradford and Rutherford notoriously possessed. None were ever more humble or more deeply convinced of their own infirmities and corruption. They would have told you that the seventh chapter of Romans precisely described their own experience. They would have endorsed every word of the "confession" put into the mouths of true believers in our Prayer-book Communion Service. They would have said continually, "the remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable." But they were ever looking unto Jesus, and in Him they were ever able to rejoice.

Communion like this is the secret of the splendid victories which these men won over sin, the world, and the fear of death. They did not sit still idly, saying, "I leave it all to Christ to do for me,"

but, strong in the Lord, they used the Divine nature He had implanted in them, boldly and confidently, and were "more than conquerors, through Him that loved them" (Romans 8:37). Like St. Paul they would have said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Php_4:13). -Ignorance of this life of communion is the simple reason why so many in this age are hankering after the Confessional, and strange views of the real presence in the Lord's Supper. It all springs from imperfect knowledge of Christ, and obscure views of the life of faith in a risen, living, and interceding Saviour.

Is communion with Christ like this a common thing? Alas! it is very rare indeed! The greater part of believers seem content with the barest elementary knowledge of justification by faith, and half-a-dozen other doctrines, and go doubting, limping, halting, groaning along the way to heaven, and experience little either of the sense of victory or joy. The Churches of these latter days are full of weak, powerless, and uninfluential believers, saved at last, "but so as by fire," but never shaking the world, and knowing nothing of an "abundant entrance" (1 Corinthians 3:15; 2 Peter 1:11). Despondency and Feeble-mind and Much-afraid, in "Pilgrim's Progress," reached the celestial city as really and truly as Valiant-for-the truth and Greatheart. But they certainly did not reach it with the same comfort, and did not do a tenth part of the same good in the world!

Reader, when things are so in the Churches, you will not wonder that I inquire how it is with your soul. Once more I ask, in the matter of communion with Christ, "How do you do?"

(10) Let me ask you, in the tenth and last place, whether you know anything of being ready for Christ's second coming? That He will come again the second time is as certain as anything in the Bible. The world has not yet seen the last of Him. As surely as He went up visibly and in the body on the Mount of Olives, before the eyes of His disciples, so surely will He come again in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. (Acts 1:11). He will come to raise the dead, to change the living, to reward His saints, to punish the wicked, to renew the earth, and take the curse away,-to purify the world, even as He purified the temple,-and to set up a kingdom where sin shall have no place, and holiness shall be the universal rule.

The Creeds which we repeat and profess to believe, continually declare that Christ is coming again. The ancient Christians made it a part of their religion to look for His return. Backward they looked to the cross and the atonement for sin, and rejoiced in Christ crucified. Upward they looked to Christ at the right hand of God, and rejoiced in Christ interceding. Forward they looked to the promised return of their Master, and rejoiced in the thought that they would see Him again. And we ought to do the same.

What have we really got from Christ? and what do we know of Him? and what do we think of Him? Are we living as if we long to see Him again, and love His appearing?-Readiness for that appearing is nothing more than being a real, consistent Christian. It requires no man to cease from his daily business. The farmer need not give up his farm, nor the shopkeeper his counter, nor the doctor his patients, nor the carpenter his hammer and nails, nor the bricklayer his mortar and trowel, nor the blacksmith his smithy. Each and all cannot do better than be found doing his duty, but doing it as a Christian, and with a heart packed up and ready to be gone.

Reader, in the face of truth like this, you cannot feel surprised if I ask, How is it with your soul in the matter of Christ's second coming? The world is growing old and running to seed. The vast

majority of Christians seem like the men in the time of Noah and Lot, who were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, planting and building, up to the very day when flood and fire came. "Remember Lot's wife." "Take heed . . . lest at any time your heart be overcharged . . . with the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 17:32; Luke 21:34). Once more I ask, in the matter of readiness for Christ's second coming, "How do you do?"

Reader, I end my inquiries here. I might easily add to them; but I trust I have said enough to stir up self-inquiry and self-examination in your soul. God is my witness that I have said nothing that I do not feel of paramount importance to my own soul. I only want to do good to you. Suffer me to conclude all with a few words of practical application.

(a) Are you asleep and utterly thoughtless about religion? Oh, reader, awake and sleep no more! Look at the churchyards and cemeteries. One by one the people around you are dropping into them, and you must lie there one day. Look forward to a world to come, and lay your hand on your heart, and say, if you dare, that you are fit to die and meet God. Ah! you are like one sleeping in a boat drifting down the stream towards the falls of Niagara! "What meanest thou, oh sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God!" "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" (Jonah 1:6; Ephesians 5:14).

(b) Are you feeling self-condemned, and afraid that there is no hope for your soul? Cast aside your fears, and accept the offer of our Lord Jesus Christ to sinners. Hear Him saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John 7:37). "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Doubt not that these words are for you as well as any one else. Bring all your sins, and unbelief, and sense of guilt, and unfitness, and doubts, and infirmities,-bring all to Christ. "This Man receiveth sinners," and He will receive you. (Luke 15:2). Do not stand still, halting between two opinions, and waiting for a convenient season. Arise, He calleth thee! Come to Christ this very day.

(c) Are you a professing believer in Christ, but a believer without much joy and peace and comfort? Take advice this day. Search your own heart, and see whether the fault be not entirely your own. Very likely you are sitting at your ease, content with a little faith, and a little repentance, a little grace, and a little sanctification, and unconsciously shrinking back from extremes. You will never be a very happy Christian at this rate, if you live to the age of Methuselah.

Change your plan, if you love life and would see good days, without delay. Come out boldly, and act decidedly. Be thorough, thorough, thorough in your Christianity, and set your face fully towards the sun. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you. Strive to get nearer to Christ, to abide in Him, to cleave to Him, and to sit at His feet like Mary, and drink full draughts out of the fountain of life. "These things," says St. John, "write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4). "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7).

(d) Are you a believer oppressed with doubts and fears, on account of your feebleness, infirmity, and sense of sin? Remember the text that says of Jesus, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench" (Matthew 12:20). Take comfort in the thought that this text is for you. What though your faith be feeble? It is better than no faith at all. The least grain of life is better

than death. Perhaps you are expecting too much in this world. Earth is not heaven. You are yet in the body. Expect little from self, but much from Christ. Reader, look more to Jesus, and less to self.

(e) Are you sometimes downcast by the trials you meet with in the way to heaven, bodily trials, family trials, trials of circumstances, trials from neighbours, and from the world? Look up, dear friend, to a sympathizing Saviour at God's right hand, and pour out your heart before Him. He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, for He suffered Himself being tempted.

Are you alone? So was He. Are you misrepresented and calumniated? So was He. Are you forsaken by friends? So was He. Are you persecuted? So was He. Are you wearied in body and grieved in spirit? So was He.-Yes! He can feel for you, and He can help as well as feel. Then learn to draw nearer to Christ. Yet a little time, and all will be over: we shall soon be "with the Lord." "There is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off" (Proverbs 23:18).

Reader, once more I ask the question, "HOW DO YOU DO?"

Hundred Years

[extract taken from]

THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS OF The Last Century;

OR,

ENGLAND A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

By the

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“Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of

their fathers.”- Job 8:8.

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ENGLAND A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

_____ I.

The Religious and Moral Condition of England AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Importance of the History of the Eighteenth Century-Political and Financial Position of England-Low State of Religion both in Churches and Chapels-Testimonies on the subject-Defects of Bishops and Clergy-Poverty of the Printed Theology-Wretched Condition of the Country as to Education, Morals, and popular Literature-The “Good Old Times” a mere Myth. T

HE subject I propose to handle in this volume is partly historical and partly biographical. If any reader expects from the title a fictitious tale, or something partly drawn from my imagination, I fear he will be disappointed. Such writing is not in my province, and I have no leisure for it if it was.

Facts, naked facts, and the stern realities of life, absorb all the time that I can spare for the press.

I trust, however, that with most readers the subject I have chosen is one that needs no apology. The man who feels no interest in the history and biography of his own country is surely a poor patriot and a worse philosopher.

“Patriot” he cannot be called. True patriotism will make an Englishman care for everything that concerns England. A true patriot will like to know something about every one who has left his mark on English character, from the Venerable Bede down to Hugh Stowell, from Alfred the Great down to Pounds, the originator of Ragged Schools.

“Philosopher” he certainly is not. What is philosophy but history teaching by examples? To know the steps by which England has reached her present position is essential to a right understanding both of our national privileges and our national dangers. To know the men whom God raised up to do his work in days gone by, will guide us in looking about for standard-bearers in our own days and days to come.

I venture to think that there is no period of English history which is so thoroughly instructive to a Christian as the middle of last century. It is the period of which we are feeling the influence at this very day. It is the period with which our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were immediately connected. It is a period, not least, from which we may draw most useful lessons for our own times.

Let me begin by trying to describe the actual condition of England a hundred years ago. A few simple facts will suffice to make this plain.

The reader will remember that I am not going to speak of our political condition. I might easily tell him that, in the days of Sir Robert Walpole, the Duke of Newcastle, and the elder Pitt, the position of England was very different from what it is now. Great statesmen and orators there were among us, no doubt. But our standing among the nations of the earth was comparatively poor, weak, and low. Our voice among the nations of the earth carried far less weight than it has since obtained. The foundation of our Indian Empire had hardly been laid. Our Australian possessions were a part of the world only just discovered, but not colonized. At home there was a strong party in the country which still longed for the restoration of the Stuarts. In 1745 the Pretender and a Highland army marched from Scotland to invade England, and got as far as Derby. Corruption, jobbing, and mismanagement in high places were the rule, and purity the exception. Civil and religious disabilities still abounded. The test and corporation Acts were still unrepealed. To be a Dissenter was to be regarded as only one degree better than being seditious and a rebel. Rotten boroughs flourished. Bribery among all classes was open, unblushing, and profuse. Such was England politically a hundred years ago.

The reader will remember, furthermore, that I am not going to speak of our condition in a financial and economical point of view. Our vast cotton, silk, and linen manufactures had hardly begun to exist. Our enormous mineral treasures of coal and iron were scarcely touched. We had no steam-boats, no locomotive engines, no railways, no gas, no electric telegraph, no penny post, no scientific farming, no macadamized roads, no free-trade, no sanitary arrangements, and no police deserving the name. Let any Englishman imagine, if he can, his country without any of the things that I have just mentioned, and he will have some faint idea of the economical and financial

condition of England a hundred years ago.

But I leave these things to the political economists and historians of this world. Interesting as they are, no doubt, they form no part of the subject that I want to dwell upon. I wish to treat that subject as a minister of Christ's gospel. It is the religious and moral condition of England a hundred years ago to which I shall confine my attention. Here is the point to which I wish to direct the reader's eye.

The state of this country in a religious and moral point of view in the middle of last century was so painfully unsatisfactory that it is difficult to convey any adequate idea of it. English people of the present day who have never been led to inquire into the subject, can have no conception of the darkness that prevailed. From the year 1700 till about the era of the French Revolution, England seemed barren of all that is really good. How such a state of things can have arisen in a land of free Bibles and professing Protestantism is almost past comprehension. Christianity seemed to lie as one dead, insomuch that you might have said “she is dead.” Morality, however much exalted in pulpits, was thoroughly trampled under foot in the streets. There was darkness in high places and darkness in low places-darkness in the court, the camp, the Parliament, and the bar-darkness in country, and darkness in town-darkness among rich and darkness among poor-a gross, thick, religious and moral darkness-a darkness that might be felt.

Does any one ask what the churches were doing a hundred years ago? The answer is soon given. The Church of England existed in those days, with her admirable articles, her time-honoured liturgy, her parochial system, her Sunday services, and her ten thousand clergy. The Nonconformist body existed, with its hardly won liberty and its free pulpit. But one account unhappily may be given of both parties. They existed, but they could hardly be said to have lived. They did nothing; they were sound asleep. The curse of the Uniformity Act seemed to rest on the Church of England. The blight of ease and freedom from persecution seemed to rest upon the Dissenters. Natural theology, without a single distinctive doctrine of Christianity, cold morality, or barren orthodoxy, formed the staple teaching both in church and chapel. Sermons everywhere were little better than miserable moral essays, utterly devoid of anything likely to awaken, convert, or save souls. Both parties seemed at last agreed on one point, and that was to let the devil alone, and to do nothing for hearts and souls. And as for the weighty truths for which Hooper and Latimer had gone to the stake, and Baxter and scores of Puritans had gone to jail, they seemed clean forgotten and laid on the shelf.

When such was the state of things in churches and chapels, it can surprise no one to learn that the land was deluged with infidelity and scepticism. The prince of this world made good use of his opportunity. His agents were active and zealous in promulgating every kind of strange and blasphemous opinion. Collins and Tindal denounced Christianity as priestcraft. Whiston pronounced the miracles of the Bible to be grand impositions. Woolston declared them to be allegories. Arianism and Socinianism were openly taught by Clark and Priestly, and became fashionable among the intellectual part of the community. Of the utter incapacity of the pulpit to stem the progress of all this flood of evil, one single fact will give us some idea. The celebrated lawyer, Blackstone, had the curiosity, early in the reign of George III., to go from church to church and hear every clergyman of note in London. He says that he did not hear a single discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero, and that it would have been

impossible for him to discover, from what he heard, whether the preacher were a follower of Confucius, of Mahomet, or of Christ!

Evidence about this painful subject is, unhappily, only too abundant. My difficulty is not so much to discover witnesses, as to select them. This was the period at which Archbishop Secker said, in one of his charges, “In this we cannot be mistaken, that an open and professed disregard of religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the age. Such are the dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and the profligacy, intemperance, and fearlessness of committing crimes in the lower part, as must, if the torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal. Christianity is ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve; and the teachers of it without any at all.” This was the period when Bishop Butler, in his preface to the “Analogy,” used the following remarkable words: “It has come to be taken for granted that Christianity is no longer a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly it is treated as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all persons of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject for mirth and ridicule.” Nor were such complaints as these confined to Churchmen. Dr. Watts declares that in his day “there was a general decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men, and that it was a general matter of mournful observation among all who lay the cause of God to heart.” Dr. Guyse, another most respectable Nonconformist, says, “The religion of nature makes up the darling topic of our age; and the religion of Jesus is valued only for the sake of that, and only so far as it carries on the light of nature, and is a bare improvement of that kind of light. All that is distinctively Christian, or that is peculiar to Christ, everything concerning him that has not its apparent foundation in natural light, or that goes beyond its principles, is waived, and banished and despised.” Testimony like this might easily be multiplied tenfold. But I spare the reader. Enough probably has been adduced to prove that when I speak of the moral and religious condition of England at the beginning of the eighteenth century as painfully unsatisfactory, I do not use the language of exaggeration.

What were the bishops of those days? Some of them were undoubtedly men of powerful intellect and learning, and of unblamable lives. But the best of them, like Secker, and Butler, and Gibson, and Lowth, and Horn, seemed unable to do more than deplore the existence of evils which they saw but knew not how to remedy. Others, like Lavington and Warburton, fulminated fierce charges against enthusiasm and fanaticism, and appeared afraid of England becoming too religious! The majority of the bishops, to say the truth, were mere men of the world. They were unfit for their position. The prevailing tone of the Episcopal body may be estimated by the fact, that Archbishop Cornwallis gave balls and routs at Lambeth Palace until the king himself interfered by letter and requested him to desist.1 Let me also add, that when the occupants of the Episcopal bench were troubled by the rapid spread of Whitefield's influence, it was gravely suggested in high quarters that the best way to stop his influence was to make him a bishop.

What were the parochial clergy of those days? The vast majority of them were sunk in worldliness, and neither knew nor cared anything about their profession. They neither did good themselves, nor liked any one else to do it for them. They hunted, they shot, they farmed, they swore, they drank, they gambled. They seemed determined to know everything except Jesus Christ and him crucified. When they assembled it was generally to toast “Church and King,” and to build one another up in earthly-mindedness, prejudice, ignorance, and formality. When they retired to their

own homes, it was to do as little and preach as seldom as possible. And when they did preach, their sermons were so unspeakably and indescribably bad, that it is comforting to reflect they were generally preached to empty benches.

What sort of theological literature was a hundred years ago bequeathed to us? The poorest and weakest in the English language. This is the age to which we owe such divinity as that of the “Whole Duty of Man,” and the sermons of Tillotson and Blair. Inquire at any old bookseller's shop, and you will find there is no theology so unsaleable as the sermons published about the middle and latter part of last century.

What sort of education had the lower orders a hundred years ago? In the greater part of parishes, and especially in rural districts, they had no education at all. Nearly all our rural schools have been built since 1800. So extreme was the ignorance, that a Methodist preacher in Somersetshire was charged before the magistrates with swearing, because in preaching he quoted the text, “He that believeth not shall be damned!” While, not to be behind Somersetshire, Yorkshire furnished a constable who brought Charles Wesley before the magistrates as a favourer of the Pretender, because in public prayer he asked the Lord to “bring back his banished ones!” To cap all, the vice-chancellor of Oxford actually expelled six students from the University because “they held Methodistic tenets, and took on them to pray, read, and expound Scripture in private houses.” To swear extempore, it was remarked by some, brought an Oxford student into no trouble; but to pray extempore was an offence not to be borne!

What were the morals of a hundred years ago? It may suffice to say that duelling, adultery, fornication, gambling, swearing, Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness were hardly regarded as vices at all. They were the fashionable practices of people in the highest ranks of society, and no one was thought the worse of for indulging in them. The best evidence of this point is to be found in Hogarth's pictures.

What was the popular literature of a hundred years ago? I pass over the fact that Bolingbroke, and Gibbon, and Hume the historian, were all deeply dyed with scepticism. I speak of the light reading which was most in vogue. Turn to the pages of Fielding, Smollett, Swift, and Sterne, and you have the answer. The cleverness of these writers is undeniable; but the indecency of many of their writings is so glaring and gross, that few people now-a-days would like to allow their works to be seen on their drawing-room table.

My picture, I fear, is a very dark and gloomy one. I wish it were in my power to throw a little more light into it. But facts are stubborn things, and specially facts about literature. The best literature of a hundred years ago is to be found in the moral writings of Addison, Johnson, and Steele. But the effects of such literature on the general public, it may be feared, was infinitesimally small. In fact, I believe that Johnson and the essayists had no more influence on the religion and morality of the masses than the broom of the renowned Mrs. Partington had on the waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

To sum up all, and bring this part of my subject to a conclusion, I ask my readers to remember that the good works with which every one is now familiar did not exist one hundred years ago. Wilberforce had not yet attacked the slave trade. Howard had not yet reformed prisons. Raikes had not established Sunday schools. We had no Bible Societies, no ragged schools, no city missions, no pastoral aid societies, no missions to the heathen. The spirit of slumber was over the

land. In a religious and moral point of view, England was sound asleep.

I cannot help remarking, as I draw this chapter to a conclusion, that we ought to be more thankful for the times in which we live. I fear we are far too apt to look at the evils we see around us, and to forget how much worse things were a hundred years ago. I have no faith, for my part, and I boldly avow it, in those “good old times” of which some delight to speak. I regard them as a mere fable and a myth. I believe that our own times are the best times that England has ever seen. I do not say this boastfully. I know we have many things to deplore; but I do say that we might be worse. I do say that we were much worse a hundred years ago. The general standard of religion and morality is undoubtedly far higher. At all events, in 1868, we are awake. We see and feel evils to which, a hundred years ago, men were insensible. We struggle to be free from these evils; we desire to amend. This is a vast improvement. With all our many faults we are not sound asleep. On every side there is stir, activity, movement, progress, and not stagnation. Bad as we are, we confess our badness; weak as we are, we acknowledge our failings; feeble as our efforts are, we strive to amend; little as we do for Christ, we do try to do something. Let us thank God for this! Things might be worse. Comparing our own days with the middle of last century, we have reason to thank God and take courage. England is in a better state than it was a hundred years ago.

II. The Agency by which Christianity was revived

in England. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Improvement of England since middle of Eighteenth Century an undeniable Fact-Agents in effecting the Change a few isolated and humble Clergymen-Preaching the chief Instrument they employed-The Manner of their Preaching-The Substance of their Preaching. THAT a great change for the better has come over England in the last hundred years is a fact which I suppose no well-informed person would ever attempt to deny. You might as well attempt to deny that there was a Protestant Reformation in the days of Luther, a Long Parliament in the time of Cromwell, or a French republic at the end of the last century. There has been a vast change for the better. Both in religion and morality the country has gone through a complete revolution. People neither think, nor talk, nor act as they did in 1750. It is a great fact, which the children of this world cannot deny, however they may attempt to explain it. They might as well try to persuade us that high-water and low-water at London Bridge are one and the same thing.

But by what agency was this great change effected? To whom are we indebted for the immense improvement in religion and morality which undoubtedly has come over the land? Who, in a word, were the instruments that God employed in bringing about the great English Reformation of the eighteenth century? This is the one point that I wish to examine generally in the present chapter. The names and biographies of the principal agents I shall reserve for future chapters.

The government of the country can lay no claim to the credit of the change. Morality cannot be called into being by penal enactments and statutes. People were never yet made religious by Acts of Parliament. At any rate, the Parliaments and administrations of last century did as little for religion and morality as any that ever existed in England.

Nor yet did the change come from the Church of England, as a body. The leaders of that venerable communion were utterly unequal to the times. Left to herself, the Church of England would probably have died of dignity, and sunk at her anchors.

Nor yet did the change come from the Dissenters. Content with their hardly-won triumphs, that worthy body of men seemed to rest upon their oars. In the plenary enjoyment of their rights of conscience, they forgot the great vital principles of their forefathers, and their own duties and responsibilities.

Who, then, were the reformers of the last century? To whom are we indebted, under God, for the change which took place?

The men who wrought deliverance for us, a hundred years ago, were a few individuals, most of them clergymen of the Established Church, whose hearts God touched about the same time in various parts of the country. They were not wealthy or highly connected. They had neither money to buy adherents, nor family influence to command attention and respect. They were not put forward by any Church, party, society, or institution. They were simply men whom God stirred up and brought out to do his work, without previous concert, scheme, or plan. They did his work in the old apostolic way, by becoming the evangelists of their day. They taught one set of truths. They taught them in the same way, with fire, reality, earnestness, as men fully convinced of what they taught. They taught them in the same spirit, always loving, compassionate, and, like Paul, even weeping, but always bold, unflinching, and not fearing the face of man. And they taught them on the same plan, always acting on the aggressive; not waiting for sinners to come to them, but going after, and seeking sinners; not sitting idle till sinners offered to repent, but assaulting the high places of ungodliness like men storming a breach, and giving sinners no rest so long as they stuck to their sins.

The movement of these gallant evangelists shook England from one end to another. At first people in high places affected to despise them. The men of letters sneered at them as fanatics; the wits cut jokes, and invented smart names for them; the Church shut her doors on them; the Dissenters turned the cold shoulder on them; the ignorant mob persecuted them. But the movement of these few evangelists went on, and made itself felt in every part of the land. Many were aroused and awakened to think about religion; many were shamed out of their sins; many were restrained and frightened at their own ungodliness; many were gathered together and induced to profess a decided hearty religion; many were converted; many who affected to dislike the movement were secretly provoked to emulation. The little sapling became a strong tree; the little rill became a deep, broad stream; the little spark became a steady burning flame. A candle was lighted, of which we are now enjoying the benefit. The feeling of all classes in the land about religion and morality gradually assumed a totally different complexion. And all this, under God, was effected by a few unpatronized, unpaid adventurers! When God takes a work in hand, nothing can stop it. When God is for us, none can he against us.

The instrumentality by which the spiritual reformers of the last century carried on their operations was of the simplest description. It was neither more nor less than the old apostolic weapon of Preaching. The sword which St. Paul wielded with such mighty effect, when he assaulted the strongholds of heathenism eighteen hundred years ago, was the same sword by which they won their victories. To say, as some have done, that they neglected education and schools, is totally incorrect. Wherever they gathered congregations, they cared for the children. To say, as others have done, that they neglected the sacraments, is simply false. Those who make that assertion only expose their entire ignorance of the religious history of England a hundred years ago. It would

be easy to name men among the leading reformers of the last century whose communicants might be reckoned by hundreds, and who honoured the Lord's Supper more than forty-nine out of fifty clergymen in their day. But beyond doubt preaching was their favourite weapon. They wisely went back to first principles, and took up apostolic plans. They held, with St. Paul, that a minister's first work is “to preach the gospel.”

They preached everywhere. If the pulpit of a parish church was open to them, they gladly availed themselves of it. If it could not be obtained, they were equally ready to preach in a barn. No place came amiss to them. In the field or by the road-side, on the village-green or in a market-place, in lanes or in alleys, in cellars or in garrets, on a tub or on a table, on a bench or on a horse-block, wherever hearers could be gathered, the spiritual reformers of the last century were ready to speak to them about their souls. They were instant in season and out of season in doing the fisherman's work, and compassed sea and land in carrying forward their Father's business. Now, all this was a new thing. Can we wonder that it produced a great effect?

They preached simply. They rightly concluded that the very first qualification to be aimed at in a sermon is to be understood. They saw clearly that thousands of able and well-composed sermons are utterly useless, because they are above the heads of the hearers. They strove to come down to the level of the people, and to speak what the poor could understand. To attain this they were not ashamed to crucify their style, and to sacrifice their reputation for learning. To attain this they used illustrations and anecdotes in abundance, and, like their divine Master, borrowed lessons from every object in nature. They carried out the maxim of Augustine,-“A wooden key is not so beautiful as a golden one, but if it can open the door when the golden one cannot, it is far more useful.” They revived the style of sermons in which Luther and Latimer used to be so eminently successful. In short, they saw the truth of what the great German reformer meant when he said, “No one can be a good preacher to the people who is not willing to preach in a manner that seems childish and vulgar to some.” Now, all this again was quite new a hundred years ago.

They preached fervently and directly. They cast aside that dull, cold, heavy, lifeless mode of delivery, which had long made sermons a very proverb for dulness. They proclaimed the words of faith with faith, and the story of life with life. They spoke with fiery zeal, like men who were thoroughly persuaded that what they said was true, and that it was of the utmost importance to your eternal interest to hear it. They spoke like men who had got a message from God to you, and must deliver it, and must have your attention while they delivered it. They threw heart and soul and feeling into their sermons, and sent their hearers home convinced, at any rate, that the preacher was sincere and wished them well. They believed that you must speak from the heart if you wish to speak to the heart, and that there must be unmistakable faith and conviction within the pulpit if there is to be faith and conviction among the pews. All this, I repeat, was a thing that had become almost obsolete a hundred years ago. Can we wonder that it took people by storm, and produced an immense effect?

But what was the substance and subject-matter of the preaching which produced such wonderful effect a hundred years ago? I will not insult my readers' common sense by only saying that it was “simple, earnest, fervent, real, genial, brave, life-like,” and so forth; I would have it understood that it was eminently doctrinal, positive, dogmatical, and distinct. The strongholds of the last century's sins would never have been cast down by mere earnestness and negative teaching. The trumpets

which blew down the walls of Jericho were trumpets which gave no uncertain sound. The English evangelists of last century were not men of an uncertain creed. But what was it that they proclaimed? A little information on this point may not be without use.

For one thing, then, the spiritual reformers of the last century taught constantly the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture. The Bible, whole and unmutilated, was their sole rule of faith and practice. They accepted all its statements without question or dispute. They knew nothing of any part of Scripture being uninspired. They never allowed that man has any “verifying faculty” within him, by which Scripture statements may be weighed, rejected, or received. They never flinched from asserting that there can be no error in the Word of God; and that when we cannot understand or reconcile some part of its contents, the fault is in the interpreter and not in the text. In all their preaching they were eminently men of one book. To that book they were content to pin their faith, and by it to stand or fall. This was one grand characteristic of their preaching. They honoured, they loved, they reverenced the Bible.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly the total corruption of human nature. They knew nothing of the modern notion that Christ is in every man, and that all possess something good within, which they have only to stir up and use in order to be saved. They never flattered men and women in this fashion. They told them plainly that they were dead, and must be made alive again; that they were guilty, lost, helpless, and hopeless, and in imminent danger of eternal ruin. Strange and paradoxical as it may seem to some, their first step towards making men good was to show them that they were utterly bad; and their primary argument in persuading men to do something for their souls was to convince them that they could do nothing at all.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly that Christ's death upon the cross was the only satisfaction for man's sin; and that, when Christ died, he died as our substitute -“the just for the unjust.” This, in fact, was the cardinal point in almost all their sermons. They never taught the modern doctrine that Christ's death was only a great example of self-sacrifice. They saw in it something far higher, greater, deeper than this. They saw in it the payment of man's mighty debt to God. They loved Christ's person; they rejoiced in Christ's promises; they urged men to walk after Christ's example. But the one subject, above all others, concerning Christ, which they delighted to dwell on, was the atoning blood which Christ shed for us on the cross.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly the great doctrine of justification by faith. They told men that faith was the one thing needful in order to obtain an interest in Christ's work for their souls; that before we believe, we are dead, and have no interest in Christ; and that the moment we do believe, we live, and have a plenary title to all Christ's benefits. Justification by virtue of church membership-justification without believing or trusting-were notions to which they gave no countenance. Everything, if you will believe, and the moment you believe; nothing, if you do not believe,-was the very marrow of their preaching.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly the universal necessity of heart conversion and a new creation by the Holy Spirit. They proclaimed everywhere to the crowds whom they addressed, “Ye must be born again.”

Sonship to God by baptism-sonship to God while we do the will of the devil-such sonship they never admitted. The regeneration which they preached was no dormant, torpid, motionless thing. It

was something that could be seen, discerned, and known by its effects.

Furthermore, the reformers of the last century taught constantly the inseparable connection between true faith and personal holiness. They never allowed for a moment that any church membership or religious profession was the least proof of a man being a true Christian if he lived an ungodly life. A true Christian, they maintained, must always be known by his fruits; and these fruits must be plainly manifest and unmistakable in all the relations of life. “No fruits, no grace,” was the unvarying tenor of their preaching.

Finally, the reformers of the last century taught constantly, as doctrines both equally true, God's eternal hatred against sin, and God's love towards sinners. They knew nothing of a “love lower than hell,” and a heaven where holy and unholy are all at length to find admission. Both about heaven and hell they used the utmost plainness of speech. They never shrunk from declaring, in plainest terms, the certainty of God's judgment and of wrath to come, if men persisted in impenitence and unbelief; and yet they never ceased to magnify the riches of God's kindness and compassion, and to entreat all sinners to repent and turn to God before it was too late.

Such were the main truths which the English evangelists of last century were constantly preaching. These were the principal doctrines which they were always proclaiming, whether in town or in country, whether in church or in the open air, whether among rich or among poor. These were the doctrines by which they turned England upside down, made ploughmen and colliers weep till their dirty faces were seamed with tears, arrested the attention of peers and philosophers, stormed the strongholds of Satan, plucked thousands like brands from the burning, and altered the character of the age. Call them simple and elementary doctrines if you will. Say, if you please, that you see nothing grand, striking, new, peculiar about this list of truths. But the fact is undeniable, that God blessed these truths to the reformation of England a hundred years ago. What God has blessed it ill becomes man to despise.

FOOTNOTE

1 The king's letter on this occasion is so curious, that I give it in its entirety, as I find it in that interesting though ill-arranged book, “The Life and Times of Lady Huntingdon.” The letter was evidently written in consequence of an interview which Lady Huntingdon had with the king. A critical reader will remember that the king was probably more familiar with the German than the English language.

“MY GOOD LORD PRELATE,-I could not delay giving you the notification of the grief and concern with which my breast was affected at receiving authentic information that routs have made their way into your palace. At the same time, I must signify to you my sentiments on this subject, which hold these levities and vain dissipations as utterly inexpedient, if not unlawful, to pass in a residence for many centuries devoted to divine studies, religious retirement, and the extensive exercise of charity and benevolence; I add, in a place where so many of your predecessors have led their lives in such sanctity as has thrown lustre on the pure religion they professed and adorned. From the dissatisfaction with which you must perceive I behold these improprieties, not to speak in harsher terms, and on still more pious principles, I trust you will suppress them immediately; so that I may not have occasion to show any further marks of my displeasure, or to interpose in a different manner. May God take your grace into his almighty protection!-I remain, my

Lord Primate, your gracious friend,

G. R.”

Chapter 44

Idolatry

[taken from “Knots Untied” first published 1877AD]

IDOLATRY

BY

J. C. Ryle D.D.

“Flee from idolatry.”- 1 Corinthians 10:14. THE text which heads this page may seem at first sight to be hardly needed in England. In an age of education and intelligence like this, we might almost fancy it is waste of time to tell an Englishman to “flee from idolatry.”

I am bold to say that this is a great mistake. I believe that we have come to a time when the subject of idolatry demands a thorough and searching investigation. I believe that idolatry is near us, and about us, and in the midst of us, to a very fearful extent. The Second Commandment, in one word, is in peril. “The plague is begun.”

Without further preface, I propose in this paper to consider the four following points:

I. The definition of idolatry. WHAT IS IT?

II. The cause of idolatry. WHENCE COMES IT?

III. The form idolatry assumes in the visible Church of Christ. WHERE IS IT?

IV. The ultimate abolition of idolatry. WHAT WILL END IT?

I feel that the subject is encompassed with many difficulties. Our lot is cast in an age when truth is constantly in danger of being sacrificed to toleration, charity, and peace falsely so called. Nevertheless, I cannot forget, as a clergyman, that the Church of England is a Church which has “given no uncertain sound” on the subject of idolatry; and, unless I am greatly mistaken, truth about idolatry is, in the highest sense, truth for the times.

I. Let me, then, first of all, supply a definition of idolatry. Let me show WHAT IT IS.

It is of the utmost importance that we should understand this. Unless I make this clear, I can do nothing with the subject. Vagueness and indistinctness prevail upon this point, as upon almost every other in religion. The Christian who would not be continually running aground in his spiritual voyage, must have his channel well buoyed, and his mind well stored with clear definitions.

I say, then, that “idolatry is a worship in which the honour due to God in Trinity, and to Him only, is given to some of His creatures, or to some invention of His creatures.” It may vary exceedingly. It may assume exceedingly different forms, according to the ignorance or the knowledge, the civilization or the barbarism, of those who offer it. It may be grossly absurd and ludicrous, or it may closely border on truth, and admit of being most speciously defended. But whether in the adoration

of the idol of Juggernaut, or in the adoration of the Host in St. Peter's at Rome, the principle of idolatry is in reality the same. In either case the honour due to God is turned aside from Him, and bestowed on that which is not God. And whenever this is done, whether in heathen temples or in professedly Christian churches, there is an act of idolatry.

It is not necessary for a man formally to deny God and Christ, in order to be an idolator. Far from it. Professed reverence for the God of the Bible, and actual idolatry, are perfectly compatible. They have often gone side by side, and they still do so. The children of Israel never thought of renouncing God when they persuaded Aaron to make the golden calf. “These be thy gods,” they said (thy Elohim), “which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” And the feast in honour of the calf was kept as “a feast unto the Lord” (Jehovah). (Exodus 32:4-5) Jeroboam, again, never pretended to ask the ten tribes to cast off their allegiance to the God of David and Solomon. When he set up the calves of gold in Dan and Bethel, he only said, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel (thy Elohim), which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” (1 Kings 12:28) In both instances, we should observe, the idol was not set up as a rival to God, but under the pretence of being a help-a stepping-stone to His service. But, in both instances, a great sin was committed. The honour due to God was given to a visible representation of Him. The majesty of Jehovah was offended. The second commandment was broken. There was, in the eyes of God, a flagrant act of idolatry.

Let us mark this well. It is high time to dismiss from our minds those loose ideas about idolatry, which are common in this day. We must not think, as many do, that there are only two sorts of idolatry,-the spiritual idolatry of the man who loves his wife, or child, or money more than God; and the open, gross idolatry of the man who bows down to an image of wood, or metal, or stone, because he knows no better. We may rest assured that idolatry is a sin which occupies a far wider field than this. It is not merely a thing in Hindostan, that we may hear of and pity at missionary meetings; nor yet is it a thing confined to our own hearts, that we may confess before the Mercy-seat upon our knees. It is a pestilence that walks in the Church of Christ to a much greater extent than many suppose. It is an evil that, like the man of sin, “sits in the very temple of God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:4) It is a sin that we all need to watch and pray against continually. It creeps into our religious worship insensibly, and is upon us before we are aware. Those are tremendous words which Isaiah spoke to the formal Jew,-not to the worshipper of Baal, remember, but to the man who actually came to the temple (Isaiah 65:3): “He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.”

This is that sin which God has especially denounced in His Word. One commandment out of ten is devoted to the prohibition of it. Not one of all the ten contains such a solemn declaration of God's character, and of His judgments against the disobedient: “I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me,” (Exodus 20:5) Not one, perhaps, of all the ten is so emphatically repeated and amplified, and especially in the fourth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy.

This is the sin, of all others, to which the Jews seem to have been most inclined before the destruction of Solomon's temple. What is the history of Israel under their judges and kings but a melancholy record of repeated falling away into idolatry? Again and again we read of “high places”

and false gods. Again and again we read of captivities and chastisements on account of idolatry. Again and again we read of a return to the old sin. It seems as if the love of idols among the Jews was naturally bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. The besetting sin of the Old Testament Church, in one word, was idolatry. In the face of the most elaborate ceremonial ordinances that God ever gave to His people, Israel was incessantly turning aside after idols, and worshipping the work of men's hands.

This is the sin, of all others, which has brought down the heaviest judgments on the visible Church. It brought on Israel the armies of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. It scattered the ten tribes, burned up Jerusalem, and carried Judah and Benjamin into captivity. It brought on the Eastern Churches, in later days, the overwhelming flood of the Saracenic invasion, and turned many a spiritual garden into a wilderness. The desolation which reigns where Cyprian and Augustine once preached, the living death in which the Churches of Asia Minor and Syria are buried, are all attributable to this sin. All testify to the same great truth which the Lord proclaims in Isaiah: “My glory will I not give to another.” (Isaiah 42:8)

Let us gather up these things in our minds, and ponder them well. Idolatry is a subject which, in every Church of Christ that would keep herself pure, should be thoroughly examined, understood, and known. It is not for nothing that St. Paul lays down the stern command, “Flee from idolatry.”

II. Let me show, in the second place, the cause to which idolatry may be traced. WHENCE COMES IT?

To the man who takes an extravagant and exalted view of human intellect and reason, idolatry may seem absurd. He fancies it too irrational for any but weak minds to be endangered by it.

To a mere superficial thinker about Christianity, the peril of idolatry may seem very small. Whatever commandments are broken, such a man will tell us, professing Christians are not very likely to transgress the second.

Now, both these persons betray a woeful ignorance of human nature. They do not see that there are secret roots of idolatry within us all. The prevalence of idolatry in all ages among the heathen must necessarily puzzle the one,-the warnings of Protestant ministers against idolatry in the Church must necessarily appear uncalled for to the other. Both are alike blind to its cause.

The cause of all idolatry is the natural corruption of man's heart. That great family disease, with which all the children of Adam are infected from their birth, shows itself in this, as it does in a thousand other ways. Out of the same fountain from which “proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit,” and the like (Mark 7:21-22),-out of that same fountain arise false views of God, and false views of the worship due to Him; and therefore, when the Apostle Paul tells the Galatians (Galatians 5:20) what are the “works of the flesh,” he places prominently among them “idolatry.”

A religion of some kind man will have. God has not left Himself without a witness in us all, fallen as we are. Like old inscriptions hidden under mounds of rubbish,-like the almost obliterated under-writing of Palimpsest manuscripts,1-even so there is a dim something engraven at the bottom of man's heart, however faint and half-erased,-a something which makes him feel he must have a religion and a worship of some kind. The proof of this is to be found in the history of

voyages and travels in every part of the globe. The exceptions to the rule are so few, if indeed there are any, that they only confirm its truth. Man's worship in some dark corner of the earth may rise no higher than a vague fear of an evil spirit, and a desire to propitiate him; but a worship of some kind man will have.

But then comes in the effect of the fall. Ignorance of God, carnal and low conceptions of His nature and attributes, earthly and sensual notions of the service which is acceptable to Him, all characterize the religion of the natural man. There is a craving in his mind after something he can see, and feel, and touch in his Divinity. He would fain bring his God down to his own crawling level. He would make his religion a thing of sense and sight. He has no idea of the religion of heart, and faith, and spirit. In short, just as he is willing to live on God's earth, but, until renewed by grace, a fallen and degraded life, so he has no objection to worship after a fashion, but, until renewed by the Holy Ghost, it is always with a fallen worship. In one word, idolatry is a natural product of man's heart. It is a weed which, like the earth uncultivated, the heart is always ready to bring forth.

And now does it surprise us, when we read of the constantly recurring idolatries of the Old Testament Church,-of Peor, and Baal, and Moloch, and Chemosh, and Ashtaroth,-of high places and hill altars, and groves and images,-and this in the full light of the Mosaic ceremonial? Let us cease to be surprised. It can be accounted for. There is a cause.

Does it surprise us when we read in history how idolatry crept in by degrees into the Church of Christ,-how little by little it thrust out Gospel truth, until, in Canterbury, men offered more at the shrine of Thomas a Becket than they did at that of the Virgin Mary, and more at that of the Virgin Mary than at that of Christ? Let us cease to be surprised. It is all intelligible. There is a cause.

Does it surprise us when we hear of men going over from Protestant Churches to the Church of Rome, in the present day? Do we think it unaccountable, and feel as if we ourselves could never forsake a pure form of worship for one like that of the Pope? Let us cease to be surprised. There is a solution for the problem. There is a cause.

That cause is nothing else but the deep corruption of man's heart. There is a natural proneness and tendency in us all to give God a sensual, carnal worship, and not that which is commanded in His Word. We are ever ready, by reason of our sloth and unbelief, to devise visible helps and stepping stones in our approaches to Him, and ultimately to give these inventions of our own the honour due to Him. In fact, idolatry is all natural, downhill, easy, like the broad way. Spiritual worship is all grace, all uphill, and all against the grain. Any worship whatsoever is more pleasing to the natural heart, than worshipping God in the way which our Lord Christ describes, “in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23)

I, for one, am not surprised at the quantity of idolatry existing, both in the world and in the visible Church. I believe it perfectly possible that we may yet live to see far more of it than some have ever dreamed of. It would never surprise me if some mighty personal Antichrist were to arise before the end,-mighty in intellect, mighty in talents for government, aye, and mighty, perhaps, in miraculous gifts too. It would never surprise me to see such an one as him setting up himself in opposition to Christ, and forming an infidel conspiracy and combination against the Gospel. I believe that many would rejoice to do him honour, who now glory in saying, “We will not have this Christ to reign over us.” I believe that many would make a god of him, and reverence him as an

incarnation of truth, and concentrate their idea of hero-worship on his person. I advance it as a possibility, and no more. But of this at least I am certain,-that no man is less safe from danger of idolatry than the man who now sneers at every form of religion; and that from infidelity to credulity, from atheism to the grossest idolatry, there is but a single step. Let us not think, at all events, that idolatry is an old-fashioned sin, into which we are never likely to fall. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” We shall do well to look into our own hearts: the seeds of idolatry are all there. We should remember the words of St. Paul: “Flee from idolatry.”

III. Let me show, in the third place, the forms which idolatry has assumed, and does assume, in the visible Church. WHERE IS IT?

I believe there never was a more baseless fabric than the theory which obtains favour with many,-that the promises of perpetuity and preservation from apostacy, belong to the visible Church of Christ. It is a theory supported neither by Scripture nor by facts. The Church against which “the gates of hell shall never prevail,” is not the visible Church, but the whole body of the elect, the company of true believers out of every nation and people. The greater part of the visible Church has frequently maintained gross heresies. The particular branches of it are never secure against deadly error, both of faith and practice. A departure from the faith,-a falling away,-a leaving of first love in any branch of the visible Church, need never surprise a careful reader of the New Testament.

That idolatry would arise, seems to have been the expectation of the Apostles, even before the canon of the New Testament was closed. It is remarkable to observe how St. Paul dwells on this subject in his Epistle to the Corinthians. If any Corinthian called a brother was an idolator, with such an one the members of the Church “were not to eat.” (1 Corinthians 5:11) “Neither be ye idolators, as were some of our fathers.” (1 Corinthians 10:7) He says again, in the text which heads this paper, “My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” (1 Corinthians 10:14) When he writes to the Colossians, he warns them against “worshipping of angels.” (Colossians 2:18) And St. John closes his first Epistle with the solemn injunction, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” (1 John 5:21) It is impossible not to feel that all these passages imply an expectation that idolatry would arise, and that soon, among professing Christians.

The famous prophecy in the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy contains a passage which is even more directly to the point: “The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” (1 Timothy 4:1) I will not detain my readers with any lengthy discussion of that remarkable expression, “doctrines of devils.” It may be sufficient to say that our excellent translators of the Bible are considered for once to have missed the full meaning of the Apostle, in their rendering of the word translated as “devils” in our version, and that the true meaning of the expression is, “doctrines about departed spirits.” And in this view, which, I may as well say, is maintained by all those who have the best right to be heard on such a question, the passage becomes a direct prediction of the rise of that most specious form of idolatry, the worship of dead saints. (See Mede's Works.)

The last passage I will call attention to, is the conclusion of the ninth chapter of Revelation. We there read, at the twentieth verse: “The rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils” (this is the same word, we should observe, as that in the Epistle to Timothy just quoted), “and idols of gold, and

silver, and brass, and stone, and wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk." Now, I am not going to offer any comment on the chapter in which this verse occurs. I know well there is a difference of opinion as to the true interpretation of the plagues predicted in it. I only venture to assert that it is the highest probability these plagues are to fall upon the visible Church of Christ; and the highest improbability that St. John was here prophesying about the heathen, who never heard the Gospel. And this once conceded, the fact that idolatry is a predicted sin of the visible Church, does seem most conclusively and for ever established.

And now, if we turn from the Bible to facts, what do we see? I reply unhesitatingly, that there is unmistakable proof that Scripture warnings and predictions were not spoken without cause, and that idolatry has actually arisen in the visible Church of Christ, and does still exist.

The rise and progress of the evil in former days, we shall find well summed up in the Homily of the Church of England on "Peril of Idolatry." To that Homily I beg to refer all Churchmen, reminding them once for all, that in the judgment of the Thirty-nine Articles, the Book of Homilies "contains a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times."-There we read, how, even in the FOURTH CENTURY, Jerome complains "that the errors of images have come in, and passed to the Christians from the Gentiles;" and Eusebius says, "We do see that images of Peter and Paul, and of our Saviour Himself, be made, and tables be painted, which I think to have been derived and kept indifferently by an heathenish custom."-There we may read how "Pontius Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in the fifth century, caused the walls of the temples to be painted with stories taken out of the Old Testament; that the people beholding and considering these pictures, might the better abstain from too much surfeiting and riot. But from learning by painted stories, it came by little and little to idolatry."-There we may read how Gregory the First, Bishop of Rome, in the beginning of the seventh century, did allow the free having of images in churches.-There we may read how Irene, mother of Constantine the Sixth, in the eighth century, assembled a Council at Nicaea, and procured a decree that "images should be put up in all the churches of Greece, and that honour and worship should be given to the said images." And there we may read the conclusion with which the Homily winds up its historical summary,-"that laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sorts, and degrees of men, women, and children of whole Christendom, have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry, of all other vices most detested of God, and most damnable to man, and that by the space of 800 years and more."

This is a mournful account, but it is only too true. There can be little doubt the evil began even before the time just mentioned by the Homily writers. No man, I think, need wonder at the rise of idolatry in the Primitive Church, who considers calmly the excessive reverence which it paid, from the very first, to the visible parts of religion. I believe that no impartial man can read the language used by nearly all the Fathers about the Church, the bishops, the ministry, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the martyrs, the dead saints generally,-no man can read it without being struck with the wide difference between their language and the language of Scripture on such subjects. You seem at once to be in a new atmosphere. You feel that you are no, longer treading on holy ground. You find that things which in the Bible are evidently of second-rate importance, are here made of first-rate importance. You find the things of sense and sight exalted to a position in which Paul, and Peter, and James, and John, speaking by the Holy Ghost, never for a moment placed them. It is not merely the weakness of uninspired writings that you have to complain of; it is something worse: it is a new system. And what is the explanation of all this? It is, in one word, that you have

got into a region where the malaria of idolatry has begun to arise. You perceive the first workings of the mystery of iniquity. You detect the buds of that huge system of idolatry which, as the Homily describes, was afterwards formally acknowledged, and ultimately blossomed so luxuriantly in every part of Christendom.

But let us now turn from the past to the present. Let us examine the question which most concerns ourselves. Let us consider in what form idolatry presents itself to us as a sin of the visible Church of Christ in our own time.

I find no difficulty in answering this question. I feel no hesitation in affirming that idolatry never yet assumed a more glaring form than it does in the Church of Rome at this present day.

And here I come to a subject on which it is hard to speak, because of the times we live in. But the whole truth ought to be spoken by ministers of Christ, without respect of times and prejudices. And I should not lie down in peace, after writing on idolatry, if I did not declare my solemn conviction that idolatry is one of the crying sins of which the Church of Rome is guilty. I say this in all sadness. I say it, acknowledging fully that we have our faults in the Protestant Church; and practically, perhaps, in some quarters, not a little idolatry. But from formal, recognized, systematic idolatry, I believe we are almost entirely free. While, as for the Church of Rome, if there is not in her worship an enormous quantity of systematic, organized idolatry, I frankly confess I do not know what idolatry is.

(a) To my mind, it is idolatry to have images and pictures of saints in churches, and to give them a reverence for which there is no warrant or precedent in Scripture. And if this be so, I say there is idolatry in the Church of Rome.

(b) To my mind, it is idolatry to invoke the Virgin Mary and the saints in glory, and to address them in language never addressed in Scripture except to the Holy Trinity. And if this be so, I say, there is idolatry in the Church of Rome.

(c) To my mind, it is idolatry to bow down to mere material things, and attribute to them a power and sanctity far exceeding that attached to the ark or altar of the Old Testament dispensation; and a power and sanctity, too, for which there is not a tittle of foundation in the Word of God. And if this be so with the holy coat of Treves, and the wonderfully multiplied wood of the true cross, and a thousand other socalled relics in my mind's eye, I say there is idolatry in the Church of Rome.

(d) To my mind, it is idolatry to worship that which man's hands have made,-to call it God, and adore it when lifted up before our eyes. And if this be so, with the notorious doctrine of transubstantiation, and the elevation of the Host in my recollection, I say there is idolatry in the Church of Rome.

(e) To my mind, it is idolatry to make ordained men mediators between ourselves and God, robbing, as it were, our Lord Christ of His office, and giving them an honour which even Apostles and angels in Scripture flatly repudiate. And if this be so, with the honour paid to Popes and Priests before my eyes, I say there is idolatry in the Church of Rome.

I know well that language like this jars the minds of many. Men love to shut their eyes against evils which it is disagreeable to allow. They will not see things which involve unpleasant consequences. That the Church of Rome is an erring Church, they will acknowledge. That she is idolatrous, they

will deny.

They tell us that the reverence which the Romanish Church gives to saints and images does not amount to idolatry. They inform us that there are distinctions between the worship of “latria” and “dulia,” between a mediation of redemption, and a mediation of intercession, which clear her of the charge. My answer is, that the Bible knows nothing of such distinctions; and that, in the actual practice of the great bulk of Roman Catholics, they have no existence at all.2

They tell us, that it is a mistake to suppose that Roman Catholics really worship the images and pictures before which they perform acts of adoration; that they only use them as helps to devotion, and in reality look far beyond them. My answer is, that many a heathen could say just as much for his idolatry; that it is notorious, in former days, that they did say so. But the apology does not avail. The terms of the second commandment are too stringent. It prohibits bowing down, as well as worshipping. And the very anxiety which the Church of Rome has often displayed to exclude that second commandment from her catechisms, is of itself a great fact which speaks volumes to a candid observer.

They tell us that we have no evidence for the assertions we make on this subject; that we found our charges on the abuses which prevail among the ignorant members of the Romish communion; and that it is absurd to say that a Church containing so many wise and learned men, is guilty of idolatry. My answer is, that the devotional books in common use among Roman Catholics supply us with unmistakable evidence. Let any one examine that notorious book, The Garden of the Soul, if he doubts my assertion, and read the language there addressed to the Virgin Mary. Let him remember that this language is addressed to a woman who, though highly favoured, and the mother of our Lord, was yet one of our fellow-sinners,-to a woman who actually confesses her need of a Saviour for herself. She says, “My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” (Luke 1:47) Let him examine this language in the light of the New Testament, and then let him tell us fairly whether the charge of idolatry is not fully made out.-But I answer, beside this, that we want no better evidence than that which is supplied in the city of Rome itself. What do men and women do under the light of the Pope's own countenance? What is the religion that prevails around St. Peter's and under the walls of the Vatican? What is Romanism at Rome, unfettered, unshackled, and free to develop itself in full perfection? Let a man honestly answer these questions, and I ask no more. Let him read such a book as Seymour's Pilgrimage to Rome, or Alfred's Letters, and ask any visitor to Rome if the picture is too highly coloured. Let him do this, I say, and I believe he cannot avoid the conclusion that Romanism in perfection is a gigantic system of Church-worship, sacrament-worship, Mary-worship, saint-worship, image-worship, relic-worship, and priest-worship,-that it is, in one word, a huge organized idolatry.

I know how painful these things sound to many ears. To me it is no pleasure to dwell on the shortcomings of any who profess and call themselves Christians. I can say truly that I have said what I have said with pain and sorrow.

I draw a wide distinction between the accredited dogmas of the Church of Rome and the private opinions of many of her members. I believe and hope that many a Roman Catholic is in heart inconsistent with his profession, and is better than the Church to which he belongs. I cannot forget the Jansenists, and Quesnel, and Martin Boos. I believe that many a poor Italian at this day is worshipping with an idolatrous worship, simply because he knows no better. He has no Bible to

instruct him. He has no faithful minister to teach him. He has the fear of the priest before his eyes, if he dares to think for himself. He has no money to enable him to get away from the bondage he lives under, even if he feels a desire. I remember all this; and I say that the Italian eminently deserves our sympathy and compassion. But all this must not prevent my saying that the Church of Rome is an idolatrous Church.

I should not be faithful if I said less. The Church of which I am a minister has spoken out most strongly on the subject. The Homily on “Peril of Idolatry,” and the solemn protest following the Rubrics at the end of our Prayer-book Communion Service, which denounces the adoration of the sacramental bread and wine as “idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians,” are plain evidence that I have said no more than the mind of my own Church. And in a day like this,-when some are disposed to secede to the Church of Rome, and many are shutting their eyes to her real character, and wanting us to be reunited to her,-in a day like this, my own conscience would rebuke me if I did not warn men plainly that the Church of Rome is an idolatrous Church, and that if they will join her they are “joining themselves to idols.”

But I may not dwell longer on this part of my subject. The main point I wish to impress on men's minds is this,-that idolatry has decidedly manifested itself in the visible Church of Christ, and nowhere so decidedly as in the Church of Rome.

IV. And now let me show, in the last place, the ultimate abolition of all idolatry. WHAT WILL END IT?

I consider that man's soul must be in an unhealthy state who does not long for the time when idolatry shall be no more. That heart can hardly be right with God which can think of the millions who are sunk in heathenism, or honour the false prophet Mahomet, or daily offer up prayers to the Virgin Mary, and not cry, “O my God, what shall be the end of these things? How long, O Lord, how long?”

Here, as in other subjects, the sure word of prophecy comes in to our aid. The end of all idolatry shall one day come. Its doom is fixed. Its overthrow is certain. Whether in heathen temples, or in so-called Christian churches, idolatry shall be destroyed at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, “The idols He shall utterly abolish.” (Isaiah 2:18)-Then shall be fulfilled the words of Micah (Micah 5:13): “Their graven images also will I cut off, and their standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.”-Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy of Zephaniah (Zephaniah 2:11): “The Lord will be terrible unto them: for He will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.”-Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah (Zechariah 13:2). “It shall come to pass at that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered.”-In a word, the ninety-seventh Psalm shall then receive its full accomplishment: “The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole

earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship Him, all ye gods."

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is that blessed hope which should ever comfort the children of God under the present dispensation. It is the pole-star by which we must journey. It is the one point on which all our expectations should be concentrated. "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Hebrews 10:37) Our David shall no longer dwell in Adullam, followed by a despised few, and rejected by the many. He shall take to Himself His great power, and reign, and cause every knee to bow before Him.

Till then our redemption is not perfectly enjoyed; as Paul tells the Ephesians, "We are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30) Till then our salvation is not completed; as Peter says, "We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5) Till then our knowledge is still defective; as Paul tells the Corinthians: "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; then shall I know even also as I am known." (1 Corinthians 13:12) In short, our best things are yet to come.

But in the day of our Lord's return every desire shall receive its full accomplishment. We shall no more be pressed down and worn out with the sense of constant failure, feebleness, and disappointment. In His presence we shall find there is a fulness of joy, if nowhere else; and when we awake up after His likeness we shall be satisfied, if we never were before. (Psalms 16:11; Psalms 17:15)

There are many abominations now in the visible Church, over which we can only sigh and cry, like the faithful in Ezekiel's day. (Ezekiel 9:4) We cannot remove them. The wheat and the tares will grow together until the harvest. But a day comes when the Lord Jesus shall once more purify His temple, and cast forth everything that defiles. He shall do that work of which the doings of Hezekiah and Josiah were a faint type long ago. He shall cast forth the images, and purge out idolatry in every shape.

Who is there now that longs for the conversion of the heathen world? You will not see it in its fulness until the Lord's appearing. Then, and not till then, will that often-misapplied text be fulfilled: "A man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats." (Isaiah 2:20)

Who is there now that longs for the redemption of Israel? You will never see it in its perfection till the Redeemer comes to Zion. Idolatry in the professing Church of Christ has been one of the mightiest stumbling-blocks in the Jew's way. When it begins to fall, the veil over the heart of Israel shall begin to be taken away. (Psalms 102:16)

Who is there now that longs for the fall of Antichrist, and the purification of the Church of Rome? I believe that will never be until the winding up of this dispensation. That vast system of idolatry may be consumed and wasted by the Spirit of the Lord's mouth, but it shall never be destroyed excepting by the brightness of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Who is there now that longs for a perfect Church-a Church in which there shall not be the slightest taint of idolatry? You must wait for the Lord's return. Then, and not till then, shall we see a perfect Church,-a Church having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing (Ephesians 5:27), a Church

of which all the members shall be regenerate, and every one a child of God.

If these things be so, men need not wonder that we urge on them the study of prophecy, and that we charge them above all to grasp firmly the glorious doctrine of Christ's second appearing and kingdom. This is the “light shining in a dark place,” to which we shall do well to take heed. Let others indulge their fancy if they will, with the vision of an imaginary “Church of the future.” Let the children of this world dream of some “coming man,” who is to understand everything, and set everything right. They are only sowing to themselves bitter disappointment. They will awake to find their visions baseless and empty as a dream. It is to such as these that the Prophet's words may be well applied: “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.” (Isaiah 1:11.)

But let our eyes look right onward to the day of Christ's second advent. That is the only day when every abuse shall be rectified, and every corruption and source of sorrow completely purged away. Waiting for that day, let us each work on and serve our generation; not idle, as if nothing could be done to check evil, but not disheartened because we see not yet all things put under our Lord. After all, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us wait, I say, on the Lord.

If these things be so, men need not wonder that we warn them to beware of all leanings towards the Church of Rome. Surely, when the mind of God about idolatry is so plainly revealed to us in His Word, it seems the height of infatuation in any one to join a Church so steeped in idolatries as the Church of Rome. To enter into communion with her, when God is saying, “Come out of her, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4),-to seek her when the Lord is warning us to leave her,-to become her subjects when the Lord's voice is crying, “Escape for thy life, flee from the wrath to come;”-all this is mental blindness indeed,-a blindness like that of him who, though fore-warned, embarks in a sinking ship,-a blindness which would be almost incredible, if our own eyes did not see examples of it continually.

We must all be on our guard. We must take nothing for granted. We must not hastily suppose that we are too wise to be ensnared, and say, like Hazael, “Is Thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” Those who preach must cry aloud and spare not, and allow no false tenderness to make them hold their peace about the heresies of the day. Those who hear must have their loins girt about with truth, and their minds stored with clear prophetical views of the end to which all idol-worshippers must come. Let us all try to realize that the latter ends of the world are upon us, and that the abolition of all idolatry is hastening on. Is this a time for a man to draw nearer to Rome? Is it not rather a time to draw further back and stand clear, lest we be involved in her downfall? Is this a time to extenuate and palliate Rome's manifold corruptions, and refuse to see the reality of her sins? Surely we ought rather to be doubly jealous of everything of a Romish tendency in religion,-doubly careful that we do not connive at any treason against our Lord Christ,-and doubly ready to protest against unscriptural worship of every description. Once more, then, I say, let us remember that the destruction of all idolatry is certain, and remembering that, beware of the Church of Rome.

The subject I now touch upon is of deep and pressing importance, and demands the serious attention of all Protestant Churchmen. It is vain to deny that a large party of English clergy and laity in the present day are moving heaven and earth to reunite the Church of England with the

idolatrous Church of Rome. The publication of that monstrous book, Dr. Pusey's Eirenicon, and the formation of a “Society for Promoting the Union of Christendom,” are plain evidence of what I mean. He that runs may read.

The existence of such a movement as this will not surprise any one who has carefully watched the history of the Church of England during the last forty years. The tendency of Tractarianism and Ritualism has been steadily towards Rome. Hundreds of men and women have fairly honestly left our ranks, and become downright Papists. But many hundreds more have stayed behind, and are yet nominal Churchmen within our pale. The pompous semi-Romish ceremonial which has been introduced into many churches, has prepared men's minds for changes. An extravagantly theatrical and idolatrous mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper has paved the way for transubstantiation. A regular process of unprotestantizing has been long and successfully at work. The poor old Church of England stands on an inclined plane. Her very existence, as a Protestant Church, is in peril.

I hold, for one, that this Romish movement ought to be steadily and firmly resisted. Notwithstanding the rank, the learning, and the devotedness of some of its advocates, I regard it as a most mischievous, soul-ruining, and unscriptural movement. To say that reunion with Rome would be an insult to our martyred Reformers, is a very light thing; it is far more than this: it would be a sin and an offence against God! Rather than be reunited with the idolatrous Church of Rome, I would willingly see my own beloved Church perish and go to pieces. Rather than become Popish once more, she had better die!

Unity in the abstract is no doubt an excellent thing: but unity without truth is useless. Peace and uniformity are beautiful and valuable: but peace without the Gospel,-peace based on a common Episcopacy, and not on a common faith, is a worthless peace, not deserving of the name. When Rome has repealed the decrees of Trent, and her additions to the Creed,-when Rome has recanted her false and unscriptural doctrines,when Rome has formally renounced image-worship, Mary-worship, and transubstantiation,-then, and not till then, it will be time to talk of reunion with her. Till then there is a gulf between us which cannot be honestly bridged. Till then I call on all Churchmen to resist to the death this idea of reunion with Rome. Till then let our watchwords be, “No peace with Rome! No communion with idolators!” Well says the admirable Bishop Jewel, in his Apology, “We do not decline concord and peace with men; but we will not continue in a state of war with God that we might have peace with men!-If the Pope does indeed desire we should be reconciled to him, he ought first to reconcile himself to God.” This witness is true! Well would it be for the Church of England, if all her bishops had been like Jewel!

I write these things with sorrow. But the circumstances of the times make it absolutely necessary to speak out. To whatever quarter of the horizon I turn, I see grave reason for alarm. For the true Church of Christ I have no fears at all. But for the Established Church of England, and for all the Protestant Churches of Great Britain, I have very grave fears indeed. The tide of events seems running strongly against Protestantism and in favour of Rome. It looks as if God had a controversy with us, as a nation, and was about to punish us for our sins.

I am no prophet. I know not where we are drifting. But at the rate we are going, I think it quite within the verge of possibility that in a few years the Church of England may be reunited to the Church of Rome. The Crown of England may be once more on the head of a Papist. Protestantism

may be formally repudiated. A Romish Archbishop may once more preside at Lambeth Palace. Mass may be once more said at Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's. And one result will be, that all Bible-reading Christians must either leave the Church of England, or else sanction idol-worship and become idolaters! God grant we may never come to this state of things! But at the rate we are going, it seems to me quite possible.

And now it only remains for me to conclude what I have been saying, by mentioning some safeguards for the souls of all who read this paper. We live in a time when the Church of Rome is walking amongst us with renewed strength, and loudly boasting that she will soon win back the ground that she has lost. False doctrines of every kind are continually set before us in the most subtle and specious forms. It cannot be thought unseasonable if I offer some practical safeguards against idolatry. What it is, whence it comes, where it is, what will end it,-all this we have seen. Let me point out how we may be safe from it, and I will say no more.

(1) Let us arm ourselves, then, for one thing, with a thorough knowledge of the Word of God. Let us read our Bibles more diligently than ever, and become familiar with every part of them. Let the Word dwell in us richly. Let us beware of anything which would make us give less time, and less heart, to the perusal of its sacred pages. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit; let it never be laid aside. The Bible is the true lantern for a dark and cloudy time; let us beware of travelling without its light. I strongly suspect, if we did but know the secret history of the numerous secessions from our Church to that of Rome, which we deplore,-I strongly suspect that in almost every case one of the most important steps in the downward road would be found to have been a neglected Bible,-more attention to forms, sacraments, daily services, primitive Christianity, and so forth, and diminished attention to the written Word of God. The Bible is the King's highway. If we once leave that for any by-path, however beautiful, and old, and frequented it may seem, we must never be surprised if we end with worshipping images and relics, and going regularly to a confessional.

(2) Let us arm ourselves, in the second place, with a godly jealousy about the least portion of the Gospel. Let us beware of sanctioning the slightest attempt to keep back any jot or tittle of it, or to throw any part of it into the shade by exalting subordinate matters in religion. When Peter withdrew himself from eating with the Gentiles, it seemed but a little thing; yet Paul tells the Galatians, “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” (Galatians 2:11) Let us count nothing little that concerns our souls. Let us be very particular whom we hear, where we go, and what we do, in all the matters of our own particular worship; and let us care nothing for the imputation of squeamishness and excessive scrupulosity. We live in days when great principles are involved in little acts, and things in religion, which fifty years ago were utterly indifferent, are now by circumstances rendered indifferent no longer. Let us beware of tampering with anything of a Romanizing tendency. It is foolishness to play with fire. I believe that many of our perverts and seceders began with thinking there could be no mighty harm in attaching a little more importance to certain outward things than they once did. But once launched on the downward course, they went on from one thing to another. They provoked God, and He left them to themselves! They were given over to strong delusion, and allowed to believe a lie. (2 Thessalonians 2:11) They tempted the devil, and he came to them! They started with trifles, as many foolishly call them. They have ended with downright idolatry.

(3) Let us arm ourselves, last of all, with clear sound views of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the salvation that is in Him. He is the “image of the invisible God,”-the express “image of His person,”-and the true preservative against all idolatry, when truly known. Let us build ourselves deep down on the strong foundation of His finished work upon the cross. Let us settle it firmly in our minds, that Christ Jesus has done everything needful in order to present us without spot before the throne of God, and that simple, childlike faith on our part is the only thing required to give us an entire interest in the work of Christ. Let us not doubt that, having this faith, we are completely justified in the sight of God,-will never be more justified if we live to the age of Methuselah and do the works of the Apostle Paul,-and CAN add nothing to that complete justification by any acts, deeds, words, performances, fastings, prayers, almsdeeds, attendance on ordinances, or anything else of our own.

Above all, let us keep up continual communion with the person of the Lord Jesus! Let us abide in Him daily, feed on Him daily, look to Him daily, lean on Him daily, live upon Him daily, draw from His fulness daily. Let us realize this, and the idea of other mediators, other comforters, other intercessors, will seem utterly absurd. “What need is there?” we shall reply: “I have Christ, and in Him I have all. What have I to do with idols? I have Jesus in my heart, Jesus in the Bible, and Jesus in heaven, and I want nothing more!”

Once let the Lord Christ have His rightful place in our hearts, and all other things in our religion will soon fall into their right places.-Church, ministers, sacraments, ordinances, all will go down, and take the second place.

Except Christ sits as Priest and King upon the throne of our hearts, that little kingdom within will be in perpetual confusion. But only let Him be “all in all” there, and all will be well. Before Him every idol, every Dagon shall fall down. CHRIST RIGHTLY KNOWN, CHRIST TRULY BELIEVED, AND CHRIST HEARTILY LOVED, IS THE TRUE PRESERVATIVE AGAINST RITUALISM, ROMANISM AND EVERY FORM OF IDOLATRY.3

FOOTNOTE

1 “Palimpsest” is the name given to ancient parchment manuscripts which have been twice written over, that is, the work of a comparatively modern writer has been written over or across the work of an older writer. Before the invention of cheap paper, the practice of so writing over an old manuscript was not uncommon. The object of the practice, of course, was to save expense. The misfortune was that the second writing was often far less valuable than the first.

2 “Latria” and “dulia” are two Greek words, both meaning “worship” or “service,” but the former being a much stronger word than the latter. The Roman Catholic admits that the worship of “latria” may not be given to saints, but maintains that “dulia” may be given.

3 I ask every reader of this paper to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the language of the following declaration. It is the declaration which, under the “Act of Settlement” and by the law of England, every Sovereign of this country, at his or her coronation, must “make, subscribe, and audibly repeat.”

“I, . . ., do solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare that I do believe that in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is not any transubstantiation of the

elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, at or after the consecration thereof, by any person whatsoever; and that the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary or any other Saint, and the sacrifice of the mass, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious, and idolatrous. And I do solemnly, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare, that I do make this declaration, and every part thereof, in the plain and ordinary sense of the words read unto me, as they are commonly understood by English Protestants, without any evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation, and without any dispensation already granted me for this purpose by the Pope or any other authority or person whatsoever, or without any hope of any such dispensation from any person or authority whatsoever, or without thinking that I am or can be acquitted before God or man, or absolved of this declaration or any part thereof, although the Pope, or any other person or persons or power whatsoever, shall dispense with or annul the same, or declare that it was null and void from the beginning."

May the day never come when British Sovereigns shall cease to make the above declaration!

If any man

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

The substance of a great part of this paper was preached, as a sermon, under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, London and also in the nave of Chester Cathedral.

'IF ANY MAN-!'

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"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."- John 7:37-38.

_____ THE text which heads this paper contains one of those mighty sayings of Christ which deserve to be printed in letters of gold. All the stars in heaven are bright and beautiful; yet even a child can see that "one star differeth from another in glory." (1 Corinthians 15:41) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; but that heart must indeed be cold and dull which does not feel that some verses are peculiarly rich and full. Of such verses this text is one.

In order to see the whole force and beauty of the text, we must remember the place, the time, and occasion when it comes in.

The PLACE, then, was Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judaism, and the stronghold of priests and scribes, of Pharisees and Sadducees.-The OCCASION was the feast of tabernacles, one of those great annual feasts when every Jew, if he could, went up to the temple according to the law.-The TIME was "the last day of the feast," when all the ceremonies were drawing to a close, when the water drawn from the fountain of Siloam had been solemnly poured on the altar, and nothing remained for worshippers but to return home.

At this critical moment our Lord Jesus Christ "-stood" forward on a prominent place, and spoke to the assembled crowds. I doubt not He read their hearts. He saw them going away with aching consciences and unsatisfied minds, having got nothing from their blind teachers the Pharisees and Sadducees, and carrying away nothing but a barren recollection of pompous forms. He saw and pitied them and cried aloud, like a herald, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."-That this was all our Lord said on this memorable occasion I take leave to doubt. I suspect it is only the keynote of His address. But this, I believe, was the first sentence that fell from His lips: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me." If any one wants living satisfying water, let him come unto ME.

Let me remind my readers, in passing, that no prophet or apostle ever took on himself to use such language as this. "Come with us," said Moses to Hobab (Numbers 10:29); "Come to the waters," says Isaiah (Isaiah 55:1); "Behold the Lamb," says John the Baptist (John 1:29); "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." says St. Paul (Acts 16:31). But no one except Jesus of Nazareth ever said, "Come to ME." That fact is very significant. He that said, "Come to Me," knew and felt, when He said it, that He was the Eternal Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

There are three points in this great saying of our Lord's to which I now propose to direct your attention.

I. You have a CASE SUPPOSED: "If any man thirst."

II. You have a REMEDY PROPOSED: "Let him come unto Me, and drink."

III. You have a PROMISE HELD OUT: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Each of these points concerns all into whose hands this paper may fall. On each of them I have somewhat to say.

I. In the first place, then, you have a case supposed. Our Lord says, "If any man thirst."

Bodily thirst is notoriously the most painful sensation to which the frame of mortal man is liable. Read the story of the miserable sufferers in the black hole at Calcutta.-Ask any one who has travelled over desert plains under a tropical sun.-Hear what any old soldier will tell you is the chief want of the wounded on a battle field.-Remember what the survivors of the crews of ships lost in mid-ocean, like the Cospatrick, went through.-Mark the awful words of the rich man in the parable: "Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame."(Luke 16:24) The testimony is unvarying. There is nothing so terrible and hard to bear as thirst.

But if bodily thirst is so painful, how much more painful is thirst of soul! Physical suffering is not the worst part of eternal punishment. It is a light thing, even in this world, compared to the suffering of the mind and inward man. To see the value of our souls, and find out they are in danger of eternal ruin, to feel the burden of unforgiven sin, and not to know where to turn for relief,-to have a conscience sick and ill at ease, and to be ignorant of the remedy,-to discover that we are dying, dying daily, and yet unprepared to meet God,-to have some clear view of our own guilt and wickedness, and yet to be in utter darkness about absolution, this is the highest degree of pain,-the pain which drinks up soul and spirit, and pierces joints and marrow! And this no doubt is the thirst of which our Lord is speaking. It is thirst after pardon, forgiveness, absolution, and peace with God. It is the craving of a really awakened conscience, wanting satisfaction and not knowing where to find it, walking through dry places, and unable to get rest.

This is the thirst which the Jews felt, when Peter preached to them on the day of Pentecost. It is written that they were "pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

This is the thirst which the Philippian jail or felt, when he awoke to consciousness of his spiritual danger, and felt the earthquake making the prison reel under his feet. It is written that he "came

trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out saying, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:31)

This is the thirst which many of the greatest servants of God seem to have felt, when light first broke in on their minds. Augustine seeking rest among the Manichean heretics and finding none, Luther groping after truth among monks in Erfurt monastery, John Bunyan agonising amidst doubts and conflicts in his Elstow cottage,-George Whitefield groaning under self-imposed austerities, for want of clear teaching, when an undergraduate at Oxford,-all have left on record their experience. I believe they all knew what our Lord meant when He spoke of "thirst."

And surely, reader, it is not too much to say that all of us ought to know SOMETHING of this thirst, if not as much as Augustine, Luther, Bunyan, or Whitefield. Living as we do in a dying world,-knowing, as we must do, if we will confess it, that there is a world beyond the grave, and that after death comes the judgment, feeling, as we must do in our better moments, what poor, weak, unstable, defective creatures we all are, and how unfit to meet God,-conscious as we must be in our inmost heart of hearts, that on our use of time depends our place in eternity,-we ought to feel and to realise something like "thirst" for a sense of peace with our living God. But alas, nothing proves so conclusively the fallen nature of man as the general, common want of spiritual appetite. For money, for power, for pleasure, for rank, for honour, for distinction,-for all these the vast majority are now intensely thirsting. To lead forlorn hopes, to dig for gold, to storm a breach, to try to hew a way through thick-ribbed ice to the North Pole, for all these objects there is no lack of adventurers and volunteers. Fierce and unceasing is the competition for these corruptible crowns. But few indeed, by comparison, are those who thirst after eternal life. No wonder that the natural man is called in Scripture "dead," and "sleeping," and "blind," and "deaf." No wonder that he is said to need a second birth and a new creation. There is no surer symptom of mortification in the body than insensibility. There is no more painful sign of an unhealthy state of soul than an utter absence of spiritual thirst. Woe to that man of whom the Saviour can say, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Revelation 3:17)

But who is there among the readers of this paper that feels the burden of sin, and longs for peace with God? Who is there that really feels the words of our Prayer-book Confession,- "I have erred and strayed like a lost sheep,-there is no health in me,-I am a miserable offender?" Who is there that enters into the fulness of our Communion service, and can say with truth, "The remembrance of my sins is grievous, and the burden of them is intolerable?" You are the man that ought to thank God. A sense of sin, guilt, and poverty of soul, is the first stone laid by the Holy Ghost, when He builds a spiritual temple. He convinces of sin. Light was the first thing called into being in the material creation. (Genesis 1:3) Light about our own state is the first work in the new creation. Thirsting soul, I say again, you are the person that ought to thank God. The kingdom of God is near you. It is not when we begin to feel good, but when we feel bad, that we take the first step towards heaven. Who taught thee that thou wast naked? Whence came this inward light? Who opened thine eyes and made thee see and feel? Know this day that flesh and blood hath not revealed these things unto thee, but our Father which is in heaven. Universities may confer degrees, and schools may impart knowledge of all the sciences, but they cannot make men feel sin. To realise our spiritual need, and feel true spiritual thirst, is the A B C in saving Christianity. It is a great saying of Elihu, in the book of Job,- "God looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited not; He will deliver his soul from death,

and his life shall see the light." (Job 33:27-28) Let him that knows any thing of spiritual "thirst" not be ashamed. Rather let him lift up his head and begin to hope. Let him pray that God would carry on the work He has begun, and make him feel more.

II. I pass from the case supposed to the remedy proposed. "If any man thirst," says our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, "let him come unto Me, and drink."

There is a grand simplicity about this little sentence which cannot he too much admired. There is not a word in it of which the literal meaning is not plain to a child. Yet, simple as it appears, it is rich in spiritual meaning. Like the Koh-i-noor diamond, which you may carry between finger and thumb, it is of unspeakable value. It solves that mighty problem which all the philosophers of Greece and Rome could never solve,-"How can man have peace with God?" Place it in your memory side by side with six other golden sayings of your Lord. "I am the bread of life: he that cometh unto ME shall never hunger; and he that believeth on ME shall never thirst."-"I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."-"I am the Door: if any man enter in, he shall be saved."-"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by ME."- "Come unto ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."-"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."-Add to these six texts the one before you today. Get the whole seven by heart. Rivet them down in your mind, and never let them go. When your feet touch the cold river, on the bed of sickness and in the hour of death, you will find these seven texts above all price. (John 6:35, John 8:12, John 10:9, John 14:6; Matthew 11:28; John 6:37)

For what is the sum and substance of these simple words? It is this. Christ is that Fountain of living water which God has graciously provided for thirsting souls. From Him, as out of the rock smitten by Moses, there flows an abundant stream for all who travel through the wilderness of this world. In Him, as our Redeemer and Substitute, crucified for our sins and raised again for our justification, there is an endless supply of all that men can need,-pardon, absolution, mercy, grace, peace, rest, relief, comfort, and hope.

This rich provision Christ has bought for us at the price of His own precious blood. To open this wondrous fountain He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, and bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (1 Peter 2:24, 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21) And now He is sealed and appointed to be the Reliever of all who are labouring and heavy laden, and the Giver of living water to all who thirst. It is His office to receive sinners. It is His pleasure to give them pardon, life, and peace. And the words of the text are a proclamation He makes to all mankind,-"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

Reader, the efficacy of a medicine depends in great measure on the mariner in which it is used. The best prescription of the best physician is useless if we refuse to follow the directions which accompany it. Suffer the word of exhortation, while I offer some caution and advice about the Fountain of living water.

(a) He that thirsts and wants relief must come to Christ Himself: He must not be content with coming to His Church and His ordinances, or to the assemblies of His people for prayer and praise. He must not stop short even at His holy table, or rest satisfied with privately opening his

heart to His ordained minister. Oh, no! he that is content with only drinking their waters "shall thirst again." (John 4:13) He must go higher, further, much further than this. He must have personal dealings with Christ Himself: all else in religion is worthless without Him. The King's palace, the attendant servants, the richly furnished banqueting house, the very banquet itself, all are nothing unless we speak with the King. His hand alone can take the burden off our backs and make us feel free. The hand of man may take the stone from the grave and show the dead; but none but Jesus can say to the dead, "Come forth and live." (John 11:41-43) We must deal directly with Christ.

(b) Again: he that thirsts and wants relief from Christ must actually come to Him. It is not enough to wish, and talk, and mean, and intend, and resolve, and hope. Hell, that awful reality, is truly said to be paved with good intentions. Thousands are yearly lost in this fashion, and perish miserably just outside the harbour. Meaning and intending they live; meaning and intending they die. Oh, no! we must "arise and come!" If the prodigal son had been content with saying, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I hope some day to return home," he might have remained for ever among the swine. It was when he AROSE AND CAME to his father that his father ran to meet him, and said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.-Let us eat and be merry." (Luke 15:20-23) Like him we must not only "come to ourselves" and think, but we must actually come to the High Priest, to Christ. We must come to the Physician.

(c) Once again: he that thirsts and wants to come to Christ must remember that SIMPLE FAITH IS THE ONE THING REQUIRED. By all means let him come with a penitent, broken, and contrite heart; but let him not dream of resting on that for acceptance. Faith is the only hand that can carry the living water to our lips. Faith is the hinge on which all turns in the matter of our justification. It is written again and again that "whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:5-6) "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5) Happy is he that can lay hold on the principle laid down in that matchless hymn,-

Just I am! without one plea,

Save that Thy blood was shed for me,

And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,-

O Lamb of God, I come!

How simple this remedy for thirst appears! But oh, how hard it is to persuade some persons to receive it! Tell them to do some great thing, to mortify their bodies, to go on pilgrimage, to give all their goods to feed the poor, and so to merit salvation, and they will try to do as they are bid. Tell them to throw overboard all idea of merit, working, or doing, and to come to Christ as empty sinners, with nothing in their hands, and, like Naaman, they are ready to turn away in disdain. (2 Kings 5:12) Human nature is always the same in every age. There are still some people just like the Jews, and some like the Greeks. To the Jews Christ crucified is still a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Their succession, at any rate, has never ceased! Never did our Lord say a finer word than that which He spoke to the proud scribes in the Sanhedrin,-"Ye WILL NOT come unto Me that ye might have life." (John 5:40)

But, simple as this remedy for thirst appears, it is the only one for man's spiritual disease, and the only bridge from earth to heaven. Kings and their subjects, preachers and hearers, masters and servants, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all must alike drink of this water of life, and drink in the same way. For eighteen centuries men have laboured to find some other medicine for weary consciences; but they have laboured in vain. Thousands after blistering their hands, and growing grey in hewing out "broken cisterns which can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:13); have been obliged to come back at last to the old Fountain, and have confessed in their latest moments that here, in Christ alone, is true peace.

And simple as the old remedy for thirst may appear, it is the root of the inward life of all God's greatest servants in all ages. What have the saints and martyrs been in every era of Church history, but men who came to Christ daily by faith, and found His flesh meat indeed and His blood drink indeed. (John 6:55) What have they all been but men who lived the life of faith in the Son of God, all drank daily out of the fulness there is in Him (Galatians 2:20) Here, at all events, the truest and best Christians, who have made a mark on the world, have been of one mind. Holy Fathers and Reformers, holy Anglican divines and Puritans, holy Episcopalians and Nonconformists, have all in their best moments borne uniform testimony to the value of the Fountain of life. Separated and contentious as they may sometimes have been in their lives, in their deaths they have not been divided. In their last struggle with the king of terrors they have simply clung to the cross of Christ, and gloried in nothing but the "precious blood," and the Fountain open for all sin and uncleanness.

Reader, how thankful we ought to be that we live in a land where the great remedy for spiritual thirst is known,-in a land of open Bibles, preached Gospel, and abundant means of grace,-in a land where the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is still proclaimed, with more or less fulness, in 20,000 pulpits every Sunday. We do not realise the value of our privileges. The very familiarity of the manna makes us think little of it, just as Israel loathed "the light bread" in the wilderness. (Numbers 21:5) But turn to the pages of a heathen philosopher like the incomparable Plato, and see how he groped after light like one blindfolded, and wearied himself to find the door. The humblest peasant who grasps the four "comfortable words" of our beautiful Communion service, in the Prayer-book, knows more of the way of peace with God than the Athenian sage.-Turn to the accounts which trustworthy travellers and missionaries give of the state of the heathen who have never heard the Gospel. Read of the human sacrifices in Africa, and the ghastly self-imposed tortures of the devotees of Hindustan, and remember they are all the result of an unquenched "thirst" and a blind an unsatisfied desire to get near to God. And then learn to be thankful that your lot is cast in a land like your own. Alas, I fear God has a controversy with us for our unthankfulness. Cold indeed, and dead, must that heart be which can study the condition of Africa, China, and Hindustan, and not thank God that he lives in Christian England.

III. I turn, in the last place, to the promise held out to all who come to Christ. "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

The subject of Scripture promises is a vast and most interesting one. I doubt whether it receives the attention which it deserves in the present day. "Clarke's Scripture Promises," I suspect, is an old book which is far less studied than it was in the days of our fathers. Few Christians realise the number, and length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and variety of the precious "shalls" and

"wills" laid up in the Bible for the special benefit and encouragement of all who will use them.

Yet promise lies at the bottom of nearly all the transactions of man with man in the affairs of this life. The vast majority of Adam's children in every civilised country are acting every day on the faith of promises. The labourer on the land works hard from Monday morning to Saturday night, because he believes that at the end of the week he shall receive his promised wages. The soldier enlists in the army, and the sailor enters his name on the ship's books in the navy, in the full confidence that these under whom they serve will at some future time give them their promised pay. The humblest maid-servant in a family works on from day to day at her appointed duties, in the belief that her mistress will give her the promised wages. In the business of great cities, among merchants, and bankers, and tradesmen, nothing could be done without incessant faith in promises. Every man of sense knows that cheques, and bills, and promissory notes, are the only means by which the immense majority of mercantile affairs can possibly he carried on. Men of business are compelled to act by faith and not by sight. They believe promises, and expect to be believed themselves. In short, promises, and faith in promises, and actions springing from faith in promises, are the backbone of nine-tenths of all the dealings of man with his fellow-creatures throughout Christendom.

Now promises, in like manner, in the religion of the Bible, are one grand means by which God is pleased to approach the soul of man. The careful student of Scripture cannot fail to observe that God is continually holding out inducement to man to listen to Him, obey Him, and serve Him; and undertaking to do great things, if man will only attend and believe. In short, as St. Peter says, "There are given to us exceeding great and precious promises." (2 Peter 1:4) He who has mercifully caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning, has shown His perfect knowledge of human nature, by spreading over the Book a perfect wealth of promises, suitable to every kind of experience and every condition of life. He seems to say, "Would you know" what I undertake to do for you? Do you want to hear my terms? Take up the Bible and read."

But there is one grand difference between the promises of Adam's children and the promises of God, which ought never to be forgotten. The promises of man are not sure to be fulfilled. With the best wishes and intentions, he cannot always keep his word. Disease and death may step in like an armed man, and take away from this world him that promises. War, or pestilence, or famine, or failure of crops, or hurricanes, may strip him of his property, and make it impossible for him to fulfil his engagements. The promises of God, on the contrary, are certain to be kept. He is Almighty: nothing can prevent His doing what He has said. He never changes: He is always "of one mind," and with Him there is "no variableness or shadow of turning."-(Job 23:13; James 1:17) He will always keep His word. There is One thing which, as a little girl once told her teacher, to her surprise, God cannot do: "It is impossible for God to lie." (Hebrews 6:18) The most unlikely and improbable things, when God has once said He will do them, have always come to pass. The destruction of the old world by a flood, and the preservation of Noah in the ark, the birth of Isaac, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the raising of David to the throne of Saul, the miraculous birth of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the scattering of the Jews all over the earth, and their continued preservation as a distinct people,-who could imagine events more unlikely and improbable than these? Yet God said they should be, and in due time they all came to pass. In short, with God it is just as easy to do a thing as to say it. Whatever He promises, He is certain to perform.

Concerning the variety and riches of Scripture promises, far more might be said than it is possible to say in a short paper like this. Their name is legion. The subject is almost inexhaustible. There is hardly a step in man's life, from childhood to old age, hardly any position in which man can be placed, for which the Bible has not held out encouragement to every one who desires to do right in the sight of God. There are "shalls" and "wills" in God's treasury for every condition. About God's infinite mercy and compassion,-about His reasonings to receive all who repent and believe,-about His kindness to forgive, pardon, and absolve the chief of sinners-about His power to change hearts and alter our corrupt nature,-about the encouragements to pray, and bear the Gospel, and draw near to the throne of grace,-about strength for duty, comfort in trouble, guidance in perplexity, help in sickness, consolation in death, support under bereavement, happiness beyond the grave, reward in glory,-about all these things there is an abundant supply of promises in the Lord. No one can form an idea of its abundance unless he carefully searches the Scriptures, keeping the subject steadily in view. If any one doubts it, I can only say, "Come and see." Like the Queen of Sheba at Solomon's Court, you will soon say, "The half was not told me." (1 Kings 10:7)

The promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, which heads this paper, is somewhat peculiar. It is singularly rich in encouragement to all who feel spiritual thirst, and come to Him for relief, and therefore it deserves peculiar attention. Most of our Lord's promises refer specially to the benefit of the person to whom they are addressed. The promise before us takes a far wider range. It seems to refer to many others beside those to whom He spoke. For what says He?-"He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said" (and everywhere teaches), "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." Figurative undoubtedly are these words,-figurative, like the earlier words of the sentence,-figurative, like "thirst" and "drinking." But all the figures of Scripture contain great truths; and what the figure before us was meant to convey I will now try to show.

(1) For one thing, then, I believe our Lord meant that he who comes to Him by faith shall receive an abundant supply of everything that he can desire for the relief of his own soul. The Spirit shall convey to him such an abiding sense of pardon, peace, and hope, that it shall be in his inward man like a well-spring never dry. He shall feel so satisfied with "the things of Christ," which the Spirit shall show Him (John 16:15), that he shall rest from spiritual anxiety about death, judgment, and eternity. He may have his seasons of darkness and doubt, through his own infirmities or the temptations of the devil but, speaking generally, when he has once come to Christ by faith he shall find in his heart of hearts an unfailing fountain of consolation. This, let us understand, is the first thing which the promise before us contains. "Only come to Me, poor anxious soul," our Lord seems to say,-"Only come to Me, and thy spiritual anxiety shall be relieved. I will place in thy heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit, such a sense of pardon and peace, through my atonement and intercession, that thou shalt never completely thirst again. Thou mayest have thy doubts, and fears, and conflicts, while thou art in the body. But once having come to Me, and taken Me for thy Saviour, thou shalt never feel thyself entirely hopeless. The condition of thine inward man shall be so thoroughly changed, that thou shalt feel as if there was within thee an ever-flowing spring of water."

Reader, what shall we say to these things? I declare my own belief that whenever a man or woman really comes to Christ by faith, he finds this promise fulfilled. He may possibly be weak in grace, and have many misgivings about his own condition. He may possibly not dare to say that

he is converted, justified, sanctified, and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. But for all that, I am bold to say, the humblest and feeblest believer in Christ has got something within him which he could not part with, though he may not yet fully understand it. And what is that "something?" It is just that "river of living water" which begins to run in the heart of every child of Adam as soon as he comes to Christ and drinks. In this sense I believe this wonderful promise of Christ is always fulfilled.

(2) But is this all that is contained in the promise which heads this paper? By no means. There yet remains much behind. There is more to follow. I believe our Lord meant us to understand that he who comes to Him by faith shall not only have an abundant supply of everything which he needs for his own soul, but shall also become a source of blessing to the souls of others. The Spirit who dwells in him shall make him a fountain of good to his fellow-men, so that at the last day there shall be found to have flowed from him "rivers of living water."

This is a most important part of our Lord's promise, and opens up a subject which is seldom realised and grasped by many Christians. But it is one of deep interest, and deserves far more attention than it receives. I believe it to be a truth of God. I believe that just as "no man liveth unto himself" (Romans 14:7), so also no man is converted only for himself; and that the conversion of one man or woman always leads on, in God's wonderful providence, to the conversion of others. I do not say for a moment that all believers know it. I think it far more likely that many live and die in the faith, who are not aware that they have done good to any soul. But I believe the resurrection morning and the judgment day, when the secret history of all Christians is revealed, will prove that the full meaning of the promise before us has never failed. I doubt if there will be a believer who will not have been to some one or other a "river of living water,"-a channel through whom the Spirit has come by saving grace. Even the penitent thief, short as his time was after he repented, has been a source of blessing to thousands of souls!

(a) Some believers are "rivers of living water" while they live. Their words, their conversation, their preaching, their teaching, are all means by which the water of life has flowed into the hearts of their fellow-men. Such, for example, were the apostles, who wrote Epistles and only preached the Word. Such were Luther, and Whitefield, and Wesley, and Berridge, and Rowlands, and thousands of others of whom I cannot now speak particularly.

(b) Some believers are "rivers of living water" when they die. Their courage in facing the king of terrors, their boldness in the most painful sufferings, their unswerving faithfulness to Christ's truth even at the stake, their manifest peace on the edge of the grave,-all this has set thousands thinking, and led hundreds to repent and believe. Such, for example, were the primitive martyrs, whom the Roman Emperors persecuted. Such were John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. Such were Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, and the noble army of Marian martyrs. The work that they did at their deaths, like Samson, was far greater than the work done in their lives.

(c) Some believers are "rivers of living water" long after they die. They do good by their books and writings in every part of the world, long after their hands which held the pen are mouldering in the dust. Such men were Bunyan, and Baxter, and Owen, and George Herbert, and Robert M'Cheyne. These blessed servants of God do more good probably by their books at this moment, than they did by their tongues when they were alive. "Being dead they yet speak." (Heb. xi. 4.)

(d) Finally, there are some believers who are "rivers of living water" by the beauty of their daily conduct and behaviour. There are many quiet, gentle, consistent Christians, who make no show and no noise in the world, and yet insensibly exercise a deep influence for good on all around them. They "win without the Word." (1 Peter 3:1) Their love, their kindness, their sweet temper, their patience, their unselfishness, tell silently on a wide circle, and sow seeds of thought and self-inquiry in many minds. It was a fine testimony of an old lady who died in great peace,-saying that under God she owed her salvation to Mr. Whitefield:-"It was not any sermon that he preached; it was not anything that he ever said to me. It was the beautiful consistency and kindness of his daily life, in the house where he was staying, when I was a little girl. I said to myself, if I ever have any religion, Mr. Whitefield's God shall be my God."

Reader, lay hold on this view of our Lord's promise, and never forget it. Think not for a moment that your own soul is the only soul that will be saved, if you come to Christ by faith and follow Him. Think of the blessedness of being a "river of living water" to others. Who can tell that you may not be the means of bringing many others to Christ? Live, and act, and speak, and pray, and work, keeping this continually in view. I knew a family, consisting of a father, mother, and ten children, in which their religion began with one of the daughters; and when it began she stood alone, and all the rest of the family were in the world. And yet, before she died, she saw both her parents and all her brothers and sisters converted to God, and all this, humanly speaking, began from her influence! Surely in the face of this, we need not doubt that a believer may be to others a "river of living water." Conversions may not be in your time, and you may die without seeing them. But never doubt that conversion generally leads to conversions, and that few go to heaven alone. When Grimshaw, of Haworth, the apostle of the north, died, he left his son graceless and godless. Afterwards the soul was converted, never having forgotten his father's advice and example. And his last words were, "What will my old father say when he sees me in heaven?" Let us take courage and hope on, believing Christ's promise.

(1) And now, reader, before we part, let me ask a plain question. Do you know anything of spiritual thirst? Have you ever felt anything of genuine deep concern about your soul. I fear that many know nothing about it. I have learned, by the painful experience of a third of a century, that people may go on for years attending God's house, and yet never feel their sins, or desire to be saved. The cares of this world, the love of pleasure, the "lust of other things" choke the good seed every Sunday, and make it unfruitful. They come to church with hearts as cold as the stone pavement on which they walk. They go away as thoughtless and unmoved as the old marble busts which look down on them from the monuments on the walls. Well, it may be so; but I do not yet despair of any one, so long as he is alive. That grand old bell in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, which has struck the hours for so many years, is seldom heard by many citizens during the business hours of the day. The roar and din of traffic in the streets have a strange power to deaden its sound, and prevent men hearing it. But when the daily work is over, and desks are locked, and doors are closed, and books are put away, and quiet reigns in the great city, the case is altered. As the old bell strikes eleven, and twelve, and one, and two, and three at night, thousands hear it who never heard it during the day. And so I hope it will be with many an one in the matter of his soul. Now, in the plenitude of health and strength, in a hurry and whirl of business, I fear the voice of your conscience is often stifled, and you cannot hear it. But the day may come when the great bell of conscience will make itself heard, whether you like it or not. The time may come when, laid aside

in quietness, and obliged by illness to sit still, you may he forced to look within, and consider your soul's concerns. And then when the great bell of awakened conscience is sounding in your ears, I trust that many a man who reads this paper may hear the voice of God and repent; may learn to thirst, and learn to come to Christ for relief. Yes! I pray God you may yet be taught to feel before it be too late!

(2) But do you feel anything at this very moment? Is your conscience awake and working? Are you sensible of spiritual thirst, and longing for relief? Then hear the invitation which I bring you in my Master's name this day-"If any man," no matter who he may be,-if any man, high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned,-"if any man thirst, let him come to Christ and drink." Hear and accept that invitation without delay. Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Who can tell that you may not wait for "a convenient season" till it be too late. The hand of a living Redeemer is now held out from heaven; but it may be withdrawn. The Fountain is open now; but it may soon be closed for ever. "If any man thirst, let him come and drink" without delay. Though you have been a great sinner, and have resisted warnings, counsel, and sermons, yet come.-Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against a father's advice, and a mother's tears, though you have lived for years without a Sabbath, and without prayer, yet come.-Say not that you know not how to come, that you do not understand what it is to believe, that you must wait for more light. Will a tired man say that he is too tired to lie down? or a drowning man, that he knows not how to lay hold on the hand stretched out to help him? or the shipwrecked sailor, with a lifeboat alongside the stranded hulk, that he knows not how to jump in? Oh, cast away these vain excuses! Arise, and come! The door is not shut. The fountain is not yet closed. The Lord Jesus invites you. It is enough that you feel thirsting, and desire to be saved. Come! come to Christ without delay. Who ever came to the Fountain for sin and found it dry? Who ever went unsatisfied away?

(3) But have you come to Christ already, and found relief? Then come nearer, nearer still. The closer your communion with Christ the more comfort you will feel. The more you daily live by the side of the Fountain, the more you shall feel in yourself "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14) You shall not only be blessed yourself, but be a source of blessing to others.

In this evil world you may not perhaps feel all the sensible comfort you could desire. But remember you cannot have two heavens. Perfect happiness is yet to come. The devil is not yet bound. There is "a good time coming" for all who feel their sins and come to Christ, and commit their thirsting soul to His keeping. When He comes again they shall be completely satisfied. They shall remember all the ways by which they were led, and see the need-be of everything that befell them. Above all, they shall wonder that they could ever live so long without Christ, and hesitate about coming to Him.

There is a pass in Scotland called Glencoe, which supplies a beautiful illustration of what heaven will be to the souls who come to Christ. The road through Glencoe carries the traveller up a long and steep ascent, with many a little turn and winding in its course. But when the top of the pass is reached, a stone is seen by the wayside with these simple words inscribed upon it:-"Rest, and be thankful." Those words describe the feelings with which every thirsting one who comes to Christ will enter heaven. The summit of the narrow way will at length be ours. We shall cease from our weary journeyings, and sit down in the kingdom of God. We shall look back on all the way of our

lives with thankfulness, and see the perfect wisdom of every step in the steep ascent by which we were led. We shall forget the toil of the upward journey in the glorious rest. Here, in this world, our sense of rest in Christ at best is feeble and partial. We hardly seem at times to taste fully the "living water." But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is imperfect shall be done away. "When we awake up after His likeness we shall he satisfied." (Psalms 17:15). We shall drink out of the river of his pleasures, and thirst no more.

Note

THERE is a passage in an old writer which throws so much light on some points mentioned in this paper, that I make no excuse for giving it to the reader in its entirety. It comes from a work which is little known and less read. It has done me good, and I think it may do good to others.

"When a man is awakened, and brought to that, that all must be brought to, or to worse, 'What shall I do to be saved?' (Acts 16:30-31), we have the apostolic answer to it: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.' This answer is so old that with many it seems out of date. But it is still and will ever be fresh, and new, and savoury, and the only resolution of this grand case of conscience, as long as conscience and the world lasts. No wit or art of man will ever find a crack or flaw in it, or devise another or a better answer; nor can any but this alone heal rightly the wound of an awakened conscience.

"Let us set this man to seek resolution and relief in this case of some masters in our Israel. According to their principles they must say to him, 'Repent, and mourn for your known sins, and leave them and loath them; and God will have mercy on you.' 'Alas I' (saith the poor man), 'my heart is hard, and I cannot repent aright: yea, I find my heart more hard and vile than when I was secure in sin.' If you speak to this man of qualifications for Christ, he knows nothing of them; if of sincere obedience, his answer is native and ready: 'Obedience is the work of a living man, and sincerity is only in a renewed soul.' Sincere obedience is therefore impossible to a dead unrenewed sinner; as perfect obedience is. Why should not the right answer be given to the awakened sinner: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.' Tell him what Christ is, what He bath done and suffered to obtain eternal redemption for sinners, and that according to the will of God and His Father. Give him a plain downright narrative of the Gospel salvation wrought out by the Son of God; tell him the history and mystery of the Gospel plainly. It may be the Holy Ghost will work faith thereby, as He did in those first fruits of the Gentiles. (Acts 10:44)

"If he ask, What warrant he hath to believe on Jesus Christ I tell him, that he hath utter indispensable necessity for it; for without believing on Him, he must perish eternally. Tell him that he hath God's gracious offer of Christ and all His redemption; with a promise, that upon accepting the offer by faith, Christ and salvation with Him is his. Tell him that he hath God's express commandment (1 John 3:23), to believe on Christ's name; and that he should make conscience of obeying it, as well as any command in the moral law. Tell him of Christ's ability and goodwill to save; that no man was ever rejected by Him that cast himself upon Him; that desperate cases are the glorious triumphs of His art of saving. Tell him, that there is no midst (or medium) between faith and unbelief; that there is no excuse for neglecting the one, and continuing in the other; that believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation is more pleasing to God than all obedience to His law;

and that unbelief is the most provoking to God, and the most damning to man, of all sin. Against the greatness of his sins, the curse of the law and the severity of God as Judge, there is no relief to be held forth to him, but the free and boundless grace of God in the merit of Christ's satisfaction by the sacrifice of Himself.

"If he should say, What is it to believe on Jesus Christ? As to this, I find no such question in the Word: but that all did some way understand the notion of it; the Jews that did not believe on Him (John 6:28-30); the chief priests and Pharisees (John 7:48); the blind man (John 9:35). When Christ asked him, Believest thou on the Son of God? he answered, Who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him? Immediately, when Christ had told him (John 9:37), he saith not, What is it to believe on Him? but, Lord, I believe; and worshipped Him: and so both professed and acted faith in Him. So the father of the lunatic (Mark 9:23-24), and the eunuch (Acts 8:37). They all, both Christ's enemies and His disciples, knew that faith in Him was a believing that the man Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, the Messiah, and Saviour of the world, so as to receive and look for salvation in His name. (Acts 4:12). This was the common report, published by Christ and His apostles and disciples; and known by all that heard it.

"If he yet ask, What he is to believe? you tell him, that he is not called to believe that he is in Christ, and that his sins are pardoned, and he a justified man; but that he is to believe God's record concerning Christ (1 John 5:10-12). And this record is, that God giveth (that is, offereth) to us eternal life in His Son Jesus Christ; and that all that with the heart believe this report, and rest their souls on these glad tidings, shall be saved. (Romans 10:9-11) And thus he is to believe, that he may be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

"If he still say that this believing is hard, this is a good doubt, but easily resolved. It bespeaks a man deeply humbled. Anybody may see his own impotence to obey the law of God fully; but few find the difficulty of believing. For his relief and resolution ask him, What it is he finds makes believing difficult to him? Is it unwillingness to be justified and saved? Is it unwillingness to be so saved by Jesus Christ, to the praise of God's grace in Him, and to the voiding of all boasting in himself? This he will surely deny. Is it a distrust of the truth of the Gospel record? This he dare not own. Is it a doubt of Christ's ability or goodwill to save. This is to contradict the testimony of God in the Gospel. Is it because he doubts of an interest in Christ and His redemption? You tell him that believing on Christ makes up the interest in Him.

"If he say that he cannot believe on Jesus Christ because of the difficulty of the acting this faith, and that a Divine power is needful to draw it forth, which he finds not, you must tell him that believing in Jesus Christ is no work, but a resting on Jesus Christ. You must tell him that this pretence is as unreasonable as if a man, wearied with a journey and not able to go one step further, should argue, 'I am so tired, that I am not able to lie down,' when indeed he can neither stand nor go. The poor wearied sinner can never believe on Jesus Christ till he finds he can do nothing for himself; and in his first believing doth always apply himself to Christ for salvation, as a man hopeless and helpless in himself. And by such reasonings with him from the Gospel, the Lord will (as He hath often done) convey faith and joy and peace by believing."-Robert Traill's works, 1696. Vol. I. 266-269.

Chapter 46

Inspiration

J. C. Ryle Tracts

INSPIRATION “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”- 2 Timothy 3:16.

HOW was the Bible written?-“Whence is it? From heaven, or of men?”-Had the writers of the Bible any special or peculiar help in doing their work?-Is there anything in the Bible which makes it unlike all other books, and therefore demands our respectful attention? These are questions of vast importance. They are questions to which I wish to offer an answer in this paper. To speak plainly, the subject I propose to examine is that deep one, the inspiration of Scripture. I believe the Bible to have been written by inspiration of God, and I want others to be of the same belief.

The subject is always important. I place it purposely in the very forefront of the papers which compose this volume. I ask a hearing for the doctrines which I am about to handle, because they are drawn from a book which is the “Word of God.” Inspiration, in short, is the very keel and foundation of Christianity. If Christians have no Divine book to turn to as the warrant of their doctrine and practice, they have no solid ground for present peace or hope, and no right to claim the attention of mankind. They are building on a quicksand, and their faith is vain. We ought to be able to say boldly, “We are what we are, and we do what we do, because we have here a book which we believe to be the “Word of God.”

The subject is one of peculiar importance in the present day. Infidelity and scepticism abound everywhere. In one form or another they are to be found in every rank and class of society. Thousands of Englishmen are not ashamed to say that they regard the Bible as an old obsolete Jewish book, which has no special claim on our faith and obedience, and that it contains many inaccuracies and defects. Myriads who will not go so far as this are wavering and shaken in their belief, and show plainly by their lives that they are not quite sure the Bible is true. In a day like this the true Christian should be able to set his foot down firmly, and to render a reason of his confidence in God's Word. He should be able by sound arguments to meet and silence the gainsayer, if he cannot convince him. He should be able to show good cause why he thinks the Bible is “from heaven, and not of men.”

The subject without doubt is a very difficult one. It cannot be followed up without entering on ground which is dark and mysterious to mortal man. It involves the discussion of things which are miraculous, and supernatural, and above reason, and cannot be fully explained. But difficulties must not turn us away from any subject in religion. There is not a science in the world about which questions may not be asked which no one can answer. It is poor philosophy to say we will believe nothing unless we can understand everything! We must not give up the subject of inspiration in despair because it contains things “hard to be understood.” There still remains a vast amount of ground which is plain to every common understanding. I invite my readers to occupy this ground with me today, and to hear what I have got to say on the Divine authority of God's Word.

In considering the subject before us, there are two things which I propose to do:- I. In the first place, I shall try to show the general truth, that the Bible is given by inspiration of God.

II. In the second place, I shall try to show the extent to which the Bible is inspired.

I trust that all who read this paper will take up the subject in a serious and reverent spirit. This question of inspiration is no light one. It involves tremendously grave consequences. If the Bible is not the Word of God and inspired, the whole of Christendom for 1800 years has been under an immense delusion; half the human race has been cheated and deceived, and churches are monuments of folly.-If the Bible is the Word of God and inspired, all who refuse to believe it are in fearful danger;-they are living on the brink of eternal misery. No man, in his sober senses, can fail to see that the whole subject demands most serious attention.

I. In the first place, I propose to show the general truth,-that the Bible is given by inspiration of God.

In saying this, I mean to assert that the Bible is utterly unlike all other books that were ever written, because its writers were specially inspired, or enabled by God, for the work which they did. I say that the Book comes to us with a claim which no other book possesses. It is stamped with Divine authority. In this respect it stands entirely alone. Sermons, and tracts, and theological writings of all kinds, may be sound and edifying, but they are only the handiwork of uninspired man. The Bible alone is the Book of God.

Now I shall not waste time in proving that the Scriptures are genuine and authentic, that they were really written by the very men who profess to have written them, and that they contain the very things which they wrote. I shall not touch what are commonly called external evidences. I shall bring forward the book itself, and put it in the witness box. I shall try to show that nothing can possibly account for the Bible being what it is, and doing what it has done, except the theory that it is the Word of God. I lay it down broadly, as a position which cannot be turned, that the Bible itself, fairly examined, is the best witness of its own inspiration. I shall content myself with stating some plain facts about the Bible, which can neither be denied nor explained away. And the ground I shall take up is this,-that these facts ought to satisfy every reasonable inquirer that the Bible is of God, and not of man. They are simple facts, which require no knowledge of Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, in order to be understood; yet they are facts which prove to my own mind conclusively that the Bible is superhuman, or not of man.

(a) It is a fact, that there is an extraordinary fullness and richness in the contents of the Bible. It throws more light on a vast number of most important subjects than all the other books in the world put together. It boldly handles matters which are beyond the reach of man, when left to himself. It treats of things which are mysterious and invisible,-the soul, the world to come, and eternity, depths which man has no line to fathom. All who have tried to write of these things, without Bible light, have done little but show their own ignorance. They grope like the blind; they speculate; they guess; they generally make the darkness more visible, and land us in a region of uncertainty and doubt. How dim were the views of Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and Seneca! A well-taught Sunday scholar, in this day, knows more spiritual truth than all these sages put together.

The Bible alone gives a reasonable account of the beginning and end of the globe on which we live. It starts from the birthday of sun, moon, stars, and earth in their present order, and shows us

creation in its cradle. It foretells the dissolution of all things, when the earth and all its works shall be burned up, and shows us creation in its grave. It tells us the story of the world's youth; and it tells us the story of its old age. It gives us a picture of its first days; and it gives us a picture of its last. How vast and important is this knowledge! Can this be the handiwork of uninspired man? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone gives a true and faithful account of man. It does not flatter him as novels and romances do; it does not conceal his faults and exaggerate his goodness; it paints him just as he is. It describes him as a fallen creature, of his own nature inclined to evil,-a creature needing not only a pardon, but a new heart, to make him fit for heaven. It shows him to be a corrupt being under every circumstance, when left to himself,-corrupt after the loss of paradise,-corrupt after the flood,-corrupt when fenced in by divine laws and commandments, corrupt when the Son of God came down and visited him in the flesh,-corrupt in the face of warnings, promises, miracles, judgments, mercies. In one word, it shows man to be by nature always a sinner. How important is this knowledge! Can this be the work of uninspired minds? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone gives us true views of God. By nature man knows nothing clearly or fully about Him. All his conceptions of Him are low, grovelling, and debased. What could be more degraded than the gods of the Canaanites and Egyptians,-of Babylon, of Greece, and of Rome? What can be more vile than the gods of the Hindus and other heathen in our own time?-By the Bible we know that God hates sin. The destruction of the old world by the flood; the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah; the drowning of Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the Red Sea; the cutting off the nations of Canaan; the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Temple; the scattering of the Jews; all these are unmistakable witnesses.-By the Bible we know that God loves sinners. His gracious promise in the day of Adam's fall; His longsuffering in the time of Noah; His deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt; His gift of the law at Mount Sinai; His bringing the tribes into the promised land; His forbearance in the days of the Judges and Kings; His repeated warnings by the mouth of His prophets; His restoration of Israel after the Babylonian captivity; His sending His Son into the world, in due time, to be crucified; His commanding the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles, all these are speaking facts.-By the Bible we learn that God knows all things. We see Him foretelling things hundreds and thousands of years before they take place, and as He foretells so it comes to pass. He foretold that the family of Ham should be a servant of servants,-that Tyre should become a rock for drying nets,-that Nineveh should become a desolation,-that Babylon should be made a desert-that Egypt should be the basest of kingdoms, that Edom should be forsaken and uninhabited,-and that the Jews should not be reckoned among the nations. All these things were utterly unlikely and improbable. Yet all have been fulfilled. Once more I say, how vast and important all this knowledge is! Can this Book be the work of uninspired man? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone teaches us that God has made a full, per feet, and complete provision for the salvation of fallen man. It tells of an atonement made for the sin of the world, by the sacrifice and death of God's own Son upon the cross. It tells us that by His death for sinners, as their Substitute, He obtained eternal redemption for all that believe on Him. The claims of God's broken law have now been satisfied. Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust. God can now be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It tells us that there is now a complete remedy for the guilt of sin,-even the precious blood of Christ; and peace, and rest of conscience for all who believe on Christ.

“Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” It tells us that there is a complete remedy for the power of sin,-even the almighty grace of the Spirit of Christ. It shows us the Holy Ghost quickening believers, and making them new creatures. It promises a new heart and a new nature to all who will hear Christ's voice, and follow Him. Once more I say, how important this knowledge is! What should we know of all this comfortable truth without the Bible? Can this Book be the composition of uninspired men? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone explains the state of things that we see in the world around us. There are many things on earth which a natural man cannot explain. The amazing inequality of conditions,-the poverty and distress; the oppression and persecution,-the shakings and tumults,-the failures of statesmen and legislators,-the constant existence of uncured evils and abuses,-all these things are often puzzling to him. He sees, but does not understand. But the Bible makes it all clear. The Bible can tell him that the whole world lieth in wickedness; that the prince of the world, the devil, is everywhere,-and that it is vain to look for perfection in the present order of things. The Bible will tell him that neither laws nor education can ever change men's hearts,-and that just as no man will ever make a machine work well, unless he allows for friction,-so also no man will do much good in the world, unless he always remembers that human nature is fallen, and that the world he works in is full of sin. The Bible will tell him that there is “a good time” certainly coming,-and coming perhaps sooner than people expect it,-a time of perfect knowledge, perfect justice, perfect happiness, and perfect peace. But the Bible will tell him this time shall not be brought in by any power but that of Christ coming to earth again. And for that second coming of Christ, the Bible will tell him to prepare. Once more, I say, how important is all this knowledge!

All these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Scriptures. We have probably not the least idea how little we should know about these things if we had not the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the value of the treasures this one volume contains. Set down that fact in your mind, and do not forget it. The extraordinary contents of the Bible are a great fact which can only be explained by admitting its inspiration. Mark well what I say. It is a simple broad fact that, in the matter of contents, the Bible stands entirely alone, and no other book is fit to be named in the same day with it. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired, let him give a reasonable account of this fact, if he can.

(b) It is another fact that there is an extraordinary unity and harmony in the contents of the Bible, which is entirely above man. We all know how difficult it is to get a story told by any three persons, not living together, in which there are not some contradictions and discrepancies. If the story is a long one, and involves a large quantity of particulars, unity seems almost impossible among the common run of men. But it is not so with the Bible. Here is a long book written by not less than thirty different persons. The writers were men of every rank and class in society. One was a lawgiver. One was a warlike king. One was a peaceful king. One was a herdsman. One had been brought up as a publican, another as a physician, another as a learned Pharisee, two as fishermen,-several as priests. They lived at different intervals over a space of 1500 years; and the greater part of them never saw each other face to face. And yet there is a perfect harmony among all these writers? They all write as if they were under one dictation. The style and hand-writing may

vary, but the mind that runs through their work is always one and the same. They all tell the same story. They all give one account of man,-one account of God,-one account of the way of salvation,-one account of the human heart. You see truth unfolding under their hands as you go through the volume of their writings,-but you never detect any real contradiction, or contrariety of view.

Let us set down this fact in our minds, and ponder it well. Tell us not that this unity might be the result of chance. No one can ever believe that but a very credulous person. There is only one satisfactory account to be given of the fact before us.-The Bible is not of man, but of God.

(c) It is another fact that there is an extraordinary wisdom, sublimity and majesty in the style of the Bible, which is above man. Strange and unlikely as it was, the writers of Scripture have produced a book which even at this day is utterly unrivalled. With all our boasted attainments in science and art and learning, we can produce nothing that can be compared with the Bible. Even at this very hour, in 1877, the book stands entirely alone. There is a strain and a style and a tone of thought about it, which separate it from all other writings. There are no weak points, and motes, and flaws, and blemishes. There is no mixture of infirmity and feebleness, such as you will find in the works of even the best Christians. “Holy, holy, holy,” seems written on every page. To talk of comparing the Bible with other “sacred books” so called, such as the Koran, the Shasters, or the book of Mormon, is positively absurd. You might as well compare the sun with a rushlight,-or Skiddaw with a molehill,-or St. Paul's with an Irish hovel,-or the Portland vase with a garden pot,-or the Kohinoor diamond with a bit of glass.1 God seems to have allowed the existence of these pretended revelations, in order to prove the immeasurable superiority of His own Word. To talk of the inspiration of the Bible, as only differing in degree from that of such writings as the works of Homer, Plato, Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton, is simply a piece of blasphemous folly. Every honest and unprejudiced reader must see that there is a gulf between the Bible and any other book, which no man can fathom. You feel, on turning from the Scriptures to other works, that you have got into a new atmosphere. You feel like one who has exchanged gold for base metal, and heaven for earth. And how can this mighty difference be accounted for? The men who wrote the Bible had no special advantages. They lived in a remote corner of the civilized earth. They had, most of them, little leisure, few books, and no learning,-such as learning is reckoned in this world. Yet the book they compose is one which is unrivalled! There is but one way of accounting for this fact. They wrote under the direct inspiration of God.

(d) It is another fact that there is an extraordinary accuracy in the facts and statements of the Bible, which is above man. Here is a book which has been finished and before the world for nearly 1800 years. These 1800 years have been the busiest and most changeful period the world has ever seen. During this period the greatest discoveries have been made in science, the greatest alterations in the ways and customs of society, the greatest improvements in the habits and usages of life. Hundreds of things might be named which satisfied and pleased our forefathers, which we have laid aside long ago as obsolete, useless, and old-fashioned. The laws, the books, the houses, the furniture, the clothes, the arms, the machinery, the carriages of each succeeding century, have been a continual improvement on those of the century that went before. There is hardly a thing in which faults and weak points have not been discovered. There is scarcely an institution which has not gone through a process of sifting, purifying, refining, simplifying, reforming, amending, and changing. But all this time men have never discovered a weak point or a

defect in the Bible. Infidels have assailed it in vain. There it stands,-perfect, and fresh, and complete, as it did eighteen centuries ago. The march of intellect never overtakes it. The wisdom of wise men never gets beyond it. The science of philosophers never proves it wrong. The discoveries of travellers never convict it of mistakes.-Are the distant islands of the Pacific laid open? Nothing is found that in the slightest degree contradicts the Bible account of man's heart.-Are the ruins of Nineveh and Egypt ransacked and explored? Nothing is found that overturns one jot or tittle of the Bible's historical statements.-How shall we account for this fact? Who could have thought it possible that so large a book, handling such a vast variety of subjects, should at the end of 1800 years, be found so free from erroneous statements? There is only one account to be given of the fact.-The Bible was written by inspiration of God.

(e) It is another fact that there is in the Bible an extraordinary suitableness to the spiritual wants of all mankind. It exactly meets the heart of man in every rank or class, in every country and climate, in every age and period of life. It is the only book in existence which is never out of place and out of date. Other books after a time become obsolete and old-fashioned: the Bible never does. Other books suit one country or people, and not another: the Bible suits all. It is the book of the poor and unlearned no less than of the rich and the philosopher. It feeds the mind of the labourer in his cottage, and it satisfies the gigantic intellects of Newton, Chalmers, Brewster, and Faraday. Lord Macaulay, and John Bright, and the writers of brilliant articles in the Times, are all under obligations to the same volume. It is equally valued by the converted New Zealander in the southern hemisphere, and the Red River Indian in the cold north of America, and the Hindu under the tropical sun.

It is the only book, moreover, which seems always fresh and evergreen and new. For eighteen centuries it has been studied and prayed over by millions of private Christians, and expounded and explained and preached to us by thousands of ministers. Fathers, and Schoolmen, and Reformers, and Puritans, and modern divines, have incessantly dug down into the mine of Scripture, and yet have never exhausted it. It is a well never dry, and a field which is never barren. It meets the hearts and minds and consciences of Christians in the nineteenth century as fully as it did those of Greeks and Romans when it was first completed. It suits the “Dairyman's daughter” as well as Persis, or Tryphena, or Tryphosa,-and the English Peer as well as the converted African at Sierra Leone. It is still the first book which fits the child's mind when he begins to learn religion, and the last to which the old man clings as he leaves the world.2 In short, it suits all ages, ranks, climates, minds, conditions. It is the one book which suits the world.

Now how shall we account for this singular fact? What satisfactory explanation can we give? There is only one account and explanation.-The Bible was written by Divine inspiration. It is the book of the world, because He inspired it who formed the world,-who made all nations of one blood,-and knows man's common nature. It is the book for every heart, because He dictated it who alone knows all hearts, and what all hearts require. It is the book of God.

(f) Last, but not least, it is a great fact that the Bible has had a most extraordinary effect on the condition of those nations in which it has been known, taught, and read.

I invite any honest-minded reader to look at a map of the world, and see what a story that map tells. Which are the countries on the face of the globe at this moment where there is the greatest amount of idolatry, or cruelty, or tyranny, or impurity, or misgovernment, or disregard of life and

liberty and truth? Precisely those countries where the Bible is not known.-Which are the Christian countries, so-called, where the greatest quantity of ignorance, superstition, and corruption, is to be found at this very moment? The countries in which the Bible is a forbidden or neglected book, such countries as Spain and the South American States.-Which are the countries where liberty, and public and private morality have attained the highest pitch? The countries where the Bible is free to all, like England, Scotland, Germany, and the United States. Yes! when you know how a nation deals with the Bible, you may generally know what a nation is.

But this is not all. Let us look nearer home. Which are the cities on earth where the fewest soldiers and police are required to keep order? London, Manchester, Liverpool, New York, Philadelphia,-cities where Bibles abound. -Which are the countries in Europe where there are the fewest murders and illegitimate births? The Protestant countries, where the Bible is freely read.-Which are the Churches and religious bodies on earth which are producing the greatest results by spreading light and dispelling darkness? Those which make much of the Bible, and teach and preach it as God's Word. The Romanist, the Neologian, the Socinian, the deist, the sceptic, or the friends of mere secular teaching, have never yet shown us one Sierra Leone, one New Zealand, one Tinnevelly, as the fruit of their principles. We only can do that who honour the Bible and reverence it as God's Word. Let this fact also be remembered. He that denies the Divine inspiration of the Bible, let him explain this fact if he Son_3:1-11

I place these six facts about the Bible before my readers, and I ask them to consider them well. Take them all six together, treat them fairly, and look at them honestly. Upon any other principle than that of divine inspiration, those six facts appear to me inexplicable and unaccountable. Here is a book written by a succession of Jews, in a little corner of the world, which positively stands alone. Not only were its writers isolated and cut off in a peculiar manner from other nations, but they belonged to a people who have never produced any other hook of note except the Bible! There is not the slightest proof that, unassisted and left to themselves, they were capable of writing anything remarkable, like the Greeks and Romans. Yet these men have given the world a volume which for depth, unity, sublimity, accuracy, suitableness to the wants of man, and power of influencing its readers, is perfectly unrivalled. How can this be explained? How can it be accounted for? To my mind there is only one answer. The writers of the Bible were divinely helped and qualified for the work which they did. The book which they have given to us was written by inspiration of God.4

For my own part, I believe that in dealing with sceptics, and unbelievers, and enemies of the Bible, Christians are too apt to stand only on the defensive. They are too often content with answering this or that little objection, or discussing this or that little difficulty, which is picked out of Scripture and thrown in their teeth. I believe we ought to act on the aggressive far more than we do, and to press home on the adversaries of inspiration the enormous difficulties of their own position. We have a right to ask them, how can they possibly explain the origin and nature of the Bible, if they will not allow that it is of Divine authority? We have a right to say,-“Here is a book which not only courts inquiry but demands investigation. We challenge you to tell us how that Book was written.”-How can they account for this Book standing so entirely alone, and for nothing having ever been written equal to it, like it, near it, or fit to be compared with it for a minute? I defy them to give any rational reply on their own principles. On our principles we can. To tell us that man's unassisted mind could have written the Bible is simply ridiculous. It is worse than ridiculous it is the

height of credulity. In short, the difficulties of unbelief are far greater than the difficulties of faith. No doubt there are things “hard to be understood” if we accept the Scriptures as God's Word. But, after all, they are nothing compared to the hard things which rise up in our way, and demand solution if we once deny inspiration. There is no alternative. Men must either believe things which are grossly improbable, or else they must accept the great general truth that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

II. The second thing which I propose to consider is the extent to which the Bible is inspired. Assuming, as a general truth, that the Bible is given by Divine inspiration, I wish to examine how far and to what degree its writers received Divine help. In short, what is it exactly that we mean when we talk of the Scriptures as “the Word of God”?

This is, no doubt, a difficult question, and one about which the best Christians are not entirely of one mind. The plain truth is that inspiration is a miracle; and, like all miracles, there is much about it which we cannot fully understand.-We must not confound it with intellectual power, such as great poets and authors possess. To talk of Shakespeare and Milton and Byron being inspired, like Moses and St. Paul, is to my mind almost profane.-Nor must we confound it with the gifts and graces bestowed on the early Christians in the primitive Church. All the Apostles were enabled to preach and work miracles, but not all were inspired to write.-We must rather regard it as a special supernatural gift, bestowed on about thirty people out of mankind, in order to qualify them for the special business of writing the Scriptures; and we must be content to allow that, like everything miraculous, we cannot entirely explain it, though we can believe it. A miracle would not be a miracle, if it could be explained. That miracles are possible, I do not stop to prove here. I never trouble myself on that subject until those who deny miracles have fairly grappled with the great fact that Christ rose again from the dead. I firmly believe that miracles are possible, and have been wrought; and among great miracles I place the fact that men were inspired by God to write the Bible. Inspiration, therefore, being a miracle, I frankly allow that there are difficulties about it which at present I cannot fully solve.

The exact manner in which the minds of the inspired writers of Scripture worked when they wrote, I do not pretend to explain. Very likely they could not have explained it themselves. I do not admit for a moment that they were mere machines holding pens, and, like type-setters in a printing-office, did not understand what they were doing. I abhor the “mechanical” theory of inspiration. I dislike the idea that men like Moses and St. Paul were no better than organ pipes, employed by the Holy Ghost, or ignorant secretaries or amanuenses who wrote by dictation what they did not understand. I admit nothing of the kind. I believe that in some marvellous manner the Holy Ghost made use of the reason, the memory, the intellect, the style of thought, and the peculiar mental temperament of each writer of the Scriptures. But how and in what manner this was done I can no more explain than I can the union of two natures, God and man, in the person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. I only know that there is both a Divine and a human element in the Bible, and that while the men who wrote it were really and truly men, the book that they wrote and handed down to us is really and truly the Word of God. I know the result, but I do not understand the process. The result is, that the Bible is the written Word of God; but I can no more explain the process than I can explain how the water became wine at Cana, or how five loaves fed five thousand men, or how a word raised Lazarus from the dead. I do not pretend to explain miracles, and I do not pretend to explain fully the miraculous gift of inspiration. The position I take

up is that, while the Bible-writers were not “machines,” as some sneeringly say, they only wrote what God taught them to write. The Holy Ghost put into their minds thoughts and ideas, and then guided their pens in writing them. When you read the Bible you are not reading the unaided, self-taught composition of erring men like ourselves, but thoughts and words which were suggested by the eternal God. The men who were employed to indite the Scripture spake not of themselves. They “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:21) He that holds a Bible in his hand should know that he holds “not the word of man but of God.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13) Concerning the precise extent to which the Bible is inspired, I freely admit that Christians differ widely. Some of the views put forth on the subject appear to me erroneous in the extreme. I shall not shrink from giving my own opinion and stating my reasons for maintaining it. In matters like these I dare not call any man master. Painful as it is to disagree with able and gifted men on religious questions, I dare not take up views of inspiration which my head and heart tell me are unsound, however high and honoured the names of those who maintain them. I believe in my conscience that low and defective views of the subject are doing immense damage to the cause of Christ in these last days.

Some hold that some of the books of Scripture are not inspired at all, and have no more authority or claim to our reverence than the writings of any ordinary man. Others who do not go so far as this, and allow that all the books in the Bible are inspired, maintain that inspiration was only partial, and that there are portions in almost every book which are uninspired.-Others hold that inspiration means nothing more than general superintendence and direction, and that, while the Bible writers were miraculously preserved from making mistakes in great things and matters necessary to salvation, in things indifferent they were left to their own unassisted faculties, like any other writers.-Some hold that all the ideas in the Bible were given by inspiration, but not the words and language in which they are clothed,-though how to separate ideas from words it is rather hard to understand!-Some, finally, allow the thorough inspiration of all the Bible, and yet maintain that it was possible for the writers to make occasional mistakes in their statements, and that such mistakes do exist at this day.

From all these views I totally and entirely dissent. They all appear to me more or less defective, below the truth, dangerous in their tendency, and open to grave and insuperable objections. The view which I maintain is that every book, and chapter, and verse, and syllable of the Bible was originally given by inspiration of God. I hold that not only the substance of the Bible, but its language,-not only the ideas of the Bible, but its words; not only certain parts of the Bible, but every chapter of the book,-that all and each are of Divine authority. I hold that the Scripture not only contains the Word of God, but is the Word of God. I believe the narratives and statements of Genesis, and the catalogues in Chronicles, were just as truly written by inspiration as the Acts of the Apostles. I believe Ezra's account of the nine-and-twenty knives, and St. Paul's message about the cloak and parchments, were as much written under Divine direction as the 20th of Exodus, the 17th of John, or the 8th of Romans. I do not say, be it remembered, that all these parts of the Bible are of equal importance to our souls. Nothing of the kind! But I do say they were all equally given by inspiration.5

In making this statement I ask the reader not to misunderstand my meaning. I do not forget that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The inspiration of every word, for which I contend, is the inspiration of every original Hebrew and Greek word, as the

Bible writers first wrote it down. I stand up for nothing more and nothing less than this. I lay no claim to the inspiration of every word in the various versions and translations of God's Word. So far as those translations and versions are faithfully and correctly done, so far they are of equal authority with the original Hebrew and Greek. We have reason to thank God that many of the translations are, in the main, faithful and accurate. At any rate our own English Bible, if not perfect, is so far correct, that in reading it we have a right to believe that we are reading in our own tongue not the word of man; but of God.

Now the view for which I contend,-that every word of the Bible is inspired,-is not accepted by many good Christians, and is bitterly opposed in many quarters. I shall therefore mention a few reasons why it appears to me the only safe and tenable view which can be adopted, and the only one which is free from innumerable objections. If I err in maintaining it I have the comfort, at any rate, of erring in good company. I only take up the same ground which almost all the Fathers occupied; which Bishop Jewell, and Hooker, and Owen, took up long ago; and which Chalmers, Robert Haldane, Gaussen, Bishop Wordsworth, M'Caul, Burgon, and Archdeacon Lee of the Irish Church, have ably defended in modern days. I know, however, that men's minds are variously constituted. Arguments and reasons which appear weighty to some are of no weight with others. I shall content myself with setting down in order the reasons which satisfy me.

(a) For one thing, I cannot see how the Bible can be a perfect rule of faith and practice if it is not fully inspired, and if it contains any flaws and imperfections. If the Bible is anything at all it is the statute-book of God's kingdom, the code of laws and regulations by which the subjects of that kingdom are to live,-the register-deed of the terms on which they have peace now and shall have glory hereafter. Now, why are we to suppose that such a book will be loosely and imperfectly drawn up, any more than legal deeds are drawn up on earth? Every lawyer can tell us that in legal deeds and statutes every word is of importance, and that property, life, or death may often turn on a single word. Think of the confusion that would ensue if wills, and settlements, and conveyances, and partnership-deeds, and leases, and agreements, and acts of parliament were not carefully drawn up and carefully interpreted, and every word allowed its due weight. Where would be the use of such documents if particular words went for nothing, and every one had a right to add, or take away, or alter, or deny the validity of words, or erase words at his own discretion? At this rate we might as well lay aside our legal documents altogether. Surely we have a right to expect that in the book which contains our title-deeds for eternity every word will be inspired, and nothing imperfect admitted. If God's statute-book is not inspired, and every word is not of Divine authority, God's subjects are left in a pitiable state. I see much in this.

(b) For another thing, if the Bible is not fully inspired and contains imperfections, I cannot understand the language which is frequently used about it in its own pages. Such expressions as “The oracles of God;”-“He saith;”-“God saith”-“the Holy Ghost spake by Esaias the prophet;” “the Holy Ghost saith, “Today if ye will hear His voice,”-would appear to me inexplicable and extravagant if applied to a book containing occasional blemishes, defects, and mistakes. (Acts 7:38; Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12; 1 Peter 4:11; Ephesians 4:8; Hebrews 1:8; Acts 28:25; Hebrews 3:7; Hebrews 10:15; Romans 9:25) Once grant that every word of Scripture is inspired, and I see an admirable propriety in the language. I cannot understand “the Holy Ghost” making a mistake, or an “oracle” containing anything defective! If any man replies that the Holy Ghost did not always speak by Isaiah, I will ask him who is to decide when He did and when He did not? I see much in

this.

(c) For another thing, the theory that the Bible was not given by inspiration of God, appears to me utterly at variance with several quotations from the Old Testament which I find in the New. I allude to those quotations in which the whole force of the passage turns on one single word, and once even on the use of the singular instead of the plural number. Take, for instance, such quotations as “The Lord said unto my Lord.” (Matthew 22:44). “I said, Ye are gods.” (John 10:34) “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” (Galatians 3:16)-“He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren.” (Hebrews 2:11-12)-In every one these cases the whole point of the quotation lies in a single word.6 But if this is so, it is hard to see on what principle we can deny the inspiration of all the words of Scripture. At any rate, those who deny verbal inspiration will find it difficult to show us which words are inspired and which are not. Who is to draw the line, and where is it to be drawn? I see much in this.

(d) For another thing, if the words of Scripture are not all inspired, the value of the Bible as a weapon in controversy is greatly damaged, if not entirely taken away. Who does not know that in arguing with Jews, Arians, or Socinians, the whole point of the texts we quote against them often lies in a single word? What are we to reply if an adversary asserts that the special word of some text, on which we ground an argument, is a mistake of the writer, and therefore of no authority? To my mind it appears that the objection would be fatal. It is useless to quote texts if we once admit that not all the words of which they are composed were given by inspiration. Unless there is some certain standard to appeal to we may as well hold our tongues. Argument is labour in vain if our mouths are to be stopped by the retort, “That text is not inspired.” I see much in this.

(e) For another thing, to give up verbal inspiration appears to me to destroy the usefulness of the Bible as an instrument of public preaching and instruction. Where is the use of choosing a text and making it the subject of a pulpit address, if we do not believe that every word of the text is inspired? Once let our hearers get hold of the idea that the writers of the Bible could make mistakes in the particular words they used, and they will care little for any reproofs, or exhortations, or remarks which are based on words.-“How do you know,” they might ask us, “that this word, about which you made such ado yesterday, was given by the Holy Ghost? How do you know that St. Paul, or St. Peter, or St. John did not make a mistake, and use the wrong word? That they could make mistakes about words you yourself allow.”-I know not what others may think. For myself, I could give no answer. I see much in this.

(f) Last, but not least, the denial of verbal inspiration appears to me to destroy a great part of the usefulness of the Bible as a source of comfort and instruction in private reading. Where is the true Christian student of the Bible who does not know that words, particular words, afford a large portion of the benefit which he derives from his daily reading? How much the value of many a cherished text depends on some single phrase, or the number of a substantive, or the tense of a verb? Alas! there would be an end of all this if we once concede that each word is not inspired; and that, for anything we know, some much loved favourite substantive, or verb, or pronoun, or adverb, or adjective, was an Apostle's mistake, and the word of man, not of God! What others might think I know not. For myself, I should be tempted to lay aside my Bible in despair, and become of all men most miserable. I see much in this.

Now, I freely grant that many excellent Christians think that the view I maintain is open to serious objections. That the Bible, generally speaking, is given by inspiration, they firmly maintain. But they shrink from maintaining that inspiration extends to every word of Scripture. I am sorry to differ from these worthy people. But I cannot see the weight and force of their objections. Fairly and honestly examined, they fail to carry conviction to my mind.

(a) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which contradict the facts of history. Are these all verbally inspired?-My answer is that it is far more easy to assert this than to prove it. There is nothing of which we have so few trustworthy remains as very ancient history, and if ancient uninspired history and Bible history seem to disagree, it is generally safer and wiser to believe that Bible history is right and other history wrong. At any rate, it is a singular fact that all recent researches in Assyria, Babylon, Palestine, and Egypt, show an extraordinary tendency to confirm the perfect accuracy of the Word of God. The lamented Mr. Smith's discoveries at Babylon are a remarkable example of what I mean. There are buried evidences which God seems to keep in reserve for these last days. If Bible history and other histories cannot be made to agree at present, it is safest to wait.

(b) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which contradict the facts of natural science. Are these all inspired?-My answer is again, that it is far more easy to assert this than to prove it. The Bible was not written to teach a system of geology, botany, or astronomy, or a history of birds, insects, and animals, and on matters touching these subjects it wisely uses popular language, such as common people can understand. No one thinks of saying that the Astronomer Royal contradicts science because he speaks of the sun's “rising and setting.” If the Bible said anywhere that the earth was a flat surface,-or that it was a fixed globe round which the sun revolved,-or that it never existed in any state before Adam and Eve,-there might be something in the objection. But it never does so. It speaks of scientific subjects as they appear. But it never flatly contradicts science.7

(c) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which are monstrous, absurd, and incredible. Are they really obliged to believe that Eve was tempted by the devil in the form of a serpent,-that Noah was saved in an ark,-that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea between two walls of water,-that Balaam's ass spoke, and that Jonah actually went into the whale's belly? Are all these statements inspired?-My answer is that Christ's apostles speak of these things as historical facts, and were more likely to know the truth about them than we are. After all, do we believe in miracles or not? Do we believe that Christ Himself rose from the dead? Let us stick to that one grand miracle first, and disprove it if we can. If we do believe it, it is foolish to object to things because they are miraculous.

(d) Some object that there are things mentioned occasionally in the Bible which are so trifling that they are unworthy to be called inspired. They point to St. Paul's writing about his cloak, and books, and parchments, and ask if we really think that the Apostle wrote about such little matters by inspiration of God?-I answer that the least things affecting any of God's children are not too small for the notice of Him who “numbers the hairs of our heads.” There are excellent and edifying lessons to be learned from the cloak and the parchments, as Robert Haldane has shown most convincingly, in his work on the Evidences of Divine Revelation. After all, man knows very little what is great and what is small in God's sight. The history of Nimrod “the mighty hunter” is

dispatched in three verses of Genesis, and the history of a Syrian dwelling in tents, called Abraham, fills up no less than fourteen chapters. The microscope applied to the book of nature, can show us God's hand in the least lichen that grows on the top of Scawfell as well as in the cedar of Lebanon. The veriest trifles, as they seem to us in the Book of Scripture, may turn out to be most striking confirmations of its truth. Paley has shown this admirably in his “Horae Paulinae,” and Professor Blunt in his “Undesigned Coincidences.”

(e) Some object that there are grave discrepancies in some of the Bible histories, especially in the four Gospels, which cannot be made to harmonize and agree. Are the words, they ask, all inspired in these cases? Have the writers made no mistakes?-I answer that the number of these discrepancies is grossly exaggerated, and that in many cases they are only apparent, and disappear under the touch of common sense. Even in the hardest of them we should remember, in common fairness, that circumstances are very likely kept back from us which entirely reconcile everything, if we only knew them. Very often in these days when two honest, veracious men give a separate account of some long story, their accounts do not quite tally, because one dwells on one part and the other on another. All well-informed students of history know that the precise day when Charles I erected his standard at Nottingham, in the Parliamentary war, has not been settled to this hour.

(f) Some object that Job's friends, in their long speeches, said many weak and foolish things. Were all their words inspired?-An objection like this arises from an illogical and confused idea of what inspiration means. The book of Job contains an historical account of a wonderful part of the old patriarch's history, and a report both of his speeches and of those of his friends. But we are nowhere told that either Job or Eliphaz and his companions spoke all that they spoke by the Holy Ghost. The writer of the book of Job was thoroughly inspired to record all they said. But whether they spoke rightly or wrongly is to be decided by the general teaching of Scripture. No one would say that St. Peter was inspired when he said, “I know not the Man,” in the High Priest's palace. But the writer of the Gospel was inspired when he wrote it down for our learning. In the Acts of the Apostles the letter of Claudius Lysias was certainly not written by inspiration, and Gamaliel, and the town clerk of Ephesus and Tertullus were not inspired when they made their speeches. But it is equally certain that St. Luke was inspired to write them down and record them in his book.

(g) Some object that St. Paul, in the 7th chapter of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians, when giving certain advice to the Corinthian Church, says at one time, “Not I, but the Lord,” and at another, “I, not the Lord.” And they ask, Does not this show that in part of his advice he was not inspired?-I answer, Not at all. A careful study of the chapter will show that when the Apostle says “Not I, but the Lord,” he lays down some principles on which the Lord had spoken already; and when he says “I, not the Lord,” he gives advice on some point about which there had been no revelation hitherto. But there is not the slightest proof that he is not writing all the way through under direct inspiration of God.

(h) Some object that there are many various readings of the words of Scripture, and that we cannot, therefore, feel sure that we have the original inspired Word of God. I answer that the various readings, when fairly examined, will prove to be absurdly exaggerated in number and importance. Dr. Kennicott, Bengel, and others have proved this long ago. No doubt we may have lost a few of the original words. We have no right to expect infallibility in transcribers and copyists,

before the invention of printing. But there is not a single doctrine in Scripture which would be affected or altered if all the various readings were allowed, and all the disputed or doubtful words were omitted. Considering how many hands the Bible passed through before printing was invented, and who the transcribers were, it is marvellous that the various readings are so few! The fact that about the immense majority of all the words in the old Hebrew and Greek Scriptures there is no doubt at all, is little short of a miracle, and demands much thanksgiving to God. One thing is very certain. There is no ancient book which has been handed down to us with so good a text and so few various readings as the Bible.

(i) Finally, some object that occasional parts of the Bible are taken out, copied, and extracted from the writings of uninspired men, such as historical chronicles, and pedigrees, and lists of names. Are all these to be regarded as inspired?-I reply that there seems no reason why the Holy Ghost should not direct the Bible writers to use materials made ready to their hands, as well as facts which they had seen themselves, and by so directing them, invested such words as they used with Divine authority. When St. Paul quoted lines from heathen poets he did not mean us to regard them as inspired. But he was taught by God to clothe his ideas in the words which they had used, and by so doing he very likely obtained a favourable reading from many. And when we read such quotations, or read lists of names taken from Jewish chronicles and registers, we need not doubt that Bible writers were taught to use such materials by inspiration of God.

I leave the objections to verbal inspiration at this point, and will detain my readers no longer with them. I will not pretend to deny that the subject has its difficulties, which will probably never be completely solved. I cannot perhaps clear up such difficulties as the mention of “Jeremy the prophet” in Matthew xxvii., or reconcile the third and sixth hour in St. John's and St. Mark's account of the crucifixion, or explain Stephen's account of Jacob's burial in the seventh chapter of Acts, to my own entire satisfaction. But I have no doubt these difficulties can be explained, and perhaps will be some day. These things do not move me. I expect difficulties in such a deep and miraculous matter as inspiration, which I have not eyes to see through. I am content to wait. It was a wise saying of Faraday, that “there are many questions about which it is the highest philosophy to keep our minds in a state of judicious suspense.” It should be a settled rule with us never to give up a great principle, when we have got hold of it, on account of difficulties. Time often makes things clear which at first look dark. The view of inspiration which presents to my own mind the fewest difficulties, is that in which all the words of Scripture, as well as the thoughts, are regarded as inspired. Here I take my stand.

Remember what I have just said. Never give up a great principle in theology on account of difficulties. Wait patiently, and the difficulties may all melt away. Let that be an axiom in your mind. Suffer me to mention an illustration of what I mean. Persons who are conversant with astronomy know that before the discovery of the planet Neptune there were difficulties which greatly troubled the most scientific astronomers, respecting certain aberrations of the planet Uranus. These aberrations puzzled the minds of astronomers; and some of them suggested that they might possibly prove the whole Newtonian system to be untrue. But just at that time a well-known French astronomer, named Leverrier, read before the Academy of Science at Paris a paper, in which he laid down this great axiom, that it did not become a scientific man to give up a principle because of difficulties which apparently could not be explained. He said in effect, “We cannot explain the aberrations of Uranus now; but we may be sure that the Newtonian system will be proved to be

right, sooner or later. Something may be discovered one day which will prove that these aberrations may be accounted for, and yet the Newtonian system remain true and unshaken.” A few years after, the anxious eyes of astronomers discovered the last great planet, Neptune. This planet was shown to be the true cause of all the aberrations of Uranus; and what the French astronomer had laid down as a principle in science was proved to be wise and true. The application of the anecdote is obvious. Let us beware of giving up any first principle in theology. Let us not give up the great principle of plenary verbal inspiration because of apparent difficulties. The day may come when they will all be solved. In the meantime we may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration are tenfold greater than any which beset our own.

Let me now conclude this paper with a few words of plain application. Let us lay aside all deep discussion of hard things about the manner of inspiration. Let us take it for granted that, in some way or other, whether we can explain it or not, we hold the Bible to be the Word of God. Let us start from this point. Let my readers give me a hearing, while I say a few things which appear to me to deserve their attention.

1. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then mind that you do not neglect it. Read it! read it! Begin to read it this very day. What greater insult to God can a man be guilty of than to refuse to read the letter God sends him from heaven? Oh, be sure, if you will not read your Bible, you are in fearful danger of losing your soul!

You are in danger, because God will reckon with you for your neglect of the Bible in the day of judgment. You will have to give account of your use of time, strength, and money; and you will also have to give account of your use of the Word. You will not stand at that bar on the same level, in point of responsibility, with the dweller in central Africa, who never heard of the Bible. Oh, no! To whom much is given, of them much will be required. Of all men's buried talents, none will weigh them down so heavily as a neglected Bible. As you deal with the Bible, so God will deal with your soul. Will you not repent and turn over a new leaf in life, and read your Bible?

You are in danger, because there is no degree of error in religion into which you may not fall. You are at the mercy of the first clever Jesuit, Mormonite, Socinian, Turk, or Jew, who may happen to meet you. A land of unwalled villages is not more defenceless against an enemy than a man who neglects his Bible. You may go on tumbling from one step of delusion to another, till at length you are landed in the pit of hell. I say once more, Will you not repent and read your Bible?

You are in danger, because there is not a single reasonable excuse you can allege for neglecting the Bible. You have no time to read it forsooth! But you can make time for eating, drinking, sleeping, getting money and spending money, and perhaps for newspaper reading and smoking. You might easily make time to read the Word. Alas, it is not want of time, but waste of time that ruins souls!-You find it too troublesome to read, forsooth! You had better say at once it is too much trouble to go to heaven, and you are content to go to hell. Truly these excuses are like the rubbish round the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's days. They would all soon disappear if, like the Jews, you had “a mind to work.” I say for the last time, Will you not repent and read your Bible?

Believe me, believe me, the Bible itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. The men who quibble and make difficulties about inspiration are too often the very men who never read the

Scriptures at all. The darkness and hardness and obscurity they profess to complain of are far more often in their own hearts than in the book. Oh, be persuaded! Take it up and begin to read.

2. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then be sure you always read it with deep reverence. Say to your soul, whenever you open the Bible, “O my soul, thou art going to read a message from God.” The sentences of judges, and the speeches of kings, are received with awe and respect. How much more reverence is due to the words of the Judge of judges and King of kings! Avoid, as you would cursing and swearing, that irreverent habit of mind into which some modern divines have unhappily fallen, in speaking about the Bible. They handle the contents of the holy book as carelessly and disrespectfully as if the writers were such men as themselves. They make one think of a child composing a book to expose the fancied ignorance of his own father,-or of a pardoned murderer criticising the handwriting and style of his own reprieve. Enter rather into the spirit of Moses on Mount Horeb: “Put thy shoes from off thy feet; the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

3. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then be sure you never read it without fervent prayer for the help and teaching of the Holy Spirit. Here is the rock on which many make shipwreck. They do not ask for wisdom and instruction, and so they find the Bible dark, and carry nothing away from it. You should pray for the Spirit to guide you into all truth. You should beg the Lord Jesus Christ to “open your understanding,” as He did that of His disciples. The Lord God, by whose inspiration the book was written, keeps the keys of the book, and alone can enable you to understand it profitably. Nine times over in one Psalm does David cry, “Teach me.” Five times over, in the same Psalm, does he say, “Give me understanding.” Well says John Owen, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, “There is a sacred light in the Word: but there is a covering and veil on the eyes of men, so that they cannot behold it aright. Now, the removal of this veil is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit.” Humble prayer will throw more light on your Bible than Poole, or Henry, or Scott, or Burkitt, or Bengel, or Alford, or Wordsworth, or Barnes, or Ellicott, or Lightfoot, or any commentary that ever was written.

The Bible is a large book or a small one, a dark or a bright one, according to the spirit in which men read it. Intellect alone will do nothing with it. Wranglers and first-class men will not understand it unless their hearts are right as well as their heads. The highest critical and grammatical knowledge will find it a sealed book without the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Its contents are often “hid to the wise and prudent and revealed to babes.” Remember this, and say always, when you open your Bible, “O God, for Christ's sake, give me the teaching of the Spirit.”

4. Finally, is the Bible the Word of God? Then let us all resolve from this day forward to prize the Bible more. Let us not fear being idolaters of this blessed book. Men may easily make an idol of the Church, of ministers, of sacraments, or of intellect. Men cannot make an idol of the Word. Let us regard all who would damage the authority of the Bible, or impugn its credit, as spiritual robbers. We are travelling through a wilderness: they rob us of our only guide. We are voyaging over a stormy sea: they rob us of our only compass. We are toiling over a weary road: they pluck our staff out of our hands. And what do these spiritual robbers give us in place of the Bible? What do they offer as a safer guide and better provision for our souls? Nothing! absolutely nothing! Big swelling words! Empty promises of new light! High sounding jargon; but nothing substantial and real! They would fain take from us the bread of life, and they do not give us in its place so much as a stone. Let us turn a deaf ear to them. Let us firmly grasp and prize the Bible more and more, the

more it is assaulted.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; God has given us the Bible to be a light to guide us to everlasting life. Let us not neglect this precious gift. Let us read it diligently, walk in its light, and we shall be saved. The following quotations about inspiration, from the works of four eminent British theologians, I venture to think deserve attentive perusal. They are valuable in themselves on account of the arguments which they contain. They also supply abundant proof that the high view of verbal inspiration, which I advocate in this paper, is no modern invention, but an “old path,” in which many of God's ablest children have walked, and found it a good way.

1. Bishop Jewell, author of the “Apology,” was unquestionably one of the most learned of the English Reformers. Let us hear what he says:-

“St. Paul, speaking of the Word of God, saith, 'the whole Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.' Many think the Apostle's speech is hardly true of the whole Scripture,-that all and every part of the Scripture is profitable. Much is spoken of genealogies and pedigrees, of lepers, of sacrificing goats and oxen, etc. These seem to have little profit in them: to be idle and vain. If they show vain in thine eyes, yet hath not the Lord set them down in vain? The words of the Lord are pure words, as the silver tried in a furnace of earth refined seven times. There is no sentence, no clause, no word, no syllable, no letter, but it is written for thy instruction: there is not one jot but it is sealed and signed with the blood of the Lamb. Our imaginations are idle, our thoughts are vain: there is no idleness, no vanity, in the Word of God. Those oxen and goats which were sacrificed teach thee to kill the uncleanness and filthiness of thine heart: they teach thee that thou art guilty of death, when thy life must be redeemed by the death of some beast: they lead thee to believe the forgiveness of sins by a more perfect sacrifice, since it was not possible that the blood of bulls or of goats should take away sins. That leprosy teacheth thee the uncleanness and leprosy of thy soul. These genealogies and pedigrees lead us to the birth of our Saviour Christ, so that the whole Word of God is pure and holy. No word, no letter, no syllable, nor point or tittle thereof, but is written and preserved for thy sake.”-Jewell on the Holy Scriptures.

2. Richard Hooker, author of the “Ecclesiastical Polity,” is justly respected by all schools of thought in the Church of England as the judicious Hooker.” Let us hear what he says:-

“Touching the manner how men, by the Spirit of Prophecy in Holy Scripture, have spoken and written of things to come, we must understand that as the knowledge of that they spake, so likewise the utterance of that they knew, came not by those usual and ordinary means whereby we are brought to understand the mysteries of our salvation, and are wont to instruct others in the same. For whatsoever we know, we have it by the hands and ministry of men, who led us along like children from a letter to a syllable, from a syllable to a word, from a word to a line, from a line to a sentence, from a sentence to a side, and so turn over. But God Himself was their instructor. He Himself taught them, partly by dreams and visions in the night, partly by revelations in the day, taking them aside from amongst their brethren, and talking with them as a man would talk with his neighbours in the way. Thus they became acquainted even with the secret and hidden counsels of God; they saw things which themselves were not able to utter, they beheld that whereat men and angels are astonished, they understood in the beginning what should come to pass in the last days. God, who lightened thus the eyes of their understanding, giving them knowledge by unusual and extraordinary means, did also miraculously Himself frame and fashion their words and

writings, insomuch that a greater difference there seemeth not to be between the manner of their knowledge, than there is between the manner of their speech and ours. 'We have received,' saith the Apostle, `not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are given to us of God: which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost doth teach.' This is that which the Prophets mean by those books written full within and without; which books were so often delivered them to eat, not because God fed them with ink and paper, but to teach us that so often as He employed them in this heavenly work, they neither spake nor wrote any word of their own, but uttered syllable by syllable as the Spirit put it in their mouths, no otherwise than the harp or the lute doth give a sound according to the direction of his hands that holdeth it and striketh it with skill."-Hooker's Works. Vol. iii. pp. 537, 540.

3. John Owen, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, was the most learned and argumentative of the Puritans. Let us hear what he says:-

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. When the word was thus brought to them it was not left to their own understandings, wisdom, minds, memories, to order, dispose, and give it out; but they were borne, actuated, carried out by the Holy Ghost, to speak, deliver, and write all that, and nothing but that,-to very tittles,-that was so brought unto them. They invented not words themselves, suited to the things they had learned, but only expressed the word that they received. Though their mind and understanding were used in the choice of words (whence arise all the differences in their manner of expression), yet they were so guided that their words were not their own, but immediately supplied unto them. Not only the doctrine they taught was the word of truth,-truth itself,-but the words whereby they taught it were words of truth from God Himself. Thus, allowing the contribution of proper instruments for the reception and representation of words which answer to the mind and tongue of the Prophets in the coming of the voice of God to them,-every apex of the written Word is equally divine, and as immediately from God as the voice wherewith, or whereby, He spake to us in the Prophets; and is therefore accompanied with the same authority in itself and to us." -Owen on the Divine Original of the Scripture. Vol xvi. p. 305.

4. Dr. Chalmers was probably the most intellectual and deep-thinking theologian that intellectual Scotland has ever produced. Let us hear what he says:

(a) "The subject-matter of the Bible had to pass through the minds of the selected Prophets and Apostles, and to issue thence in language ere it comes forth in the shape of Scripture upon the world. Now it is here that we meet the advocates of a partial or mitigated inspiration, and would make common cause against one and all of them. There is not one theory short, by however so little, of a thorough and perfect inspiration,-there is not one of them but is chargeable with the consequence, that the subject-matter of revelation suffers and is deteriorated in the closing footsteps of its progress; and just before it settles into that ultimate position, where it stands forth to guide and illuminate the world. It existed purely in heaven. It descended purely from heaven to earth. It was deposited purely by the great Agent of revelation in the minds of the Apostles. But then we are told that when but a little way from the final landing place, then, instead of being carried forward purely to the situation where alone the great purpose of the whole movement was to be fulfilled, then was it abandoned to itself, and then were human infirmities permitted to mingle with it, and to mar its lustre. Strange, that just when entering on the functions of an authoritative

guide and leader to mankind, that then, and not till then, the soil and the feebleness of humanity should be suffered to gather around it. Strange, that, with the inspiration of thoughts, it should make pure ingress into the minds of the Apostles; but wanting the inspiration of words should not make pure egress to that world in whose behalf alone, and for whose admonition alone, this great movement originated in heaven, and terminated in earth. Strange, more especially strange, in the face of the declaration that not unto themselves but unto us they ministered these things,-strange, nevertheless, that this revelation should come in purely to themselves, but to us should come forth impurely, with somewhat, it would appear, with somewhat the taint and the obscuration of human frailty attached to it.-It matters not at what point in the progress of this celestial truth to our world the obscuration has been cast upon it. It comes to us a dim and desecrated thing at last; and man instead of holding converse with God's unspotted testimony, has an imperfect, a mutilated Bible put into his hands."

(b) "Such being our views, it is the unavoidable consequence of them that we should hold the Bible, for all the purposes of a revelation, to be perfect in its language, as well as perfect in its doctrine. And for this conclusion it is not necessary that we should arbitrate between the theories of superintendence and suggestion. The superintendence that would barely intercept the progress of error, we altogether discard, conceiving, that, if this term be applicable to the process of inspiration at all, it must be that efficient superintendence which not only secures that, negatively, there shall be nothing wrong,-but which also secures that, affirmatively, there should at all times have emanated from the sacred penmen, the fittest topics, and these couched in the fittest and most appropriate expression. Whether this has been affected partly by superintendence and partly by suggestion, or wholly by suggestion, we care not. We have no inclination and no taste for these distinctions. Our cause is independent of them; nor can we fully participate in the fears of those alarmists who think that our cause is materially injured by them. The important question with us is not the process of the manufacture, but the qualities of the resulting commodity. The former we bold not to be a relevant, and we are not sure that it is a legitimate inquiry. It is on the latter we take our stand; and the superabundant testimonies of Scripture on the worth and the perfection and the absolute authority of the Word-these form the strongholds of an argument that goes to establish all which the most rigid advocates for a total and infallible inspiration ought to desire. Our concern is with the work, and not with the workmanship; nor need we intrude into the mysteries of the hidden operation, if only assured by the explicit testimonies of Scripture that the product of that operation, is, both in substance and expression, a perfect directory of faith and practice. We believe that, in the composition of that record, men not only thought as they were inspired, but spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But our argument for the absolute perfection of Holy Writ is invulnerably beyond the reach even of those who have attempted to trace with geographical precision the line which separates the miraculous from the natural; and tell us when it was that Apostles wrote the words which the Spirit prompted them, and when it was that they wrote the words which the Spirit permitted them. To the result, in our humble apprehension, it positively matters not. Did they speak the words that the Spirit prompted,-these words were therefore the best. Did they speak the words which the Spirit permitted,-it was because these words were the best. The optimism of the Bible is alike secured in both these ways; and the sanction of the Spirit extended, both in respect of sentiments nod of sayings, to every clause of it. In either way, they effectively are the words of the Spirit; and God through the Bible is not presenting truths through the medium of others' language. He in effect has made it His own language; and God, through the

Bible, is speaking to us."

(c) "It is the part of Christians to rise like a wall of fire around the integrity and inspiration of Scripture; and to hold them as intact and inviolable as if a rampart were thrown around them whose foundations are on earth and whose battlements are in heaven. It is this tampering with limits that destroys and defaces everything; and therefore it is precisely when the limit is broken that the alarm should be sounded. If the battle-cry is to be lifted at all, it should be lifted at the outset; and so on the first mingling, by however so slight an infusion, of things human with things divine, all the friends of the Bible should join heart and hand against so foul and fearful a desecration."-Chalmers' Christian Evidences, Vol. ii. pp. 371, 372, 375, 376, 396.

FOOTNOTES

1 Carlyle's estimate of the Koran is given, in "Hero-worship," in the following words. "It is a wearisome, confused jumble, crude, recondite, abounding in endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement, insupportable stupidity. In short nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran, with its unreadable masses of lumber."

John Owen says, "There are no other writings in the world, beside the Bible, that ever pretended unto a divine original, but they are not only from their matter, but from the manner of their writing, and the plain footsteps of human artifice and weakness therein, sufficient for their own conviction, and do openly discover their own vain pretensions." (The Reason of Faith. Works, vol iv., p. 34, Johnston's Edition.)

2 "I have always been strongly in favour of secular education in the sense of education without theology. But I must confess I have been no less seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, could be kept up in the present chaotic state of opinion on these matters without the use of the Bible."

"Consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this Book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history;-that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple from John o' Groat's Home to the Land's End, as Dante and Tasso once were to the Italians;-that it is written in the best and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form,-and finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past, stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its effort to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work?"-Professor Huxley on School Boards (Huxley's Critiques and Essays, p 51.)

3 "The Bible is the fountain of all true patriotism and loyalty in States,-it is the source of all true wisdom, sound policy, and equity in Senates, Council-chambers, and Courts of Justice -it is the spring of all true discipline and obedience, and of all valour and chivalry, in armies and fleets, in the battlefield and on the wide sea;-it is the origin of all probity and integrity in commerce and in trade, in marts and in shops, in banks and exchanges, in the public resorts of men and the secret silence of the heart; it is the pure, unsullied fountain of all love and peace, happiness, quietness

and joy, in families and households.-Wherever it is duly obeyed it makes the desert of the world to rejoice and blossom as the rose.”-Wordsworth on Inspiration, p. 113.

4 “The little ark of Jewish literature still floats above the surges of time, while mere fragments of the wrecked archives of the huge oriental empires, as well as of the lesser kingdoms that surrounded Judea, are now and then cast on our distant shores. “-Rogers on the Superhuman Origin of the Bible, p. 311,

5 “We affirm that the Bible is the Worn of God, and that it is not marred with human infirmities. We do not imagine, with some, that the Bible is like a threshing-floor, on which wheat and chaff lie mingled together, and that it is left for the reader to winnow and sift the wheat from the chaff by the fan and sieve of his own mind.”-Wordsworth on “Inspiration.” (P. 11.)

6 It would be easy to multiply texts in proof of this point. I will only name the following: Hebrews 2:8; Hebrews 3:7-19; Hebrews 4:2-11; Hebrews 12:27.

7 “The language of Scripture is necessarily adapted to the common state of man's intellectual development, in which he is not supposed to be possessed of science. Hence the phrases used by Scripture are precisely those which science soon teaches man to consider inaccurate. Yet they are not on that account the less fitted for their purpose, for if any terms had been used adapted to a more advanced state of knowledge, they must have been unintelligible to those to whom the Scripture was first addressed.”-Whewell's Philosophy of Inductive Science. Vol. i., p. 636.

Chapter 47

Inspiration of the Bible

J. C. Ryle Tracts

A classic of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. This introductory article on "the Inspiration of the Bible" to the classic 6 vol. Imperial Bible Dictionary, needs to be read more than ever today. I offer you this work exactly word for word as first published in the 19th. century. THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE "Thy Word is Truth." John 17:17

What is truth about the Inspiration of the Bible? This is a question of supreme importance in the present day. Ignorance, or want of clear views about the subject, is a worm at the root of much religion in the nineteenth century. Myriads of professing Christians are like men whose feet are on a quicksand and whose heads are in a fog. They do not know what they believe about inspiration.

The treatise [Rev. C. H. Waller's "The Authoritative Inspiration of Holy Scripture," being an "Introduction" to the 6 vol. Imperial Bible Dictionary edited by Rev. Patrick Fairbairn in the 19th century.] to which I have been asked to write an introduction, contains a most satisfactory discussion of the whole subject of inspiration, and places it on the right foundation. It is, in fact, an exhaustive statement, to which I can add very little.

But I do not forget that the minds of men, like their bodies, are "fearfully and wonderfully made." The standpoints from which two thinking and educated men look at the same deep subject are seldom exactly the same. The minds of readers, moreover, differ quite as much as those of writers, and the line of argument which meets and satisfies the mental wants of one person does not satisfy another. I do not therefore hesitate to preface my valued friend's treatise by a few simple thoughts of my own. The ground that we travel over, it will be found, is not exactly identical. But the final conclusion we arrive at is one and the same. We both firmly maintain the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible.

I begin by saying that a general vague belief that the Bible is an inspired book is common among Christians. Many, no doubt, could not explain what they mean. But whether men know it or not, their belief is well founded. It rests on a collection of facts which no intelligent, educated, and honest-minded man can pretend for a moment to deny.

(a) It is a fact that there is an extraordinary depth, fullness, and richness in the contents of the Bible, which is supernatural and above man. There is a complete gulf between it and any other book that ever was written. It throws more light on a vast number of most important subjects than all the other books in the world put together. It boldly handles matters which are beyond the reach of man, when left to himself. It treats of things which are mysterious and invisible,-the soul, the world to come, and eternity, depths which man has no line to fathom. All who have tried to write of these things, without Bible light, have done little but show their own ignorance. They grope like the blind; they speculate, they guess, they generally make the darkness more visible, and land us in a region of uncertainty and doubt. How dim were the views of Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and Seneca!

A well-taught Sunday scholar, in this day, knows more spiritual truth than all these sages put together.

The Bible alone gives a reasonable account of the beginning and end of the globe on which we live, a true picture of man, and just views of God.-The Bible alone shows us a reasonable and satisfactory remedy for the spiritual wants and necessities of dying men, and meets the universal cravings of conscience by revealing a Saviour.-The Bible alone explains the state of things which we see in the world around us. There are many things on earth which a natural man cannot explain. The amazing inequality of conditions,-the poverty and distress,-the oppression and persecution,-the shakings and tumults,-the failures of statesmen and legislators, -the constant existence of uncured evils and abuses,-all these things are often puzzling to him. He sees but does not understand. But the Bible makes it all clear. The Bible can tell him that the whole world lieth in wickedness,-that the prince of the world, the devil, is everywhere,-and that it is vain to look for perfection in the present order of things. The Bible will tell him that neither laws nor education can ever change men's hearts,-and that, just as no man will ever make a machine work well, unless he allows for friction,-so also no man will do much good in the world unless he always remembers that human nature is fallen, and that the world he works in is full of sin. The Bible will tell him that there is "a good time" certainly coming,-and coming perhaps sooner than people expect it,-a time of perfect knowledge, perfect justice, perfect happiness, and perfect peace. But the Bible will tell him this time shall not be brought in by any power but that of Christ coming to earth again. And for that second coming of Christ the Bible will tell him to prepare.

Now all these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Scriptures. We have probably not the least idea how little we should know about these things if we had not the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realise the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed.

(b) It is another fact that there is an extraordinary unity and harmony in the contents of the Bible, which is supernatural and above man. We all know how difficult it is to get a story told by any three persons, not living together, in which there are not some contradictions and discrepancies. If the story is a long one, and involves a large quantity of particulars, unity seems almost impossible among the common run of men. But it is not so with the Bible. Here is a long book written by not less than thirty different persons. The writers were men of every rank and class in society. One was a lawgiver. One was a warlike king. One was a peaceful king. One was a herdsman. One had been brought up as a publican -another as a physician,-another as a learned Pharisee,-two as fishermen,-several as priests. They lived at different intervals over a space of 1500 years, and the greater part of them never saw each other face to face. And yet there is a perfect harmony among all these writers! They all write as if they were under one dictation. The style and handwriting may vary, but the mind that runs through their work is always one and the same. They all tell the same story. They all give one account of man,-one account of God,-one account of the way of salvation,-one account of the human heart. You see truth unfolding and developing under their hands as you go through the volume of their writings, but you never detect any real contradiction or contrariety of view.

(c) It is another fact that there is an extraordinary wisdom, sublimity, and majesty in the style of the Bible, which is above man. Strange and unlikely as it was, the writers of Scripture have produced a book which even at this day is utterly unrivalled. With all our boasted attainments in science and art and learning we can produce nothing in literature that can be compared with the Bible. Even at this very hour, in the nineteenth century, the book stands entirely alone. There is a strain and a style and a tone of thought about it which separates it from all other writings. There are no weak points, and motes, and flaws, and blemishes. There is no mixture of infirmity and feebleness such as you will find in the works of even the best Christians. "Holy, holy, holy" seems written on every page. To talk of comparing the Bible with other "sacred books" so-called, such as the Koran, the Shasters, or the book of Mormon, is positively absurd. You might as well compare the sun with a rushlight,-or Skiddaw with a molehill,-or St. Paul's with an Irish hovel,-or the Portland vase with a garden-pot,-or the Koh-i-noor diamond with a bit of glass. God seems to have allowed the existence of pretended revelations in order to prove the immeasurable superiority of His own Word. To talk of the inspiration of the Bible, as only differing in degree from that of such writings as the works of Homer, Plato, Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton, is simply foolish. Every well-educated, honest, and unprejudiced reader must see that there is a gulf between the Bible and any other book which no man can fathom. You feel, at turning from the Scriptures to other works, that you have got into a new atmosphere. You feel like one who has exchanged gold for base metal, and heaven for earth.

(d) It is another fact that there is an extraordinary accuracy in the facts and statements of the Bible, which is supernatural and above man. Here is a book which has been finished and before the world for nearly 1800 years. Those 1800 years have been the busiest and most changeful period the world has ever seen. During this period the greatest discoveries have been made in science, the greatest alterations in the ways and customs of society, the greatest improvements in the habits and usage's of life. Hundreds of things might be named which satisfied and pleased our forefathers, which we have laid aside long ago as obsolete, useless, and old-fashioned. The laws, the books, the houses, the furniture, the clothes, the carriages of each succeeding century, have been a continual improvement on those of the century that went before. There is hardly a thing in which faults and weak points have not been discovered. There is scarcely an institution which has not gone through a process of sifting, purifying, refining, simplifying, reforming, amending, and changing. But all this time men have never discovered a weak point or a defect in the Bible. Infidels have assailed it in vain. There it stands, -perfect, and fresh, and complete, as it did eighteen centuries ago. The march of intellect never overtakes it. The wisdom of wise men never gets beyond it. The science of philosophers never proves it wrong. The discoveries of travellers never convict it of mistakes.-Are the distant islands of the Pacific laid open? Nothing is found that in the slightest degree contradicts the Bible account of man's heart.-Are the ruins of Ninevah and Egypt ransacked and explored? Nothing is found that overturns one jot or tittle of the Bible's historical statements.-How shall we account for this fact? Who could have thought it possible that so large a book, handling such a vast variety of subjects, should, at the end of 1800 years, be found so free from erroneous statements? There is only one account to be given of the fact,-the Bible was written by inspiration of God.

(e) It is another fact that there is in the Bible an extraordinary suitableness to the spiritual wants of all mankind. It exactly meets the heart of man in every rank or class, in every country and climate,

in every age and period of life. It is the only book in existence which is never out of place and out of date. Other books after a time become obsolete and old-fashioned. The Bible never does. Other books suit one country or people, and not another. The Bible suits all. It is the book of the poor and unlearned no less than of the rich and the philosopher. It feeds the mind of the labourer in his cottage, and it satisfies the gigantic intellects of Newton, Chalmers, Brewster, and Faraday. Lord Macaulay and John Bright, and the writers of brilliant articles in the Times, and the humblest City Missionaries, are all under obligations to the same volume. It is equally valued by the converted New Zealander in the southern hemisphere, and the Red River Indian in the cold north of America, and the Hindoo under the tropical sun.

It is the only book, moreover, which seems always fresh, and evergreen, and new. For eighteen centuries it has been studied and prayed over by millions of private Christians, and expounded, and explained, and preached upon by thousands of ministers. Fathers, and Schoolmen, and Reformers, and Puritans, and modern divines, have incessantly dug down into the mine of Scripture, and yet never exhausted it. It is a well never dry, and a field which is never barren. It meets the hearts and minds and consciences of Christians in the nineteenth century as fully as it did those of Greeks and Romans when it was first completed. It suits the Dairyman's Daughter as well as Persis, or Tryphena, or Tryphosa-and the English peer as well as the converted African at Sierra Leone. It is still the first book which fits the child's mind when he begins to learn religion, and the last to which the old man clings as he leaves the world. In short, it suits all ages, ranks, climates, minds, conditions. It is the one book which suits the world.

(f) Last, but not least, it is a great fact that the Bible has had a most extraordinary effect on the condition of those nations in which it has been known, taught, and read.

I invite any honest-minded render to look at a map of the world, and see what a story that map tells. Which are the countries on the face of the globe at this moment where there is the greatest amount of idolatry, or cruelty, or tyranny, or impurity, or misgovernment, or disregard of life, and liberty, and truth? Precisely those countries where the Bible is not known.-Which are the Christian countries, so-called, where the greatest quantity of ignorance, superstition, and corruption is to be found at this very moment? The countries in which the Bible is a forbidden or neglected book, such countries as Spain and the South American States.-Which are the countries where liberty, and public and private morality, have attained the highest pitch? The countries where the Bible is free to all, like England, Scotland, Germany, and the United States. Yes! when you know how a nation deals with the Bible you may generally know what a nation is.

But this is not all. Let us look nearer home. Which are the cities on earth where the fewest soldiers and police are required to keep order? London, Manchester, Liverpool, New York, Philadelphia-cities where Bibles abound.-Which are the countries in Europe where there are the fewest murders and illegitimate births? The Protestant countries, where the Bible is freely read.-Which are the Churches and religious bodies on earth which are producing the greatest results by spreading light and dispelling darkness? Those which make much of the Bible, and teach and preach it as God's Word. The Romanist, the Neologian, the Socinian, the deist, the sceptic, or the friends of mere secular teaching, have never yet shown us one Sierra Leone, one New Zealand, one Tinnevelly, as the fruit of their principles. We only can do that who honour the Bible and reverence it as God's Word. Let that fact also be remembered. He that denies the Divine

inspiration of the Bible, let him explain that fact if he can.

I place these six facts about the Bible before my readers, and I ask them to consider them well. Take all six together, treat them fairly, and look at them honestly. Upon any other principle than that of supernatural and divine inspiration, those six facts appear to me inexplicable and unaccountable. Here is a book written by a succession of Jews in a little corner of the world, which positively stands alone. Not only were its writers isolated and cut off in a peculiar manner from other nations, but they belonged to a people who have never produced any other book of note except the Bible! There is not the slightest proof that, unassisted and left to themselves, they were capable of writing anything remarkable, like the Greeks and Romans. Yet these men have given the world a volume which for depth, unity, sublimity, accuracy, suitableness to the wants of man, and power of influencing its readers, is perfectly unrivalled! How can this be explained? How can it be accounted for? To my mind there is only one answer. The writers of the Bible were divinely helped and qualified for the work which they did. The book which they have given to us was written by inspiration of God.

Of course I know that deists, agnostics, and infidels see nothing in the six facts which I have just put down. Such unhappy persons always appear blind to the enormous difficulties of their own position. We have a just right to ask them how they can possibly explain the origin and nature of the Bible, if they will not allow that it is of Divine authority? We have a right to say, "Here is a book which not only courts inquiry but demands investigation. We challenge you to tell us how that book was written, if you deny its inspiration." How can they account for this book standing so entirely alone, and for nothing having ever been written equal to it, like it, near it, or fit to be compared with it for a minute? I defy them to give any rational reply on their own principles. On our principles we can. To tell us that man's unassisted mind could have written the Bible is simply ridiculous. It is worse than ridiculous: it is the height of credulity. In short, the difficulties of unbelief are far greater than the difficulties of faith. No doubt there are things "hard to be understood," if we accept the Scriptures as God's word. But, after all, they are nothing compared to the hard things which rise up in our way and demand solution if we once deny inspiration. There is no alternative. Men must either believe things which are grossly improbable, or else they must accept the great general truth that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Passing away from the common vague general belief in the Divine inspiration of the Bible, I propose now to consider the extent to which the Bible is inspired. Assuming as a general truth that the Bible is given by Divine inspiration, I wish to examine how far and to what degree its writers received Divine help. In short, what is it exactly that we mean when we talk of the Scriptures as the Word of God?

This is no doubt a difficult question, and one about which the best Christians are not entirely of one mind. It is a question, moreover, about which there is an immense quantity of loose and unsatisfactory opinion floating about in the Churches, and many do not seem to know what they believe. But it is a question about which I have fully made up my own mind, and I will not hesitate to say what it is.

My starting-point is this. Do we believe that Christianity is a supernatural religion? Do we or do we not believe in the possibility of miracles? That is my first point. Inspiration is a miracle; and, like all miracles, there is much about it which we cannot fully understand.-We must not confound it with

intellectual power, such as great poets and authors possess. To talk of Shakespeare and Milton and Byron being inspired, like Moses and St Paul, is to my mind almost profane.-Nor must we confound it with the gifts and graces bestowed on the early Christians in the primitive Church. All the Apostles were enabled to preach and work miracles, but not all were inspired to write.-We must rather regard it as a special supernatural gift, bestowed on about thirty people out of mankind, in order to qualify them for the special business of writing the Scriptures; and we must be content to allow that, like everything miraculous, we cannot entirely explain it, though we can believe it. A miracle would not be a miracle if it could be explained! That miracles are possible I do not stop to prove here. I never trouble myself on that subject until those who deny miracles have fairly grappled with the great fact that Christ rose again from the dead. I firmly believe that miracles are possible and have been wrought, and among great miracles I place the fact that men were inspired by God to write the Bible. Inspiration, therefore, being a miracle, I frankly allow that there are difficulties about it which at present I cannot fully solve.

The exact manner in which the minds of the inspired writers of Scripture worked when they wrote I do not pretend to explain. Very likely they could not have explained it themselves. I do not admit for a moment that they were mere machines holding pens, and, like type-setters in a printing-office, did not understand what they were doing. I abhor the "mechanical" theory of inspiration. I dislike the idea that men like Moses and St. Paul were no better than organ-pipes, employed by the Holy Ghost, or ignorant secretaries or amanuenses who wrote by dictatation what they did not understand. I admit nothing of the kind. I believe that in some marvellous manner the Holy Ghost made use of the reason, the memory, the intellect, the style of thought, and the peculiar mental temperament of each writer of the Scriptures. But how and in what manner this was done I can no more explain than I can the union of two natures, God and man, in the person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.-I only know that there is both a Divine and a human element in the Bible, and that while the men who wrote it were really and truly men, the book that they wrote and handed down to us is really and truly the Word of God. I know the result, but I do not understand the process. The result is that the Bible is the written Word of God; but I can no more explain the process than I can explain how the water became wine at Cana, or how five loaves fed five thousand men, or how a word raised Lazarus from the dead.-I do not pretend to explain miracles, and I do not pretend to explain fully the miraculous gift of inspiration. The position I take up is that, while the Bible-writers were not "machines," as some sneeringly say, they only wrote what God taught them to write. The Holy Ghost put into their minds thoughts and ideas, and then guided their pens in writing and expressing them. When you read the Bible you are not reading the unaided, self-taught composition of erring men like yourselves, but thoughts and words which were suggested by the eternal God. The men who were employed to incite the Scripture "spake not of themselves." They "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). He that holds a Bible in his hand should know that he holds not the word of man but of God.

Concerning the precise extent to which the Bible is inspired, I freely admit that Christians differ widely. Some of the views put forth on the subject appear to me erroneous in the extreme. I shall not shrink from giving my own opinion and stating my reasons for maintaining it. In matters like these I dare not call any man master. Painful as it is to disagree with able and gifted men on religious questions, I dare not take up views of inspiration which my head and heart tell me are unsound, however high and honoured the names of those who maintain them. I believe in my

conscience that low and defective views of this subject are doing immense damage to the cause of Christ in these last days.

Some hold that some of the books of Scripture are not inspired at all, and have no more authority or claim to our reverence than the writings of any ordinary man.-Others who do not go so far as this, and allow that all the books in the Bible are inspired, maintain that inspiration was only partial, and that there are portions in almost every book which are uninspired.-Others hold that inspiration means nothing more than general superintendence and direction, and that, while the Bible writers were miraculously preserved from making mistakes in great things and matters necessary to salvation, in things indifferent they were left to their own unassisted faculties like any other writers.-Some hold that all the ideas in the Bible were given by inspiration, but not the words and language in which they are clothed,-though how to separate ideas from words it is rather hard to understand!-Some, finally, allow the thorough inspiration of all the Bible, and yet maintain that it was possible for the writers to make occasional mistakes in their statements, and that such mistakes do exist at this day.

From all these views I totally and entirely dissent. They all appear to me more or less defective, below the truth, dangerous in their tendency, and open to grave and insuperable objections. The view which I maintain is that every book, and chapter, and verse, and syllable of the Bible, was given by inspiration of God. I hold that not only the substance of the Bible, but its language,-not only the ideas of the Bible, but its words,-not only certain parts of the Bible, but every chapter of the book,-that all and each are of Divine authority. I hold that the Scripture not only contains the Word of God, but is the Word of God. I believe the narratives and statements of Genesis, and the catalogues in Chronicles, were just as truly written by inspiration as the Acts of the Apostles. I believe Ezra's account of the nine-and-twenty knives, and St Paul's message about the cloak and parchments, were as much written under Divine direction as the 20th of Exodus, the 17th of John, or the 8th of Romans. I do not say, be it remembered, that all these parts of the Bible are of equal importance to our souls. Nothing of the kind! But I do say they were all equally given by inspiration.

In making this statement I ask the reader not to misunderstand my meaning. I do not forget that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The inspiration of every word, for which I contend, is the inspiration of every original Hebrew and Greek word as the Bible writers first wrote it down. I stand up for nothing more and nothing less than this. I do not say that those who wrote copies of the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures were incapable of making mistakes, and never left out or added a word. I lay no claim to the inspiration of every word in the various versions and translations of God's Word. So far as those translations and versions are faithfully and correctly done so far they are, practically, of equal authority with the original Hebrew and Greek. We have reason to thank God that many of the translations are, in the main, faithful and accurate. At any rate our own English Bible, if not perfect, is so far correct that in reading it we have a right to believe that we are reading in our own tongue, not the word of man, but of God.

Now the view for which I contend,-that every word of the Bible is inspired,-is not accepted by many good Christians, and is bitterly opposed in many quarters. I shall therefore mention a few reasons why it appears to me the only safe and tenable view which can be adopted, and the only one which is free from innumerable objections. If I err in maintaining it I have the comfort at any rate of

erring in good company. I only take up the same ground which almost all the Fathers occupied; which Bishop Jewell, and Hooker, and Owen, took up long ago; and which Chalmers, Robert Haldane, Gaussen, Bishop Wordsworth, M'Caul, Burgon, and Archdeacon Lee of the Irish Church, have ably defended in modern days. I know, however, that men's minds are variously constituted. Arguments and reasons which appear weighty to some are of no weight with others. I shall content myself with setting down in order the reasons which satisfy me.

(a) For one thing, I cannot see how the Bible can be a perfect rule of faith and practice, if it is not fully inspired, and if it contains any flaws and imperfections. If the Bible is anything at all it is the statute-book of God's kingdom,-the code of laws and regulations by which the subjects of that kingdom are to live,-the register-deed of the terms on which they have peace now and shall have glory hereafter. Now, why are we to suppose that such a book will be loosely and imperfectly drawn up any more than legal deeds are drawn up on earth? Every lawyer can tell us that in legal deeds and statutes every word is of importance, and that property, life, or death may often turn on a single word. Think of the confusion that would ensue if wills and settlements, and conveyance, and partnership deeds and leases, and agreements, and Acts of Parliament were not carefully drawn up and carefully interpreted, and every word allowed its due weight. Where would be the use of such documents if particular words went for nothing, and everyone had a right to add, or take away, or alter, or deny the validity of words, or erase words at his own discretion? At this rate we might as well lay aside our legal documents altogether! Surely we have a right to expect that in the book which contains our title-deeds for eternity every word should be inspired, and nothing imperfect admitted. If God's statute-book is not inspired, and every word is not of Divine authority, God's subjects are left in a pitiable state. I see much in this.

(b) For another thing, if the Bible is not fully inspired, and contains imperfections, I cannot understand the language which is frequently used about it in its own pages. Such expressions as "The oracles of God;"- "He saith;"- "God saith;"- "the Holy Ghost spake by Isaiah the prophet;"- "the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice,"-would appear to me inexplicable and extravagant if applied to a book containing occasional blemishes, defects, and mistakes. (Acts 7:38; Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12; 1 Peter 4:11; Ephesians 4:8; Hebrews 1:8; Acts 28:25; Hebrews 2:7; Hebrews 10:15; Romans 9:25) Once grant that every word of Scripture is inspired, and I see an admirable propriety in the language. I cannot understand "the Holy Ghost" making a mistake, or an "oracle" containing anything defective! If any man replies that the Holy Ghost did not always speak by Isaiah, I will ask him who is to decide when He did and when He did not? I see much in this.

(c) For another thing, the theory that all the words of the Bible were not given by inspiration of God, appears to me utterly at variance with several quotations from the Old Testament which I find in the New. I allude to those quotations in which the whole force of the passage turns on one single word, and once even on the use of the singular instead of the plural number. Take, for instance, such quotations as: "The Lord said unto my Lord" (Matthew 22:44). "I said, Ye are gods" (John 10:34). "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Galatians 3:16). "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren." (Hebrews 2:11-12). In every one of these cases the whole point of the quotation lies in a single word. But if this is so, it is hard to see on what principle we can deny the inspiration of all the words of Scripture. At any rate, those

who deny verbal inspiration will find it difficult to show us exactly which words are inspired and which are not. Who is to draw the line, and where is it to be drawn? I in this.

(d) For another thing, if the words of Scripture are not all inspired, the value of the Bible as a weapon in controversy is greatly damaged, if not entirely taken away. Who does not know that in arguing with Jews, Arians, or Socinians, the whole point of the texts we quote against them often lies in a single word? What are we to reply if an adversary asserts that the special word of some text, on which we ground an argument, is a mistake of the writer, and therefore of no authority? To my mind it appears that the objection would be fatal. It is useless to quote texts if we once admit that not all the words of which they are composed were given by inspiration. Unless there is some certain standard to appeal to we may as well hold our tongues. Argument is labour in vain if our mouths are to be stopped by the retort, "That text is not inspired." I see much in this.

(e) For another thing, to give up verbal inspiration appears to me to destroy the usefulness of the Bible as an instrument for public preaching and instruction. Where is the use of choosing a text and making it the subject of a pulpit address if we do not believe that every word of the text is inspired? Once let our hearers get hold of the idea that the writers of the Bible could make mistakes in the particular words they used, and they will care little for any reproofs, or exhortations, or remarks which are based on words. "How do you know," they might ask us, "that this word, about which you made such ado yesterday, was given by the Holy Ghost? How do you know that St. Paul or St. Peter, or St. John did not make a mistake and use the wrong word? That they could make mistakes about words you yourself allow." I know not what others may think. For myself I could give no answer. I see much in this.

(f) Last, but not least, the denial of verbal inspiration appears to me to destroy a great part of the usefulness of the Bible as a source of comfort and instruction in private reading. Where is the truly Christian student of the Bible who does not know that words, particular words, afford a large portion of the benefit which he derives from his daily reading? How much the value of many a cherished text depends on some single phrase, or the number of a substantive, or the tense of a verb? Alas! there would be an and of all this if we once concede that each word is not inspired; and that, for anything we know, some much-loved favourite substantive, or verb, or pronoun, or adverb, or adjective, was an Apostle's mistake, and the word of man, not of God! What others might think I know not. For myself I should be tempted to lay aside my Bible in despair, and become of all men most miserable. I see much in this.

Now, I freely grant that many excellent Christians think that the view I maintain is open to serious objections. That the Bible, generally speaking, is given by inspiration they firmly maintain. But they shrink from maintaining that inspiration extends to every word of Scripture. I am sorry to differ from these worthy people. But I cannot see the weight and force of their objections. Fairly and honestly examined, they fail to carry conviction to my mind.

(a) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which contradict the facts of history. Are these all verbally inspired?-My answer is that it is far more easy to assert this than to prove it. There is nothing of which we have so few trustworthy remains as very ancient history, and if ancient uninspired history and Bible history seem to disagree, it is generally safer and wiser to believe that Bible history is right and other history wrong. At any rate, it is a singular fact that all recent researches in Assyria, Babylon, Palestine, and Egypt, show an extraordinary and

increasing tendency to confirm the perfect accuracy of the Word of God. The lamented Mr. Smith's discoveries at Babylon are a remarkable example of what I mean. There are buried evidences which God seems to keep in reserve for these last days. If Bible history and other histories cannot be made to agree at present, it is safest to wait.

(b) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which contradict the facts of natural science. Are these all inspired?-My answer is again, that it is far more easy to assert this than to prove it. The Bible was not written to teach a system of geology or astronomy, and on matters touching these two sciences it wisely uses popular language, such as common people can understand. No one thinks of saying the Astronomer Royal contradicts science because he speaks of the sun's "rising and setting." If the Bible said anywhere that the earth was a flat surface,-or that it was a fixed globe round which the sun revolved,-or that it never existed in any state before Adam and Eve,-there might be something in the objection. But it never does so. It speaks of scientific subjects as they appear. But it never flatly contradicts science.

(c) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which are monstrous, absurd, and incredible. Are they really obliged to believe that Eve was tempted by the devil in the form of a serpent,-that Noah was saved in an ark,-that Balaam's ass spoke,-and that Jonah actually went into the whale's belly? Are all these statements inspired?-My answer is that Christ and His Apostles speak of these things as historical facts, and were more likely to know the truth about them than we are. Will any one dare to say that the eternal Son of God was ignorant and mistaken, or that He and His Apostles spoke of things as real facts, in order to please their hearers and readers, while they knew in their own hearts that they were only fables, and not facts at all? I challenge an answer to that question. After all, do we believe in miracles or not? Do we believe that Christ Himself rose from the dead? Let us stick to that one grand miracle first, and disprove it if we can. If we do believe it, it is foolish to object to things because they are miraculous.

(d) Some object that there are things mentioned occasionally in the Bible which are so trifling that they are unworthy to be called inspired. They point to St. Paul's writing about his cloak, and books, and parchments, and ask if we think such little matters were really written by inspiration of God?- I answer that the least things affecting any of God's children are not too small for the notice of Him who numbers "the hairs of our heads." There are excellent and edifying lessons to be learned from the cloak and parchments, as Robert Haldane has shown most convincingly, in his work on the Evidences of Divine Revelation. After all, man knows very little indeed what is great and what is small in God's sight. The history of Nimrod "the mighty hunter" is despatched in three verses of Genesis, while the history of a Syrian dwelling in tents, called Abraham, fills up no less than fourteen chapters. The microscope applied to the book of nature, can show us God's hand in the least lichen that grows on the top of Scawfell as well as in the cedar of Lebanon. The veriest trifles, as they seem to us in the Book of Scripture, may turn out to be most striking confirmations of its truth. Paley has shown this admirably in his Horæ Paulinæ, and Professor Blunt in his Undesigned Coincidences.

(e) Some object that there are grave discrepancies in some of the Bible histories, especially in the four Gospels, which cannot be made to harmonise and agree. Are the words, they ask, all inspired in these cases? Have the writers made no mistakes?-I answer that the number of these discrepancies is grossly exaggerated, and that in many cases they are only apparent, and

disappear under the touch of common sense. Even in the hardest of them, we should remember, in common fairness, that there are very likely circumstances kept back from us which entirely reconcile everything if we only knew them. Very often in these days when two honest veracious men give a separate account of some long story, their accounts do not quite tally, because one dwells on one part, and the other on another. All well-informed students of history know that the precise day when Charles I erected his standard at Nottingham in the Parliamentary war has not been settled to this hour!

(f) Some object that Job's friends in their long speeches said many weak and foolish things. Were all their words inspired?-An objection like this arises from an illogical and confused idea of what inspiration means. The book of Job contains an historical account of a wonderful part of the old patriarch's history, and a report both of his speeches and those of his friends. But we are nowhere told that either Job or Eliphaz and his companions spoke all that they spoke by the Holy Ghost. The writer of the book of Job was thoroughly inspired to record all they said. But whether they spoke rightly or wrongly is to be decided by the general teaching of Scripture.-No one would say that St. Peter was inspired when he said, "I know not the Man," in the High Priest's palace. But the writer of the Gospel was inspired when he wrote it down for our learning.-In the Acts of the Apostles the letter of Claudius Lysias was certainly not written by inspiration, and Gamaliel, and the town-clerk of Ephesus, and Tertullus were not inspired when they made their speeches. But it is equally certain that St. Luke was inspired to write them down and record them in his book.

(g) Some object that St. Paul, in the 7th chapter of the 1st Corinthians, when giving certain advice to the Corinthian Church, says at one time, "Not I, but the Lord," and at another, "I, not the Lord." And they ask, Does not this show that in part of his advice he was not inspired?-I answer, Not at all. A careful study of the chapter will show that when the Apostle says, "Not I, but the Lord," he lays down some principles on which the Lord had spoken already; and when he says, "I, not the Lord," he gives advice on some point about which there had been no revelation hitherto. But there is not the slightest proof that he is not writing all the way through under direct inspiration of God.

(h) Some object that there are many various readings of the words of Scripture, and that we cannot, therefore, feel sure that we have the original inspired Word of God. I answer that the various readings, when fairly examined, will prove to be absurdly exaggerated in number and importance. Dr. Kennicott, Bengel, and others have proved this long ago. No doubt we may have lost a few of the original words. We have no right to expect infallibility in transcribers and copyists before the invention of printing. But there is not a single doctrine in Scripture which would be affected or altered, if all the various readings were allowed, and the disputed or doubtful words were omitted. Considering how many hands the Bible passed through before printing was invented, and who the transcribers were, it is marvellous that the various readings are so few! The fact that about the immense majority of all the words in the old Hebrew and Greek Scriptures there is no doubt at all, is little short of a miracle, and demands thanksgiving to God. One thing is very certain. There is no ancient book which has been handed down to us with so good a text and so few various readings as the Bible.

(i) Finally, some object that occasional parts of the Bible are taken from the writings of uninspired men, such as historical chronicles, and pedigrees, and lists of names. Are all these to be regarded as inspired?-I reply that there seems no reason why the Holy Ghost should not direct the Bible

writers to use materials made ready to their hands as well as facts which they had seen themselves, and by so directing them, invested such words as they used with Divine authority. When St. Paul quoted lines from heathen poets he did not mean us to regard them as inspired. But he was taught by God to clothe his ideas in the words which they had used, and by so doing he very likely obtained a favourable reading from many. And when we read such quotations, or read lists of names taken from Jewish chronicles and registers, we need not doubt that the Bible writers were taught to use such materials by inspiration of God.

I leave the objections to verbal inspiration at this point, and will detain my readers no longer with them. It is vain to deny that the subject has its difficulties, which will probably never be completely solved. But I have no doubt they can be explained, and perhaps will be some day. These things do not move me. I expect difficulties in such a deep and miraculous matter as inspiration, which I have not eyes to see through. I am content to wait. It was a wise saying of Faraday, that "there are many questions of science about which it is the highest philosophy to keep our minds in a state of judicious suspense." It should be a settled rule with us never to give up a great principle, when we have got hold of it, on account of difficulties. Time often makes things clear which at first look dark. The view of inspiration which presents to my own mind the fewest difficulties, is that in which all the words of Scripture, as well as the thoughts, are regarded as inspired. Here I take my stand.

I ask my readers to remember what I have just said. Never give up a great principle in theology on account of difficulties. Wait patiently, and the difficulties may all melt away. Let that be an axiom in your mind. I will mention an illustration of what I mean. Those conversant with astronomy know that before the discovery of the planet Neptune there were difficulties which greatly troubled the most scientific astronomers respecting certain aberrations of the planet Uranus. These aberrations puzzled the minds of many students so much, that some of them suggested that they might possibly prove the whole Newtonian system to be untrue! But at that time a well-known French astronomer, named Leverrier, read before the Academy of Science a paper in which he laid down this great axiom,-that it did not become a scientific man to give up a principle because of difficulties which could not be explained. He said in effect, "We cannot explain the aberrations of Uranus now; but we may be sure that the Newtonian system will prove to be right, sooner or later. Something maybe discovered one day which will prove that these aberrations may be accounted for, and yet the Newtonian system remain true and unshaken." A few years after the anxious eyes of astronomers discovered the last great planet Neptune. This planet was shown to be the true cause of all the aberrations of Uranus; and what the French astronomer had laid down as a principle in science was proved to be wise and true. The application of the anecdote is obvious. Let us beware of giving up any first principle in theology. Let us not give up the great principle of plenary verbal inspiration because of apparent difficulties. The day may come when they will all be solved. In the meantime we may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration are tenfold greater than any which beset our own.

J. C. RYLE, LIVERPOOL PALACE, LIVERPOOL.

June 15, 1885.

Chapter 48

Is it real?

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. IS IT REAL?

"Reprobate silver."- Jeremiah 6:30.

READER,

What is this that I ask about? What is the meaning of the question before your eyes? I ask about your religion. I offer you a solemn question on a matter that deeply concerns your soul. I say to you, is your religion real? Is it true?

What do I mean when I use the word "real"? I mean that which is genuine, and sincere, and honest, and thorough. I mean that which is not base, and hollow, and formal, and false, and counterfeit, and sham, and nominal. Real religion is not mere show, and pretence, and skin-deep feeling, and temporary profession, and outside work. It is something inward, solid, substantial, intrinsic, living, lasting. You know the difference between base coin and good money,-between solid gold and tinsel,-between plated metal and silver,-between real stone and plaster imitation. Think of these things as you consider the question which heads this tract. What is the character of your religion? Is it real? It may be weak, and feeble, and mingled with many infirmities. That is not the point before you today. My question is simply this,-Is your religion real? Is it true?

Reader, the times in which you live demand such a question as that which is before you. A want of reality is a striking feature of a vast amount of religion in the present day. Poets have sometimes told us that the world has passed through four different states or conditions. We have had a golden age, and a silver age, a brazen age, and an iron age. How far this is true I do not stop to inquire. But I fear there is little doubt as to the character of the age in which we live. It is universally an age of base metal and alloy. If we measure the religion of the age by its apparent quantity, there is much of it. But if we measure it by its quality, there is very little indeed. On every side we want MORE REALITY.

Reader, I ask for attention, while I try to bring home to your conscience the question of this tract. There are two things which I propose to do:-

I. In the first place I will show the importance of reality in religion.

II. In the second place, I will supply some tests by which you may prove whether your own religion is real.

Reader, have you the least desire to go to heaven when you die? Do you wish to have a relation which will comfort you in life, give you good hope in death, and abide the judgment of God at the

last day? Then do not turn away from the question before you. Sit down, and consider calmly, whether your Christianity is real and true, or base and hollow.

I. I have to show the importance of reality in religion.

The point is one which, at first sight, may seem to require very few remarks to establish it. All men, I shall be told, are fully convinced of the importance of reality.

But is this true? Can it be said indeed that reality is rightly esteemed among Christians? I deny it entirely. The greater part of people who profess to admire reality, seem to think that every one possesses it! They tell us "that all have got good hearts at bottom,"-that all are sincere and true in the main, though they may make mistakes. They call us uncharitable, and harsh, and censorious, if we doubt anybody's goodness of heart. In short, they destroy the value of reality, by regarding it as a thing which almost everyone has.

Reader, this wide-spread delusion is precisely one of the causes why I put forth this tract. I want you to understand that reality is a far more rare and uncommon thing than is commonly supposed. I want you to see that unreality is one of the great dangers of which Christians ought to beware. Believe me, it is no light or easily-answered inquiry, when I ask,-Is your religion real?

What saith the Scripture? This is the only judge that can try the subject. Turn to your Bible, and examine it fairly, and then deny, if you can, the importance of reality in religion, and the danger of not being real.

I. Look then, for one thing, at the parables spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe how many of them are intended to put in strong contrast the true believer and the mere nominal disciple. The parables of the sower, of the wheat and tares, of the draw-net, of the two sons, of the wedding garment, of the ten virgins, of the talents, of the great supper, of the pounds, of the two builders, have all one great point in common. They all bring out in striking colours the difference between reality and unreality in religion. They all show the uselessness and danger of any Christianity which is not real, thorough, and true.

2. Look, for another thing, at the language of our Lord Jesus Christ about the Scribes and the Pharisees. Eight times over in one chapter we find Him denouncing them as "hypocrites," in words of almost fearful severity.-"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers," He says, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33). What may we learn from these tremendously strong expressions? How is it that our gracious and merciful Saviour used such cutting words about people who at any rate were more moral and decent than the publicans and harlots? It is meant to teach us the exceeding abominableness of false profession and mere outward religion, in God's sight. Open profligacy and wilful obedience to fleshly lusts are no doubt ruinous sins, if not given up. But there seems nothing which is so displeasing to Christ as hypocrisy and unreality.

3. Look, for another thing, at the startling fact, that there is hardly a grace in the character of a true Christian of which you will not find a counterfeit described in the Word of God. There is not a feature in a believer's countenance of which there is not an imitation. Give me your attention, and I will show you this in a few particulars.

Is there not an unreal repentance? Beyond doubt there is. Saul, and Ahab, and Herod, and Judas Iscariot, had many feelings of sorrow about sin. But they never really repented unto salvation.

Is there not an unreal faith? Beyond doubt there is. It is written of Simon Magus, at Samaria, that he "believed," and yet his heart was not right in the sight of God. It is even written of the devils that they "believe and tremble." (Acts 8:13; James 2:19).

Is there not an unreal holiness? Beyond doubt there is. Joash, king of Judah, became to all appearance very holy and good while Jehoiada the priest lived. But as soon as he died the religion of Joash died at the same time. (2 Chronicles 24:2). Judas Iscariot's outward life was as correct as that of any of the apostles up to the time that he betrayed his Master. There was nothing suspicious about him. Yet in reality he was a thief and a traitor.

Is there not an unreal love and charity? Beyond doubt there is. There is a love which consists in words and tender expressions, and a great show of affection, and calling other people "dear brethren," while the heart does not love at all. It is not for nothing that St. John says, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." It was not without cause that St. Paul said, "Let love be without dissimulation." (1 John 3:18 Romans 12:9).

Is there not an unreal humility? Beyond doubt there is. There is a pretended lowliness of demeanour, which often covers over a very proud heart. St. Paul warns us against a "voluntary humility," and speaks of "things which had a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility." (Colossians 2:18, Colossians 2:23).

Is there not unreal praying? Beyond doubt there is. Our Lord denounces it as one of the special sins of the Pharisees-that for a "pretence they made long prayer." He does not charge them with not praying, or with praying too shortly. Their sin lay in this, that their prayers were not real.

Is there not unreal worship? Beyond doubt there is. Our Lord says of the Jews, "This people draw nigh to Me with their mouths, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Matthew 15:8) They had plenty of formal services in their temples and their synagogues. But the fatal defect about them was want of reality and want of heart.

Is there not unreal talking about religion? Beyond doubt there is. Ezekiel describes some professing Jews who talked and spoke like God's people, "while their hearts went after their covetousness." (Ezekiel 33:31) St. Paul tells us that we may "speak with the tongue of men and angels," and yet be no better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. (1 Corinthians 13:1)

Reader, what shall we say to these things? To say the least they ought to set us thinking. To my own mind they seem to lead to only one conclusion. They show clearly the immense importance which Scripture attaches to reality in religion. They show clearly what need we have to take heed, lest our Christianity turn out to be merely nominal, formal, unreal, and base.

The subject is of deep importance in every age. There has never been a time, since the Church of Christ was founded, when there has not been a vast amount of unreality and mere nominal religion among professing Christians. I am sure it is the case in the present day. Wherever I turn my eyes I see abundant cause for the warning,-Beware of base metal in religion. Be genuine. Be thorough. Be real. Be true.

How much religion among some members of the Church of England consists of nothing but Churchman-ship! They belong to the Established Church. They are baptized at her fonts, married at her communion rails, buried in her churchyards, preached to on Sundays by her ministers. But

the great doctrines laid down in her Articles and Liturgy have no place in their hearts, and no influence on their lives. They neither think, nor feel, nor care, nor know anything about them. And is the religion of these people real Christianity? It is nothing of the kind. It is mere base metal. It is not the Christianity of Peter, and James, and John, and Paul. It is Churchianity, and no more.

How much religion among some Dissenters from the Church of England consists of nothing but dissent! They pride themselves on having nothing to do with the Establishment. They rejoice in having no liturgy, no forms, no bishops. They glory in the exercise of their private judgment, and the absence of everything like ceremonial in their public worship. But all this time they have neither grace, nor faith, nor repentance, nor holiness, nor spirituality of conduct or conversation. The experimental and practical piety of the old Nonconformists is a thing of which they are utterly destitute. Their Christianity is as sapless and fruitless as a dead tree, and as dry and marrow-less as an old bone. And is the Christianity of these people real? It is nothing of the kind. It is base metal. It is not the Christianity of Owen, and Manton, and Goodwyn, and Baxter, and Traill. It is Dissentianity, and nothing more.

How much Tractarian religion is utterly unreal! You will sometimes see men boiling over with zeal about vestments, and gestures, and postures, and church decorations, and daily services, and frequent communions, while their hearts are manifestly in the world. Of the inward work of the Holy Ghost,-of living faith in the Lord Jesus,-of delight in the Bible and religious conversation,-of separation from conversion of souls and personal dealing with worldly follies and amusements,-of zeal for the conversion all these things they are profoundly ignorant. And is such Christianity as this real? It is nothing of the kind. It is a mere name.

How much Evangelical religion is completely unreal? You will sometimes see men professing great affection for the pure "Gospel," while they are practically inflicting on it the greatest injury. They will talk loudly of soundness in the faith, and have a keen nose for heresy. They will run eagerly after popular preachers, and applaud Protestant speakers at public meetings to the very echo. They are familiar with all the phrases of evangelical religion and can converse fluently about its leading doctrines. To see their faces at public meetings, or in church, you would think them eminently godly. To hear them talk you would suppose their lives were bound up in religious Societies, the "Record" newspaper, and Exeter Hall. And yet these people in private will sometimes do things of which even some heathens would be ashamed. They are neither truthful, nor straightforward, nor honest, nor manly, nor just, nor good-tempered, nor unselfish, nor merciful, nor humble, nor kind! And is such Christianity as this real? It is not. It is a miserable imposture, a base cheat and caricature.

How much Revivalist religion in the present day is utterly unreal. You will find a crowd of false professors bringing discredit on the work of God wherever the Holy Spirit is poured out. You will see a mixed multitude of Egyptians accompanying the Israel of God, and doing it harm, whenever Israel goes out of Egypt. How many now-a-days will profess to be suddenly convinced of sin,-to find peace in Jesus,-to be overwhelmed with joys and ecstacies of soul,-while in reality they have no grace at all. They endure but for a season. In the time of temptation and tribulation they fall away As soon as the first excitement is passed off they return to their old ways, and resume their former sins. Their religion is like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and perished in a night. They have neither root nor vitality. They only injure God's cause and give occasion to God's

enemies to blaspheme. And is Christianity like this real? It is nothing of the kind. It is base metal from the devil's mint, and is worthless in God's sight.

Reader, I write these things with sorrow. I have no desire to bring any section of the Church of Christ into contempt. I have no wish to cast any slur on any movement which begins with the Spirit of God. But the times demand very plain speaking about some points in the prevailing Christianity of our day. And one point, I am quite persuaded, that demands attention, is the abounding want of reality which is to be seen on every side.

Reader, you will at any rate concede that the subject of the tract before you is of VAST IMPORTANCE.

II. I pass on now to the second thing which I propose to do. I will supply some tests by which you may try the reality of your religion.

Reader, in approaching this part of my subject, I ask you to deal fairly, honestly, and reasonably with your soul. Dismiss from your mind the common idea,-that of course all is right if you go to church or to chapel. Cast away such vain notions for ever. You must look further, higher, deeper than this, if you would find out the truth. Listen to me, and I will give you a few hints. Believe me, it is no light matter. It is your life.

1. For one thing, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by the place which it occupies in your inner man. It is not enough that it is in your head. You may know the truth, and assent to the truth, and believe the truth, and yet be wrong in God's sight.-It is not enough that it is on your lips. You may repeat the creed daily. You may say "Amen" to public prayer in church, and yet have nothing more than an outward religion.-It is not enough that it is in your feelings. You may weep under preaching one day, and be lifted to the third heaven by joyous excitement another day, and yet be dead to God.-Your religion, if it is real, and given by the Holy Ghost, must be in your heart. It must occupy the citadel. It must hold the reins. It must sway the affections. It must lead the will. It must direct the tastes. It must influence the choices and decisions. It must fill the deepest, lowest, inmost seat in your soul. Reader, is this your religion? If not, you may well doubt whether it is real and true. (Acts 8:21; Romans 10:10)

2. In the next place, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by the feelings towards sin which it produces. The Christianity which is from the Holy Ghost, will always have a very deep view of the sinfulness of sin. It will not merely regard it as a blemish and misfortune, which makes men and women objects of pity and compassion. It will see in sin the abominable thing which God hates, the thing which makes man guilty and lost in his Maker's sight, the thing which deserves God's wrath and condemnation. It will look on sin as the cause of all sorrow and unhappiness, of strife and wars, of quarrels and contentions, of sickness and death; the blight which has blighted God's fair creation, the cursed thing which makes the whole earth groan and travail in pain. Above all, it will see in sin the thing which will ruin us eternally, except we can find a ransom,-lead us captive, except we can get its chains broken,-and destroy our happiness, both here and hereafter, except we fight against it, even unto death. Reader, is this your religion? Are these your feelings about sin? If not, you may well doubt whether your religion is real.

3. For another thing, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by the feelings toward Christ which it produces. Nominal religion may believe that such a person as Christ existed, and

was a great benefactor to mankind. It may show Him some external respect, attend His outward ordinances, and bow the head at His name. But it will go no further. Real religion will make a man glory in Christ, as the Redeemer, the Deliverer, the Priest, the Friend, without whom he would have no hope at all. It will produce confidence in Him, love towards Him, delight in Him, comfort in Him, as the mediator, the food, the light, the life, the peace of the soul. Reader, is this your religion? Do you know anything of feelings like these toward Jesus Christ? If not, you may well doubt whether your religion is real.

4. For another thing, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by the fruit it bears in your heart and life. The Christianity which is from above, will always be known by its fruits. It will raise in the man who has it, repentance, faith, hope, charity, humility, spirituality, kind temper, self-denial, unselfishness, forgivingness, temperance, truthfulness, brotherly-kindness, patience, forbearance. The degree in which these various graces appear may vary in different believers. The germ and seeds of them will be found in all who are the children of God. By their fruits they may be known. Reader, is this your religion? If not, you may well doubt whether it is real.

5. In the last place, if you would know whether your religion is real, try it by your feelings and habits about means of grace. Prove it by the Sunday. Is that day a season of weariness and constraint, or a delight and a refreshment, and a sweet foretaste of the rest to come in heaven?-Prove it by the public means of grace. What are your feelings about public prayer, and public praise, about the public preaching of God's Word, and the administration of the Lord's Supper. Are they things to which you give a cold assent, and tolerate them as proper and correct? Or, are they things in which you take pleasure, and without which you could not live happy? -Prove it, finally, by your feelings about private means of grace. Do you find it essential to your comfort to read the Bible regularly in private, and to speak to God in prayer? Or, do you find these habits irksome, and either slur them over, or neglect them altogether? Reader, these questions deserve your attention. If means of grace, whether public or private, are not as necessary to your soul as meat and drink are to your body, you may well doubt whether your religion is real.

Reader, I press on your attention the five points which I have just brought before you. There is nothing like coming to particulars about these matters. If you would know whether your religion is real, genuine, and true, measure it by the five particulars which I have now named. Measure it fairly. Test it honestly. If your heart is right in the sight of God, you have no cause to flinch from examination. If it is wrong, the sooner you find it out the better.

And now I have done what I proposed to do. I have shown you from Scripture, the unspeakable importance of reality in religion, and the danger in which many stand of being lost forever, for want of it. I have given you five plain tests, by which you may find out whether your own Christianity is real. I will conclude all, by a direct application of the whole subject to the souls of all who read this tract. I will draw my bow at a venture, and trust that God will bring an arrow home to the heart and consciences of many.

1. My first word of application shall be an inquiry. Reader, is your own religion real or unreal, genuine or base? I do not ask what you think about others. Perhaps you may see many hypocrites around you. You may be able to point to many who have no reality at all. This is not the question. You may be right in your opinion about others. But I want to know about yourself. Is your own Christianity real and true, or nominal and base?

Reader, if you love life, do not turn away from the question which is now before you. The time must come, when the whole truth will be known. The judgment day will reveal every man's religion, of what sort it is. The parable of the wedding-garment will receive an awful fulfilment. Surely, it is a thousand times better to find out now your condition, and to repent, than to find it out too late in the next world, when there will be no space for repentance. Reader, if you have common prudence, sense, and judgment, consider what I say. Sit down quietly this day, and examine yourself. Find out the real character of your religion. With the Bible in your hand, and honesty in your heart, the thing may be known. Then resolve to find out.

2. My second word of application shall be a warning. I address it to all who know in their own consciences that their religion is not real. I ask them to remember the greatness of their danger, and their exceeding guilt in the sight of God.

An unreal Christianity is specially offensive to that Great God with whom we have to do. He is continually spoken of in Scripture as the God of Truth. Truth is peculiarly one of His attributes. Can you doubt for a moment that He abhors everything that is not genuine and true? Better, I firmly believe, to be found an ignorant heathen at the last day, than to be found with nothing better than a nominal religion. Reader, if your religion is of this sort, beware!

An unreal Christianity is sure to fail a man at last. It will wear out. It will break down. It will leave its possessor like a wreck on a sandbank, high and dry and forsaken by the tide. It will supply no comfort in the hour when comfort is most needed, in the time of affliction and on the bed of death. Reader, if you want a religion to be of any use to your soul, beware of unreality. If you would not be comfortless in death, and hopeless in the judgment day, be genuine, be real, be true.

3. My third word of application shall be advice. I offer it to all who feel pricked in conscience by the subject of this tract. I advise them to cease from all trifling and playing with religion, and to become honest, thorough-going, whole-hearted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reader, apply without delay to the Lord Jesus, and ask Him to become your Saviour, your Physician, your Priest, and your Friend. Let not the thought of your unworthiness keep you away. Let not the recollection of your sins prevent your application. Never, never forget that Christ can cleanse you from any quantity of sins, if you only commit your soul to Him. But one thing he does ask of those who come to Him. He asks them to be real, honest, and true.

Reader, let reality be one great mark of your approach to Christ, and there is everything to give you hope. Your repentance may be feeble, but let it be real. Your faith may be weak, but let it be real. Your desires after holiness may be mingled with much infirmity, but let them be real. Let there be nothing of reserve, of double-dealing, of part-acting, of dishonesty, of sham, of counterfeit, in your Christianity. Never be content to wear a cloak of religion. Be all that you profess. Though you may err, be real. Though you may stumble, be true. Reader, keep this principle continually before your eyes, and it will be well with your soul throughout your journey from grace to glory.

4. My last word of application shall be encouragement. I address it to all who have manfully taken up the cross, and are honestly following Christ. I exhort them to persevere, and not to be moved by difficulties and opposition.

You may often find few with you, and many against you. You may often hear hard things said of you. You may often be told that you go too far, and that you are extreme. Heed it not. Turn a deaf ear to remarks of this kind. Press on.

If there is anything which a man ought to do thoroughly, really, truly, honestly, and with all his heart, it is the business of his soul. If there is any work which he ought never to slur over, and do in a slovenly fashion, it is the great work of working out his own salvation. Believer in Christ, remember this! Whatever you do in religion, do it well. Be real. Be thorough. Be honest. Be true.

If there is anything in the world of which a man need not be ashamed, it is the service of Jesus Christ. Of sin, of worldliness, of levity, of trifling, of time-wasting, of pleasure-seeking, of bad temper, of pride, of making an idol of money, dress, dancing, hunting, shooting, card-playing, novel-reading, and the like,-of all this a man may well be ashamed. Living after this fashion he makes the angels sorrow, and the devils rejoice. But of living for his soul,-caring for his soul,-thinking of his soul,-providing for his soul,-making his soul's salvation the principal and chief thing in his daily life,-of all this a man has no cause to be ashamed at all. Believer in Christ, remember this! Remember it in your Bible reading and your private praying. Remember it on your Sabbaths. Remember it in your worship of God. In all these things never be ashamed of being whole-hearted, real, thorough, and true.

Reader, the years of our life are fast passing away. Who knows but this year may be the last in your life? Who can tell but that you may be called this very year to meet your God? As ever you would be found ready, be a real and true Christian. Do not be base metal.

The time is fast coming when nothing but reality will stand the fire. Real repentance towards God,-real faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,-real holiness of heat and life,-fthese are the things which will alone pass current at the last day. It is a solemn saying of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:22-23)

Reader, I leave the question with you. I pray God that it may receive deep thought in your mind and prove lastingly profitable to your soul.

I remain,

Your affectionate friend,

J. C. RYLE _____

Chapter 49

Justified!

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are “pure gold.” Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

JUSTIFIED! THE word which forms the title of this paper is one of deep importance in religion. It has within it the foundation of sound soul-saving Christianity. It contains the true secret of inward and spiritual comfort. Happy is the man who can use the language of St. Paul, and say from his heart, “Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ.”

I wish to set before every reader of these pages a few thoughts about justification and peace with God. It is a subject we can never understand too well. Before we leave this world let us take care that we see clearly what it is to be “justified.” To die ignorant about this is to be ruined to all eternity. We had better never have been born.

There are four things which I propose to bring before you, in order to throw light on the whole subject.

I. Let me show you the chief privilege of a true Christian: “He has peace with God.”

II. Let me show you the fountain from which that privilege flows: “He is justified.”

III. Let me show you the rock from which that fountain springs: “Jesus Christ.”

IV. Let me show you the hand by which the privilege is made our own: “Faith.”

Upon each of these four points I have something to say. May the Holy Ghost make the whole subject peace-giving to some souls?

I. First of all, let me show the chief privilege of a true Christian: He has peace with God.

When the apostle St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, he used five words which the wisest of the heathen could never have used. Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Cicero, and Seneca were wise men. On many subjects they saw more clearly than most people in the present day. They were men of mighty minds, and of a vast range of intellect. But not one of them could have said as the Jewish apostle did, “We have peace with God” (Romans 5:1).

When St. Paul used these words, he spoke not for himself only, but for all true Christians. Some of them no doubt have a greater sense of this privilege than others. All of them find an evil principle within, warring against their spiritual welfare day by day. All of them find their adversary, the devil, waging an endless battle with their souls. All of them find that they must endure the enmity of the world. But all, notwithstanding, to a greater or less extent, “have peace with God.”

This peace with God is a calm, intelligent sense of friendship with the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth. He that has it, feels as if there was no barrier and separation between himself and his holy Maker. He can think of himself as under the eye of an all-seeing Being, and yet not feel afraid. He can believe that this all-seeing Being beholds him, and yet is not displeased.

Such a man can see death waiting for him, and yet not be greatly moved. He can look back on the many sins of a misspent life and not feel afraid. He can go down into the cold river-close his eyes on all he has on earth-launch forth into a world unknown, and take up his abode in the silent grave-and yet feel peace. Reader, can you?

Such a man can look forward to the resurrection and the judgment, and yet not be greatly moved. He can see with his mind's eye the great white throne-the assembled world-the open books-the listening angels-the Judge Himself, and yet feel peace. Reader, can you?

Such a man can think of eternity, and yet not be greatly moved. He can imagine a never-ending existence in the presence of God, and of the Lamb-an everlasting Sunday-a perpetual communion, and yet feel peace. Reader, can you?

I know of no happiness compared to that which this peace affords. A calm sea after a storm-a blue sky after a black thunder-cloud-health after sickness-light after darkness-rest after toil-all, all are beautiful and pleasant things. But none, none of them all can give more than a feeble idea of the comfort which those enjoy who have been brought into the state of peace with God. It is “a peace which passeth all understanding “(Php_4:7).

It is the want of this very peace which makes many in the world unhappy. Thousands have everything that is thought able to give pleasure, and yet are never satisfied. Their hearts are always aching. There is a constant sense of emptiness within. And what is the secret of all this? They have no peace with God.

It is the desire of this very peace which makes many a heathen do much in his idolatrous religion. Hundreds have been seen to mortify their bodies, and vex their own flesh in the service of some wretched image which their own hands had made. And why? Because they hungered after peace with God.

It is the possession of this very peace on which the value of a man's religion depends. Without it there may be everything to please the eye, and gratify the ear-forms, ceremonies, services, and sacraments-and yet no good done to the soul. The grand question that should try all is the state of a man's conscience. Is it peace? Has he peace with God?

This is the very peace about which I address you this day. Have you got it? Do you feel it? Is it your own?

If you have it, you are truly rich. You have that which will endure for ever. You have treasure which you will not lose when you die and leave the world. You will carry it with you beyond the grave. You will have it and enjoy it to all eternity. Silver and gold you may have none. The praise of man you may never enjoy. But you have that which is far better than either, if you have peace with God.

If you have it not, you are truly poor. You have nothing which will last-nothing which will wear nothing-which you can carry with you when your turn comes to die. Naked you came into this

world, and naked in every sense you will go forth. Your body may be carried to the grave with pomp and ceremony. A solemn service may be read over your coffin. A marble monument may be put up in your honour. But after all it will be a pauper's funeral, if you die without peace with God.

Remember my warning. Number up your possessions. Take account of all your property. Consider what you have. You may have youth, and health, and riches, and rank; you may have money, and lands, and houses, and horses, and carriages; you may have honour, love, obedience, troops of friends. It is well. Be thankful for it all. But have you peace? I ask again, Have you peace? Let conscience speak, and give an answer.

II. Let me show you, in the next place, the fountain from which true peace is drawn. That fountain is justification.

The peace of the true Christian is not a vague, dreamy feeling, without reason and without foundation. He can show cause for it. He builds upon solid ground. He has peace with God, because he is justified.

Without justification it is impossible to have real peace. Conscience forbids it. Sin is a mountain between a man and God, and must be taken away. The sense of guilt lies heavy on the heart, and must be removed. Unpardoned sin will murder peace. The true Christian knows all this well. His peace arises from a consciousness of his sins being forgiven, and his guilt being put away. His house is not built on sandy ground. His well is not a broken cistern, which can hold no water. He has peace with God, because he is justified.

He is justified, and his sins are forgiven. However many, and however great, they are cleansed away, pardoned, and wiped out. They are blotted out of the book of God's remembrance. They are sunk into the depths of the sea. They are cast behind God's back. They are searched for and not found. They are remembered no more. Though they may have been like scarlet, they are become as white as snow; though they may have been red like crimson, they are as wool. And so he has peace.

He is justified and counted righteous in God's sight. The Father sees no spot in him, and reckons him innocent. He is clothed in a robe of perfect righteousness, and may sit down by the side of angels without feeling ashamed. The holy law of God, which touches the thoughts and intents of men's hearts, cannot condemn him. The devil, the accuser of the brethren, can lay nothing to his charge, to prevent his full acquittal. And so he has peace.

Is he not naturally a poor, weak, erring, defective sinner? He is. None knows that better than he does himself. But notwithstanding this, he is reckoned complete, perfect, and faultless before God, for he is justified.

Is he not naturally a debtor? He is. None feels that more deeply than he does himself. He owes ten thousand talents, and has nothing of his own to pay. But his debts are all paid, settled, and crossed out for ever, for he is justified.

Is he not naturally liable to the curse of a broken law? He is. None would confess that more readily than he would himself. But the demands of the law have been fully satisfied, the claims of justice have been met to the last tittle, and he is justified.

Does he not naturally deserve punishment? He does. None would acknowledge that more fully than he would himself. But the punishment has been borne. The wrath of God against sin has been made manifest. Yet he has escaped, and is justified.

Do you know anything of all this? Are you justified? Do you feel as if you were pardoned, forgiven, and accepted before God? Can you draw near to Him with boldness and say, “Thou art my Father and my Friend, and I am Thy reconciled child?” Oh, believe me, you will never taste true peace until you are justified

Where are your sins? Are they removed and taken away from off your soul? Have they been reckoned for, and accounted for, in God's presence? Oh, be very sure these questions are of the most solemn importance! A peace of conscience not built on justification is a perilous dream. From such a peace the Lord deliver you!

Go with me in imagination to some of our great London hospitals. Stand with me there by the bedside of some poor creature in the last stage of an incurable disease. He lies quiet perhaps, and makes no struggle. He does not complain of pain perhaps, and does not appear to feel it. He sleeps, and is still. His eyes are closed. His head reclines on his pillow. He smiles faintly, and mutters something. He is dreaming of home, and his mother, and his youth. His thoughts are far away.-But is this health? Oh, no, no! It is only the effect of opiates. Nothing can be done for him. He is dying daily. The only object is to lessen his pain. His quiet is an unnatural quiet. His sleep is an unhealthy sleep. Reader, you see in that man's case a vivid likeness of peace without justification. It is a hollow, deceptive, unhealthy thing. Its end is death.

Go with me in imagination to some lunatic asylum. Let us visit some case of incurable delusion. We shall probably find someone who fancies that he is rich and noble, or a king. See how he will take the straw from off the ground, twist it round his head, and call it a crown. Mark how he will pick up stones and gravel, and call them diamonds and pearls. Hear how he will laugh, and sing, and appear to be happy in his delusions.-But is this happiness? Oh, no! We know it is only the result of ignorant insanity. Reader, you see in that man's case another likeness of peace built on fancy, and not on justification. It is a senseless, baseless thing. It has neither root nor life.

Settle it in your mind that there can be no peace with God, unless we feel that we are justified. We must know what is become of our sins. We must have a reasonable hope that they are forgiven, and put away. We must have the witness of our conscience that we are reckoned not guilty before God. Without this it is vain to talk of peace. We have nothing but the shadow and imitation of it. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:21).

Did you ever hear the sound of the trumpets which are blown before the judges, as they come into the city to open the assize? Did you ever reflect how different are the feelings which these trumpets awaken in the minds of different men? The innocent man, who has no cause to be tried, hears them unmoved. They proclaim no terrors to him. He listens and looks on quietly, and is not afraid. But often there is some poor wretch waiting his trial in a silent cell, to whom those trumpets are a knell of despair. They tell him that the day of trial is at hand. Yet a little time and he will stand at the bar of justice, and hear witness after witness telling the story of his misdeeds. Yet a little time, and all will be over-the trial, the verdict, and the sentence-and there will remain nothing for him but punishment and disgrace. No wonder the prisoner's heart beats when he hears that

trumpet's sound!

There is a day fast coming when all who are not justified shall despair in like manner. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall scatter to the winds the false peace which now buoys up many a soul. The day of judgment shall convince thousands of self-willed people, too late, that it needs something more than a few beautiful ideas about God's love and mercy to reconcile a man to his Maker, and to deliver his guilty soul from hell. No hope shall stand in that awful day but the hope of the justified man. No peace shall prove solid, substantial, and unbroken, but the peace which is built on justification.

Is this peace your own? Rest not, rest not, if you love life, till you know and feel that you are a justified man. Think not that this is a mere matter of names and words. Flatter not yourself with the idea that justification is an “abstruse and difficult subject,” and that you may get to heaven well enough without knowing anything about it. Make up your mind to the great truth that there can be no heaven without peace with God, and no peace with God without justification. And then give your soul no rest till you are a justified man.

III. Let me show you, in the third place, the rock from which justification and peace with God flow. That rock is Christ.

The true Christian is not justified because of any goodness of his own. His peace is not to be traced up to any work that he has done. It is not purchased by his prayers and regularity, his repentance and his amendment, his morality and his charity. All these are utterly unable to justify him. In themselves they are defective in many things, and need a large forgiveness. And as to justifying him, such a thing is not to be named. Tried by the perfect standard of God's law the best of Christians is nothing better than a justified sinner, a pardoned criminal. As to merit, worthiness, desert, or claim upon God's mercy, he has none. Peace built on any such foundations as these is utterly worthless. The man who rests upon them is miserably deceived.

Never were truer words put on paper than those which Richard Hooker penned on this subject years ago. Let those who would like to know what English clergymen thought in olden times, mark well what he says: “If God would make us an offer thus large, 'Search all the generation of men since the fall of your father, Adam, and find one man that hath done any one action which hath past from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all-and for that one man's one only action, neither man nor angel shall find the torments which are prepared for both;' do you think this ransom, to deliver man and angels, would be found among the sons of men? The best things we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned. How then can we do anything meritorious and worthy to be rewarded?” To these words I desire entirely to subscribe. I believe that no man can be justified by his works before God in the slightest possible degree. Before man he may be justified. His works may evidence his Christianity. Before God he cannot be justified by anything that he can do. He will be always defective, always imperfect, always shortcoming, always far below the mark, so long as he lives. It is not by works of his own that anyone ever has peace and is a justified man.

But how then is a true Christian justified? What is the secret of that peace and sense of pardon which he enjoys? How can we understand a holy God dealing with a sinful man as with one innocent, and reckoning him righteous notwithstanding his many sins?

The answer to all these questions is short and simple. The true Christian is counted righteous for the sake of a Divine Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is justified because of the death and atonement of Christ. He has peace because Christ died for his sins according to the Scripture. This is the key that unlocks the mighty mystery. Here the great problem is solved, how God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. The life and death of the Lord Jesus explain all. “He is our peace “(Ephesians 2:14).

Christ has stood in the place of the true Christian. He has become his surety and his substitute. He has undertaken to bear all that was to be borne, and to do all that was to be done. Hence the true Christian is a justified man.

Christ has suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. He has endured our punishment in His own body on the cross. He has allowed the wrath of God, which we deserved, to fall on His own head. Hence the true Christian is a justified man.

Christ has paid the debt the Christian owed, by His own blood. He has reckoned for it, and discharged it to the uttermost farthing by His own precious death. God is a just God, and will not require His debts to be paid twice over. Hence the true Christian is a justified man.

Christ has obeyed the law of God perfectly. The prince of this world could find no fault in Him. By so fulfilling it He brought in an everlasting righteousness, in which all His people are clothed in the sight of God. Hence the true Christian is a justified man.

Christ, in one word, has lived for the true Christian. Christ has died for him. Christ has gone to the grave for him. Christ has risen again for him. Christ has ascended up on high for him, and gone into heaven to intercede for his soul. Christ has done all, paid all, and suffered all that was needful for his redemption. Hence arises the true Christian's justification-hence his peace. In himself there is nothing, but in Christ he has all things that his soul can require.

Who can tell the blessedness of the exchange that takes place between the true Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ's righteousness is placed upon him, and his sins are placed upon Christ. Christ has been reckoned a sinner for his sake, and now he is reckoned innocent for Christ's sake. Christ has been condemned for his sake, though there was no fault in Him-and now he is acquitted for Christ's sake, though he is covered with sins, faults, and shortcomings. Here is wisdom indeed! God can now be just and yet pardon the ungodly. Man can feel that he is a prisoner, and yet have a good hope of heaven and feel peace within. Who among men could have imagined such a thing? Who ought not to admire it when he hears it?

We read in British history of a Lord Nithsdale, who was sentenced to death for a great political crime. He was closely confined in prison after his trial. The day of his execution was fixed. There seemed no chance of escape. And yet before the sentence was carried into effect he contrived to escape through the skill and affection of his wife. She brought him a woman's clothes into the cell where he lay. She disguised him in them and made him appear like her own maidservant. She then went out of the prison with him following as her attendant, and though he passed through guards and keepers, none detected him. Who would not admire the skill and the love of such a wife as this?

But we read in Gospel history of a display of love, compared to which the love of Lady Nithsdale is nothing. We read of Jesus the Son of God coming down to a world of sinners, who neither cared for Him before He came, nor honoured Him when He appeared. We read of Him going down to the prison-house, and submitting to be bound, that we, the poor prisoners, might be able to go free. We read of Him becoming obedient to death-and that the death of the cross that we, the unworthy children of Adam, might have a door opened to life everlasting. We read of Him being content to bear our sins and carry our transgressions, that we might wear His righteousness, and walk in the light and liberty of the sons of God.

This may well be called a “love that passeth knowledge!” In no way could free grace ever have shown so brightly as in the way of justification by Christ (Ephesians 3:19).

This is the old way by which alone the children of Adam, who have been justified from the beginning of the world, have found their peace. From Abel downwards, no man or woman has ever had one drop of mercy, excepting through Christ. To Him every altar that was raised before the time of Moses was intended to point. To Him every sacrifice and ordinance of the Jewish law was meant to direct the children of Israel. Of Him all the prophets testified. In a word, if you lose sight of justification by Christ, a large part of the Old Testament Scripture will become a tangled maze.

This, above all, is the way of justification which exactly meets the wants and requirements of human nature. There is a conscience left in man, although he is a fallen being. There is a dim sense of his own need, which in his better moments will make itself heard, and which nothing but Christ can satisfy. So long as his conscience is not hungry, any religious toy will satisfy a man's soul and keep him quiet. But once let his conscience become hungry, and nothing will quiet him but food, and no food but Christ.

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “there must be a price paid for my soul, or no peace.” At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. Christ has already paid a ransom for his redemption. Christ has given Himself for him. Christ has redeemed him from the curse of the law, being made a curse for him (Galatians 2:20; Galatians 3:13).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers,” I must have some righteousness or title to heaven, or no peace. At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. He has brought in an everlasting righteousness. He is the end of the law for righteousness. His name is called, The Lord our Righteousness. God has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 10:4; Jeremiah 23:6).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “there must be punishment and suffering because of my sins, or no peace.” At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. Christ hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring him to God. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. By His stripes we are healed (1 Peter 2:24).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “I must have a priest for my soul, or no peace.” At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. Christ is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be the Mediator between Himself and man. He is the ordained

Advocate for sinners. He is the accredited Counsellor and Physician of sick souls. He is the Great High Priest, the Almighty Absolver, the Gracious Confessor of heavy-laden sinners (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:1).

This is the one true way of peace-justification by Christ. Beware lest any turn you out of this way and lead you into any of the false doctrines of the Church of Rome. Alas, it is wonderful to see how that unhappy Church has built a house of error hard by the house of truth! Hold fast the truth of God about justification, and be not deceived. Listen not to anything you may hear about other mediators and helpers to peace. Remember there is no mediator but one-Jesus Christ; no purgatory for sinners but one-the blood of Christ; no sacrifice for sin but one-the sacrifice once made on the cross; no works that can merit anything-but the work of Christ; no priest that can truly absolve-but Christ. Stand fast here, and be on your guard. Give not the glory due to Christ to another.

What do you know of Christ? I doubt not you have heard of Him by the hearing of the ear. You know His name. You are acquainted, perhaps, with the story of His life and death. But what experimental knowledge have you of Him? What practical use do you make of Him? What dealings and transactions have there been between your soul and Him?

Oh, believe me, there is no peace with God excepting through Christ! Peace is His peculiar gift. Peace is that legacy which he alone had power to leave behind Him when He left the world. All other peace besides this is a mockery and a delusion. When hunger can be relieved without food, and thirst quenched without drink, and weariness removed without rest, then, and not till then, will men find peace without Christ.

Is this peace your own? Bought by Christ with His own blood, offered by Christ freely to all who are willing to receive it-is this peace your own? Oh, rest not rest not till you can give a satisfactory answer to my question-Have you peace? Are you justified?

IV. Let me show you, in the last place, the hand by which the privilege of peace is received.

I ask your special attention to this part of our subject. There is scarcely any point in Christianity so important as the means by which Christ, justification, and peace, become the property of a man's soul. Many, I fear, would go with me so far as I have gone in this paper, but here would part company. Let us endeavour to lay hold firmly on the truth.

The means, by which a man obtains an interest in Christ and all His benefits, is simple faith. There is but one thing needful in order to be justified by His blood, and have peace with God. That one thing is to believe on Him. This is the peculiar mark of a true Christian. He believes on the Lord Jesus for His salvation. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Acts 16:31; John 3:16).

Without this faith it is impossible to be saved. A man may be moral, amiable, good-natured, and respectable. But if he does not believe on Christ, he has no pardon, no justification, no title to heaven. “He that believeth not is condemned already.” “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.” “He that believeth not, shall be damned “(John 3:18, John 3:36; Mark 16:16).

Beside this faith nothing whatever is needed for a man's justification. Beyond doubt, repentance, holiness, love, humility, prayerfulness, will always be seen in the justified man. But they do not in the smallest degree justify him in the sight of God. Nothing joins a man to Christ, nothing justifies, but simple faith. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” “We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 4:5; Romans 3:28).

Having this faith, a man is at once completely justified. His sins are at once removed. His iniquities are at once put away. The very hour that he believes he is reckoned by God entirely pardoned, forgiven, and a righteous man. His justification is not a future privilege, to be obtained after a long time and great pains. It is an immediate present possession. Jesus says, “He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life.” Paul says, “By Him all that, believeth are justified from all things “(John 6:47; Acts 13:39).

I need hardly say that it is of the utmost importance to have clear views about the nature of true saving faith. It is constantly spoken of as the distinguishing characteristic of New Testament Christians. They are called “believers.” In the single Gospel of John, “believing” is mentioned eighty or ninety times. There is hardly any subject about which so many mistakes are made. There is none about which mistakes are so injurious to the soul. The darkness of many a sincere inquirer may be traced up to confused views about faith. Let us try to get a distinct idea of its real nature.

True saving faith is not the possession of everybody. The opinion that all who are called Christians are, as a matter of course, believers, is a most mischievous delusion. A man may be baptized, like Simon Magus, and yet have no part or lot in Christ. The visible Church contains unbelievers as well as believers. “All men have not faith”(2 Thessalonians 3:2).

True saving faith is not a mere matter of feeling. A man may have many good feelings and desires in his mind towards Christ, and yet they may all prove as temporary and short-lived as the morning cloud and the early dew. Many are like the stony-ground hearers, and “hear the word with joy.” Many will say under momentary excitement, “I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest” (Matthew 8:19).

True saving faith is not a bare assent of the intellect to the fact that Christ died for sinners. This is not a whit better than the faith of devils. They know who Jesus is. They believe, and they do more, they tremble (James 2:19).

True saving faith is an act of the whole inner man. It is an act of the head, heart, and will, all united and combined. It is an act of the soul, in which, seeing his own guilt, danger, and helplessness-and seeing at the same time Christ offering to save him-a man ventures on Christ-flees to Christ-receives Christ as his only hope-and becomes a willing dependent on Him for salvation. It is an act which becomes at once the parent of a habit. He that has it may not always be equally sensible of his own faith, but in the main he lives by faith, and walks by faith.

True faith has nothing whatever of merit about it, and in the highest sense cannot be called a work. It is but laying hold of a Saviour's hand, leaning on a husband's arm, and receiving a physician's medicine. It brings with it nothing to Christ but a sinful man's soul. It gives nothing, contributes nothing, pays nothing, performs nothing. It only receives, takes, accepts, grasps, and embraces the glorious gift of justification which Christ bestows, and by renewed daily acts enjoys that gift.

Of all Christian graces, faith is the most important. Of all it is the simplest in reality. Of all it is the most difficult to make men understand in practice. The mistakes into which men fall about it are endless. Some who have no faith never doubt for a moment that they are believers. Others, who have faith, can never be persuaded that they are believers at all. But nearly every mistake about faith may be traced up to the old root of natural pride. Men will persist in sticking to the idea that they are to pay something of their own in order to be saved. As to a faith which consists in receiving only, and paying nothing at all, it seems as if they could not understand it.

Saving faith is the hand of the soul. The sinner is like a drowning man at the point of sinking. He sees the Lord Jesus Christ holding out help to him. He grasps it and is saved. This is faith.

Saving faith is the eye of the soul. The sinner is like the Israelite bitten by the fiery serpent in the wilderness, and at the point of death. The Lord Jesus Christ is offered to him as the brazen serpent, set up for his cure. He looks and is healed. This is faith.

Saving faith is the mouth of the soul. The sinner is starving for want of food, and sick of a sore disease. The Lord Jesus Christ is set before him as the bread of life, and the universal medicine. He receives it, and is made well and strong. This is faith.

Saving faith is the foot of the soul. The sinner is pursued by a deadly enemy, and is in fear of being overtaken. The Lord Jesus Christ is put before him as a strong tower, a hiding place, and a refuge. He runs into it and is safe. This is faith.

If you love life, cling fast hold to the doctrine of justification by faith. If you love inward peace, let your views of faith be very simple. Honour every part of the Christian religion. Contend to the death for the necessity of holiness. Use diligently and reverently every appointed means of grace; but do not give to these things the office of justifying your soul in the slightest degree. If you would have peace, remember that faith alone justifies, and that not as a meritorious work, but as the act that joins the soul to Christ. Believe me, the crown and glory of the Gospel is “justification by faith without the deeds of the law.”

No doctrine can be imagined so beautifully simple as justification by faith. It is not a dark mysterious truth, intelligible to none but the great, the rich, and the learned. It places eternal life within the reach of the most unlearned, and the poorest in the land. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so glorifying to God. It honours all His attributes, justice, mercy, and holiness. It gives the whole credit of the sinner's salvation to the Saviour He has appointed. It honours the Son, and so honours the Father that sent Him. It gives man no partnership in his redemption, but makes salvation to be wholly of the Lord. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so calculated to put man in his right place. It shows him his own sinfulness, and weakness, and inability to save his soul by his own works. It leaves him without excuse if he is not saved at last. It offers to him peace and pardon without money and without price. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so comforting to a broken-hearted and penitent sinner. It brings to such an one glad tidings. It shows him that there is hope even for him. It tells him though he is a great sinner, there is ready for him a great Saviour; and though he cannot justify himself, God can and will justify him for the sake of Christ. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so satisfying to a true Christian. It supplies him with a solid ground of comfort-the finished work of Christ. If anything was left for the Christian to do, where would his comfort be? He would never know that he had done enough, and was really safe. But the doctrine that Christ undertakes all, and that we have only to believe and receive peace, meets every fear. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so sanctifying. It draws men by the strongest of all cords, the cord of love. It makes them feel they are debtors, and in gratitude bound to love much, when much has been forgiven. Preaching up works never produces such fruit as preaching them down. Exalting man's goodness and merits never makes men so holy as exalting Christ. The fiercest lunatics at Paris became gentle, mild, and obedient, when Abby Pinel gave them liberty and hope. The free grace of Christ will produce far greater effects on men's lives than the sternest commands of law. Surely the doctrine must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so strengthening to the hands of a minister. It enables him to come to the vilest of men and say, “There is a door of hope even for you.” It enables him to feel, “While life lasts there are no incurable cases among the souls under my charge.” Many a minister by the use of this doctrine can say of souls, “I found them in the state of nature. I beheld them pass into the state of grace. I watched them moving into the state of glory.” Truly this doctrine must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined that wears so well. It suits men when they first begin, like the Philippian jailer, crying, “What shall I do to be saved?” It suits them when they fight in the forefront of the battle. Like the apostle Paul, they say, “The life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” It suits them when they die, as it did Stephen when he cried, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Yes: many an one has opposed the doctrine fiercely while he lived, and yet on his death-bed has gladly embraced justification by faith, and departed saying that “he trusted in nothing but Christ.” It must be of God.

Have you this faith? Do you know anything of simple child-like confidence in Jesus? Do you know what it is to rest your soul's hopes wholly on Christ? Oh, remember that where there is no faith, there is no interest in Christ; where there is no interest in Christ, there is no justification; where there is no justification, there can be no peace with God; where there is no peace with God, there is no heaven! And what then? There remains nothing but hell.

And now let me commend the solemn matters we have been considering to your serious and prayerful attention. I invite you to begin by meditating calmly on peace with God-on justification-on Christ-on faith. These are not mere speculative subjects, fit for none but retired students. They lie at the very root of Christianity. They are bound up with life eternal. Bear with me for a few moments, while I add a few words in order to bring them home more closely to your heart and conscience.

1. Let me, then, for one thing, request every reader of this paper to remember its title.

Are you justified? Have you peace with God? You have heard of it. You have read of it. You know there is such a thing. You know where it is to be found. But do you possess it yourself? Is it yet your own? Oh, deal honestly with yourself, and do not evade my question! Are you justified? Have you peace with God?

I do not ask whether you think it an excellent thing, and hope to procure it at some future time before you die. I want to know about your state now. To-day, while it is called to-day, I ask you to deal honestly with my question. Are you justified? Have you peace with God?

May the question ring in your ears, and never leave you till you can give it a satisfactory answer! May the Holy Spirit of God so apply it to your heart that you may be able to say boldly before you die, “Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

2. In the next place, let me offer a solemn warning to every reader of this paper who knows that he has not peace with God.

You are not justified! You have not peace! Consider for a moment how fearfully great is your danger! You and God are not friends. The wrath of God abideth on you. God is angry with you every day. Your ways, your words, your thoughts, your actions, are a continual offence to Him. They are all unpardoned and unforgiven. They cover you from head to foot. They provoke Him every day to cut you off. The sword that the reveller of old saw hanging over his head by a single hair is but a faint emblem of the danger of your soul. There is but a step between you and hell.

You are not justified! You have not peace! Consider for a moment how fearfully great is your folly! There sits at the right hand of God a mighty Saviour, able and willing to give you peace, and you do not seek Him. For ten, twenty, thirty, and perhaps forty years He has called to you, and you have refused His counsel. He has cried, “Come to Me,” and you have practically replied, “I will not.” He has said, “My ways are ways of pleasantness,” and you have constantly said, “I like my own sinful ways far better.”

And after all, for what have you refused Christ? For worldly riches, which cannot heal a broken heart; for worldly business, which you must one day leave; for worldly pleasures, which do not really satisfy; for these things, and such as these, you have refused Christ. Is this wisdom, is this fairness, is this kindness to your soul?

I do beseech you to consider your ways. I mourn over your present condition with especial sorrow. I grieve to think how many are within a hair's breadth of some crushing affliction, and yet utterly unprepared to meet it. Fain would I draw near to everyone, and cry in his ear, “Seek Christ! Seek Christ, that you may have peace within and a present help in trouble.” Fain would I persuade every anxious parent and wife and child to become acquainted with Him, who is a brother born for adversity, and the Prince of Peace a friend that never fails nor forsakes, and a husband that never dies.

May God the Spirit apply this warning to some reader's soul! May some who began to read this paper in thoughtlessness find it a word in season, and be led into the way of peace!

3. Let me, in the next place, offer an affectionate entreaty to all who want peace and know not where to find it.

You want peace! Then seek it without delay from Him who alone is able to give it-Christ Jesus the Lord. Go to Him in humble prayer, and ask Him to fulfil His own promises and look graciously on your soul. Tell Him you have read His compassionate invitation to the labouring and heavy-laden. Tell Him that this is the plight of your soul, and implore Him to give you rest. Do this, and do it without delay.

Seek Christ Himself, and do not stop short of personal dealings with Him. Rest not in regular attendance on Christ's ordinances. Be not content with becoming a communicant and receiving the Lord's Supper. Think not to find solid peace in this way. You must see the King's face, and be touched by the golden sceptre. You must speak to the Physician, and open your whole case to Him. You must be closeted with the Advocate, and keep nothing back from Him. Oh, reader, remember this. Many are shipwrecked just outside the harbour. They stop short in means and ordinances, and never go straight and direct to Christ. “He that drinks of this water shall thirst again.” Christ Himself can alone satisfy the soul.

Seek Christ, and wait for nothing. Wait not till you feel you have repented enough. Wait not till your knowledge is increased. Wait not till you have been sufficiently humbled because of your sins. Wait not till you have no ravelled tangle of doubts and darkness and unbelief all over your heart. Seek Christ just as you are. You will never be better by keeping away from Him. From the bottom of my heart I subscribe to old Traill's opinion, “It is impossible that people should believe in Christ too soon.” Alas! it is not humility, but pride and ignorance that make so many anxious souls hang back from closing with Jesus. They forget that the more sick a man is the more need he has of the physician. The more bad a man feels his heart, the more readily and speedily ought he to flee to Christ.

Seek Christ, and do not fancy you must sit still. Let not Satan tempt you to suppose that you must wait in a state of passive inaction, and not strive to lay hold upon Jesus. How you can lay hold upon Him I do not pretend to explain. But I am certain it is better to struggle towards Christ and strive to lay hold, than to sit still with our arms folded in sin and unbelief. Better perish striving to lay hold on Jesus, than perish in indolence and sin. Well says old Traill, of those who tell us they are anxious but cannot believe in Christ: “This pretence is as inexcusable as if a man wearied with a journey, and not able to go one step further, should argue, 'I am so tired that I am not able to lie down,' when indeed he can neither stand nor go.”

May God the Spirit apply this invitation to some reader's soul! May it be the means of leading some weary soul into the way of peace.

4. Let me, in the next place, offer some encouragement to those who have good reason to hope they have peace with God, but are troubled by doubts and fears.

You have doubts and fears! But what do you expect? What would you have? Your soul is married to a body full of weakness, passions, and infirmities. You live in a world that lies in wickedness, a world in which the great majority do not love Christ. You are constantly liable to the temptations of the devil. That busy enemy, if he cannot shut you out of heaven, will try hard to make your journey uncomfortable. Surely these things ought all to be considered.

Believing reader, so far from being surprised that you have doubts and fears, I should suspect the reality of your peace if you had none. I think little of that grace which is accompanied by no inward conflict. There is seldom life in the heart when all is still, quiet, and one way of thinking. Believe me, a true Christian may be known by his warfare as well as by his peace. These very doubts and fears which now distress you are tokens of good. They satisfy me that you have really got something which you are afraid to lose.

Believing reader, I advise you to beware that you do not help Satan by becoming an unjust accuser of yourself, and an unbeliever in the reality of God's work of grace. I advise you to pray for more knowledge of your own heart, of the fulness of Jesus, and of the devices of the devil. Let doubts and fears drive you to the throne of grace, stir you up to more prayer, send you more frequently to Christ. But do not let doubts and fears rob you of your peace. Believe me, you must be content to go to heaven as a sinner saved by grace. And you must not be surprised to find daily proof that you really are a sinner so long as you live.

May the Holy Spirit apply this word of encouragement to some reader's soul! May it be the means of establishing the feet of some doubting brother in the way of peace.

5. Let me, in the last place, offer some counsel to all who have peace with God, and desire to keep up a lively sense of it.

It must never be forgotten that a believer's sense of his own justification and acceptance with God admits of many degrees and variations. At one time it may be bright and clear; at another dull and dim. At one time it may be high and full, like the flood-tide; at another low, like the ebb. Our justification is a fixed, changeless, immovable thing. But our sense of justification is liable to many changes.

What, then, are the best means of preserving in a believer's heart the lively sense of justification which is so precious to the soul that knows it? I offer a few hints to believers. But such as they are I offer them, though I lay no claim to infallibility.

To keep up a lively sense of peace, there must be constant looking to Jesus. As the pilot keeps his eye on the mark by which he steers, so must we keep our eye on Christ.

There must be constant communion with Jesus. We must use Him daily as our soul's Physician and High Priest. There must be daily conference, daily confession, and daily absolution.

There must be constant watchfulness against the enemies of your soul. He that would have peace must be always prepared for war.

There must be a constant following after holiness in every relation of life-in our tempers, in our tongues, abroad and at home. A small speck on the lens of a telescope is enough to prevent our seeing distant objects clearly. A little dust will soon make a watch go incorrectly.

There must be a constant labouring after humility. Pride goes before a fall. Self-confidence is often the mother of sloth, of hurried Bible-reading, and sleepy prayers. Peter first said he would never forsake his Lord, though all others did; then he slept when he should have prayed; then He denied Him three times, and only found wisdom after bitter weeping.

There must be constant boldness in confessing our Lord before men. Them that honour Christ, Christ will honour with much of His company. When the disciples forsook our Lord they were wretched and miserable. When they confessed Him before the Council, they were filled with “joy and the Holy Ghost.”

There must be constant diligence about means of grace, and good works. Here are the ways in which Jesus loves to walk. No disciple must expect to see much of his Master, who does not

delight in public worship, Bible-reading, private prayer, and constant efforts to mend the world.

Lastly, there must be constant jealousy over our own souls, and frequent self-examination. We must be careful to distinguish between justification and sanctification. We must beware that we do not make a Christ of holiness.

I lay these hints before you. I might easily add to them. But I am sure they are among the first things to be attended to by believers, if they wish to keep up a lively sense of their own justification and acceptance with God.

Reader, I conclude all by expressing my heart's desire and prayer that you may know what it is to have true peace in your soul.

If you never had peace yet, may it be recorded in the book of God that this year you sought peace in Christ and found it!

If you have tasted peace already, may your sense of peace mightily increase!

The following passage from a direction for the visitation of the sick, composed by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, about the year 1093, will probably be interesting to many readers, “Dost thou believe that thou canst not be saved but by the death of Christ? The sick man answereth, Yes. Then let it be said unto him, Go to then, and whilst thy soul abideth in thee, put all thy confidence in this death alone. Place thy trust in no other thing. Commit thyself wholly to this death. Cover thyself wholly with this alone. Cast thyself wholly on this death. Wrap thyself wholly in this death. And if God would judge thee, say, 'Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Thy judgment; and otherwise I will not contend with Thee.' And if He shall say unto thee that thou art a sinner, say, 'I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my sins.' If He shall say unto thee that thou hast deserved damnation, say, 'Lord, I put the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between Thee and all my sins; and I offer His merits for my own, which I should have, and have not.' If He say that He is angry with thee, say, 'Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Thy anger.”-Quoted by Owen in his Treatise on Justification.-JOHNSTONE'S EDITION OF OWEN'S WORK. Vol. v. p. 37.

PEACE, perfect peace? in this dark world of sin!

The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace? by thronging duties pressed!

To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

Peace, perfect peace? with sorrows surging round!

On Jesus' bosom nought but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace? with loved ones far away!

In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.

Peace, perfect peace? our future all unknown!

Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

Peace, perfect peace? death shadowing us and ours!

Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,

And Jesus call us to heaven's perfect peace.

E. H. Bickersteth.

Chapter 50

Looking unto Jesus

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

"LOOKING UNTO JESUS."

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.- Hebrews 12:2.

_____ THE text of Scripture which heads this page is well fitted to supply useful thoughts for Christmas. At a season like this, when we are specially invited to remember how our blessed Lord came into the world, and was born of the Virgin Mary, we surely cannot do better than ask ourselves what we know of "Looking unto Jesus." The Christianity which the world requires is a Christianity for everyday life. No other religion will ever receive much heart-felt attention from mankind. It may exist; but it will never strike deep root, and satisfy souls.

A mere Sunday religion is not enough. A thing put on and off with our Sabbath clothes is powerless. Thinking men feel and know that there are seven days in a week, and that life is not made up of Sundays.

A daily round of forms and ceremonies within consecrated buildings is not enough. Wise men remember that there is a world of duty and trial outside the walls of the church, in which they have to play their part. They want something that they can carry with them into that world.

A monastic religion will never do. A faith that cannot flourish except in an ecclesiastical hot-house, a faith which cannot face the cold air of worldly business, and bear fruit except behind the fence of retirement and private asceticism,- such a faith is a plant which our Heavenly Father has not planted, and it brings no fruit to perfection.

A religion of spasmodic and hysterical excitement will not do. It may suit weak and sentimental minds for a little season; but it rarely lasts, and does not meet the wants of many. Itlacks bone and muscle, and too often ends in deadness, by the force of reaction. It is not the wind, nor the fire, nor the earthquake, but the still small voice, which shows the real presence of the Holy Ghost. (1 Kings 19:12).

The Christianity which the world requires, and the Word of God reveals, is of a very different stamp. It is a useful everyday religion. It is a healthy, strong, manly plant, which can live in every position, and flourish in every atmosphere except that of sin. It is a religion which a man can carry with him wherever he goes, and never need leave behind him. In the army or in the navy, at the

public school or at college, in the great hospital lecture-room and at the bar, on the farm or in the shop, in the market or 'change, in parliament or at court, true heaven-born Christianity will live and not die. It will wear, and stand, and prosper in any climate, in winter and in summer, in heat and in cold. Such a religion meets the wants of mankind.

But where is such true Christianity to be found? What are its special ingredients? What is the nature of it? What are its peculiar characteristics? The answer to these questions is to be found in the three words of the text which form the title of this paper. The secret of a vigorous, powerful, everyday Christianity is to be ever "Looking unto Jesus." The glorious company of the Apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the saints who in every age and land have made their mark on mankind, and turned the world upside down,-all, all have had one common mint-stamp upon them. They have been men who lived "Looking unto Jesus." The expression of the text is one of those pithy golden sayings which stand out here and there on the face of the New Testament, and demand special attention. It is like "to me to live is Christ,"-"Christ is all and in all,"-"Christ, who is our life,"-"He is our peace,"-"I live by the faith of the Son of God." (Php_1:21; Colossians 3:4, Colossians 3:11; Ephesians 2:14; Galatians 2:20) To each and all of these sayings, one common remark applies. They are rich in thought and food for reflection. They contain far more than a careless eye can see on the surface.

In the phrase "looking unto Jesus," it is useful and interesting to remember that the Greek word which, in our English Bible, we render "looking," is only found here in the New Testament. Literally translated it means "looking off,"-looking away from other objects to one, only one, and looking on that one with a steady, fixed, intent gaze.

And the object we are to look at, you will observe, is a PERSON,-not a doctrine, not an abstract theological dogma, but a living Person; and that Person is Jesus the Son of God. How much matter for thought lies there! Creeds and confessions are the necessary invention of a comparatively modern age. The first and simplest type of an apostolic early Christian was a man who trusted, and loved, a living Divine Person. Of head knowledge, and accurate definitions, perhaps he had but little store. Very likely he would have passed a poor examination in a latter day theological school. But one thing he did know: he knew, believed, loved, and could have died for, a living Saviour, a real personal Friend in heaven, even Jesus, the crucified and risen Son of God. Well would it be for the Churches of the nineteenth century, if we had more of this simple Christianity among us, and could realize more the Person of Christ.

But, after all, the grand question which rises out of the text is this: What is it that we are to look at in Jesus? If we are to live habitually fixing the eyes of our mind on Christ, what are the special points to which we are to have regard? If "looking unto Jesus" is the real secret of a healthy, vigorous Christianity, what does the phrase mean?

I answer these questions without hesitation. I dismiss as insufficient and unsatisfactory the idea that the Lord Jesus is only set before us here as an "example, and nothing more." I hold with that great divine, John Owen, who was once Dean of my own college at Oxford, that "He is proposed to us as one in whom we are to place our faith, trust, and confidence, with all our expectation of success in our Christian course." I consider there are four points of view in which we are intended to "look to Jesus," and I shall try, briefly, to put these four before you in order.

I. First, and foremost (yes! by far first), if we would look rightly to Jesus, we must look daily at His death, as the only source of inward peace.

We need inward peace. So long as our conscience is asleep, deadened by indulged sin, or dulled and stupefied by incessant pursuit of the things of this world, so long can man get on tolerably well without peace with God. But once let conscience open its eyes, and shake itself, and rise, and move, and it will make the stoutest child of Adam feel ill at ease. The irrepressible thought that this life is not all,-that there is a God, and a judgment, and a "something after death, an undiscovered bourne from which no traveller returns,"-that thought will come up at times in every man's mind, and make him long for inward peace. It is easy to write brave words about "eternal hope," and strew the path to the grave with flowers. Such theology is naturally popular: the world loves to have it so. But after all, there is something deep down in the heart of hearts of most men, which must be satisfied. The strongest evidence that old-fashioned creeds, as some are pleased to call them, are God's eternal truth, is the universal conscience of mankind.

Who is there among us all that can sit down and think over the days that are past,-school days, and college days, and days of middle life, their countless things left undone that ought to have been done, and done that ought not to have been done,-who, I say, can think over it all without shame, if indeed he does not turn from the review with disgust and terror, and refuse to think at all? We all need peace.

Where is the man in all England, the best and saintliest among us, whether old or young, who must not confess, if he speak the truth, that his best things now are full of imperfection, and his life a constant succession of shortcomings? Yes: the older we grow, and the nearer we draw to the light of perfect day, the more we see our own great darkness and multitudinous defilements, and the more disposed we feel to cry, "Unclean! unclean! God be merciful to me a sinner." We need peace.

Now, there is only one source of peace revealed in Scripture, and that is the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and the atonement which He has made for sin by that vicarious death on the cross. To obtain a portion in that great peace, we have only to "look" by faith to Jesus, as our Substitute and Redeemer, bearing our sin in His own body on the tree, and to cast all the weight of our souls on Him. To enjoy that peace habitually, we must keep "daily looking back" to the same wondrous point at which we began, daily bringing all our iniquity to Him, and daily remembering that "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah liii. 6). This, I am bold to say, is the Bible way of peace.

This is the old fountain of which all the true sheep of Christ have drunk for 1800 years, and have never found its waters fail. Holy fathers and holy school-men, holy reformers on both sides of the Channel and both sides of the Tweed, holy Nonconformists and holy Episcopalians in our own land,-all have agreed on one point, at least, in their respective creeds. And that point is this, that the only receipt for peace of conscience is to "look" by faith to Jesus suffering in our stead, the just for the unjust, paying our debt by that suffering, and dying for us on the cross.

The wisdom of these latter days entirely fails to find a better way of peace than the old path of "looking" to the vicarious death of Christ. Thousands are annually growing grey, and blistering their hands in hewing out cisterns,-broken cisterns, that can hold no water. They are vainly hoping that

they will find some better way to heaven than the old-fashioned way of the cross. They will never find it. They will have to turn at last, if they love life, like many before them, to the brazen serpent. They must be content, like Israel in the wilderness, to look and live, and to be saved by the blood of the Lamb.

The words which Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote in A.D. 1093 upon this subject, are well worth noticing. They are to be found in his directions for the visitation of the sick. Quaint and old-fashioned as they sound, they are wiser, I fear, than many things written in our own times. He says:-

"Dost thou believe that thou canst not be saved but by the death of Christ?" The sick man answereth, Yes. Then let it be said unto him, Go to, then, and whilst thy soul abideth in thee, put all thy confidence in this death alone. Place thy trust in no other thing. Commit thyself wholly to this death. Wrap thyself wholly in this death. And if God would judge thee, say, 'Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Thy judgment; and otherwise I will not contend with Thee.' And if He shall say unto thee that thou art a sinner, say, 'I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my sins.' If He shall say unto thee that thou hast deserved damnation, say, 'Lord, I put the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between Thee and all my sins: and I offer His merits for my own, which I should have, and have not.' If He say that He is angry with thee, say, 'Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Thy anger.'-Quoted by Owen in his "Treatise on Justification:" (Johnstone's edition of Owen's works, vol. v., p. 17.)

For ever let us keep to this old path of peace, and never be ashamed of it. While others go back, and barely conceal their contempt for the so-called blood theology, let us boldly go forward, "looking unto Jesus," and saying daily to Him, "Lord, I have sinned; but Thou hast suffered in my stead; I take Thee at Thy word, and rest my soul on Thee."

So much for the first "Look to Jesus." We must look back habitually to Christ's death for peace and pardon. This is what St. Paul meant the Hebrews to do. Let this be the first item in our creed.

II. In the second place, if we would look rightly to Jesus, we must look daily to His life of intercession in heaven, as our principal provision of strength and help.

We must surely feel that we need Almighty help every day we live, if we are true Christians. Even when started in the narrow way of life, with pardon, grace, and a new heart, we soon find that, left to ourselves, we shall never get safe home. Every returning morning brings with it so much to be done and borne and suffered, that we are often tempted to despair. So weak and treacherous are our hearts, so busy the devil, so persecuting and ensnaring the world, that we are sometimes half inclined to look back and return to Egypt. We are such poor, weak creatures, that we cannot do two things at once. It seems almost impossible to do our duty in that place of life to which God has called us, and not to be absorbed in it and forget our souls. The cares and business and occupations of life appear to drink up all our thoughts, and swallow up all our attention. What are we to do? Where are we to look? How many are exercised with thoughts like these

I believe the great Scriptural remedy for all who feel such helplessness as I have faintly described, is to look upward to Christ in heaven, and to keep steadily before our eyes His intercession at the right hand of God. Like the sailor boy who goes aloft for the first time, we must learn to look UPWARD, away from ourselves and our weakness, and upward to Christ in heaven. We must try

to realize daily that Jesus not only died for us and rose again, but that He also lives as our Advocate with the Father, and appears in heaven for us. This, surely, was the mind of St. Paul, when he said, "Being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10). This, again, is what he meant when he gave that confident challenge, "Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Romans 8:34). This, above all, is what he had in view when he told the Hebrews, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25).

Now I venture boldly to express a doubt whether modern Christians "look to Jesus" in this point of view, and make as much as they ought of His life of intercession. It is too often a dropped link in our latter-day Christianity. We are apt to think only of the atoning DEATH and the precious blood, and to forget the LIFE and priestly office of our great Redeemer. It ought not to be so. We miss much by this forgetfulness of the whole truth as it is in Jesus. What a mine of daily comfort there is in the thought, that we have an Advocate with the Father, who never slumbers or sleeps, whose eye is always upon us, who is continually pleading our cause and obtaining fresh supplies of grace for us, who watches over us in every company and place, and never forgets us, though we, in going to and fro, and doing our daily business, cannot always think of Him While we are fighting Amalek in the valley below, One greater than Moses is holding up His hands for us in heaven, and through His intercession we shall prevail. Surely, if we have been satisfied with half the truth about Jesus hitherto, we ought to say, 'I will live in such fashion no more.'

And here let me declare my own firm conviction, that the habit of daily looking to the intercession of Christ is one great safeguard against some modern superstitions. If Jesus did NOT live in heaven as our merciful and faithful High Priest, I could understand a little the craving that exists in many minds for that deadly opiate, which, nowadays, usurps the name and office of spiritual medicine: I mean, habitual confession to earthly priests, and habitual absolution. But I cannot understand it when I read the Epistle to the Hebrews, and see that we have a great High Priest in heaven, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who bids us pour out our hearts before Him, and come to Him for grace to help in time of need. In short, I do not hesitate to assert, that a right view of Christ's priestly office is the true antidote to some of the most dangerous errors of the Church of Rome.

So much for the second "look to Jesus." We ought to look habitually to His life and intercession.

III. In the third place, if we would look rightly to Jesus, we must look daily at His example, as our chief standard of holy living.

We must all feel, I suspect, and often feel, how hard it is to regulate our daily lives by mere rules and regulations. Scores of circumstances will continually cross our path, in which we find it difficult to see the line of duty, and feel perplexed. Prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and attention to the practical part of the Epistles, are, undoubtedly, primary resources. But surely it would cut many a knot, and solve many a problem, if we would cultivate the habit of studying the daily behaviour of our Lord, as recorded in the four Gospels, and striving to shape our own behaviour by its pattern. Yet this must have been what our Lord meant when He said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." (John 13:15). And this is what St. Paul meant, when he wrote, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1). And this

is what St. John meant when he said, "he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 John 2:6). This is the chief end for which any one is said to be predestinated; it is "to be conformed to the image of His Son." (Romans 8:29). This, says the 17th Article, with true wisdom, is the special character of God's elect,- "they be made like the image of God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ." In the face of such evidence as this, I have a right to say that our "look" to Jesus is very imperfect, if we do not look at His example, and strive to follow it.

Let us consider for a moment what a beautifier and marvellous portrait the four Gospels hold up to our eyes of the Man Jesus Christ. It is a portrait that extorted the admiration even of a wretched sceptic like Rousseau. It is a portrait which, even to this day, is one of the cardinal difficulties of infidelity, for there never lived the infidel who could face the question, "Tell us, if you refuse to believe the Divine origin of Christianity, tell us who and what Christ was?" Let us Christians trace all the footsteps of our Master's career from the carpenter's shop at Nazareth to the cross of Calvary. See how in every company and position, by the Sea of Galilee, and in the Temple courts of Jerusalem, by the well of Samaria, in the house Bethany, amidst the sneering Sadducees, or the despised publicans, alone with His faithful disciples, or surrounded by bitter enemies, He is always the same,-always holy, harmless, undefiled; always perfect in word and deed. Mark what a wonderful combination of seemingly opposite qualifications is to be seen in His character. Bold and outspoken in opposing hypocrisy and self-righteousness, tender and compassionate in receiving the chief of sinners; profoundly wise in arguing before the Sanhedrin; simple, so that a child might understand Him, in teaching the poor; patient towards His weak disciples; unruffled in temper by the keenest provocation; considerate for all around Him; sympathizing, self-denying, prayerful, overflowing with love and compassion, utterly unselfish, always about His Father's business, ever going about doing good, continually ministering to others, and never expecting others to minister to Him,-what person born of woman ever walked on earth like Jesus of Nazareth? We may well be humbled and ashamed when we think how unlike the best of us are to our great Example, and what poor, blurred copies of His character we show to mankind. Like careless children at school, we are content to copy those around us, with all their faults, and do not look constantly at the only faultless copy, the One perfect Man, in whom even Satan could find "nothing." (John 14:30). But one thing, at any rate, we must all admit. If Christians, during the last eighteen centuries, had been more like Christ, the Church would certainly have been far more beautiful, and would probably have done far more good to the world.

It is a sorrowful thought that Christ's example should be so little remembered or looked at in these latter days. It is a striking illustration of man's mental littleness and inability to grasp more than a portion of the truth. You may lay your hand on a hundred books which profess to grapple with points of doctrine, before you will find one which handles the mighty subject of the true pattern of Christian practice. Yet no part of God's truth can ever be neglected without the Church taking damages; and I believe the Church has suffered greatly by neglecting the point of which I now speak. The famous book of Thomas a Kempis may have many defects, I have no doubt, and to some it is even mischievous. But I am sure it would be well if we had many more Christlike Christian men and women, who strive at home and abroad to imitate Christ.

Let us beware of this error in these latter days. Let us cultivate the daily habit of "looking to Christ as our pattern," as well as our salvation. Let us not forget that a cunning artificer will tell you that he often learns more from a pattern in five minutes than from the best written rules and directions

in an hour. We can never look too steadily at Christ's death and intercession. But we may easily look too little at the blessed steps of His most holy life. Let us shake off this reproach. Let us strive and pray that we may make the tone and temper of Jesus our model and standard in our daily behaviour. Let all men see that, as the poet says, "this example has a magnet force," and that we love to follow Him whom we profess to love. "My Master, my Master!" as George Herbert loved to say. "How would my Master have behaved in my position?" should be our constant cry. "Let me go and do likewise."

So much for the third "look"at Jesus. We ought to look habitually to His example.

IV. Fourthly and lastly, if we would "look" to Jesus rightly, we must look forward to His second Advent, as the truest fountain of hope and consolation.

That the early Christians were always looking forward to a second coming of their risen Master, is a fact beyond all controversy. You cannot read the Epistles and fail to see that one of their chief sources of comfort was the hope of His return. They clung tenaciously to the old promise, "This same Jesus shall come in like manner as ye have seen Him go." (Acts 1:11). In all their trials and persecutions, under Roman Emperors and heathen rulers, they cheered one another with the thought that their own King would soon come again, and plead their cause. Persecutors and oppressors would soon be swept away, and the great Shepherd of the sheep would gather them into a fold of safety. "We look for the Saviour." "We wait for the Son of God from heaven." "Yet a little time He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "Be patient unto the coming of the Lord." (Php_3:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 10:37; James 5:7). Many, no doubt, in their impatience, misunderstood the times and seasons, and thought that the kingdom of God would immediately appear. But, for all that, it remains a fact that a second personal advent of Christ was the great hope of the early Church.

Now, I believe firmly that this same second advent was meant to be the hope of the Church in every age of the world. It ought to be the consolation of Christians in these latter days as much as it was in primitive times. And I doubt whether there ever was an era when it was so useful to keep the second advent of Christ steadily in view as it is just now.

Who can look abroad at public affairs all over the globe, and avoid the impression that this old, bankrupt world needs a new order of things? The cement seems to have fallen out of the walls of human society. On all sides we hear of restlessness, anarchy, lawlessness, envy, jealousy, distrust, suspicion, and discontent. The continuance of evils of every kind, physical, moral, and social,-the constantly recurring revolutions, and wars, and famines, and pestilences,-the never-ending growth of superstition, scepticism, and unbelief,-the bitter strife of political parties,-the divisions and controversies of Christians,-the overflowing of intemperance and immorality,-the boundless luxury and extravagance of some classes, and the grinding poverty of others,-the strikes of workmen,-the conflict of labour and capital,-the shiftless helplessness of statesmen to devise remedies,-the commercial dishonesty,-the utter failure of mere secular knowledge to regenerate mankind,-the comparative deadness of Churches,-the apparently small results of missions at home and abroad,-the universal "distress of nations with perplexity," and dread of something terrible coming,-these strange phenomena and symptoms, what do they all mean? Yes: what indeed! They all seem to tell us, with no uncertain voice, that the world is out of joint, and needs a new administration, and a new King. Like a crying infant in the arms of a

stranger, the world is ever fretting, and wailing, and struggling, though it hardly knows why, and will never rest and be quiet till its rightful parent takes it in hand, and puts the stranger aside. As Plato makes Socrates say, in one of his dialogues, before the FIRST advent, "We must wait for some one, be he God, or inspired man, to give us light, and take away darkness from our eyes,"-even so we Christians must fix our hopes upon the SECOND advent, and look and long for the rightful King's appearing.

And who, again, can look round his own private circle, whether great or small, and fail to see many things which are most painful and distressing; things which, like a watcher by a dying pillow, he can only look on and feel deeply, but cannot mend? Think of the everflowing stream of sorrow arising from poverty, sickness, disease, and death,-from quarrels about money, from incompatibility of temper, from family misunderstandings, from failures in business, from disappointments about children, from separations of families in pursuit of callings. What hidden skeletons there are in many households! How many aching hearts! How many secret sorrows known only to God! How many Jacobs in the world, vexed by their children, and refusing to be comforted! How many Absaloms bowing down a father's head by their thanklessness and rebellion! How many Isaacs and

Rebeccas daily grieved by self-willed sons! How many weeping widows of Nain! Where is the thoughtful Christian who does not often sigh for a better state of things, and ask himself, "How long, O Lord, faithful and true, how long are we to go on weeping, and working, binding up wounds, and drinking bitter cups, and educating, and parting, and burying, and putting on mourning? When shall the end once be?"

Now, I believe that the true Scriptural source of consolation, in the face of all that troubles us, whether publicly or privately, is to keep steadily before our eyes the second coming of Christ. Once more I say, we must "look forward to Jesus." We must grasp and realize the blessed fact that the rightful King of the world is returning soon, and shall have His own again; that He shall put down that old usurper, the devil, and take away the curse from off the earth. Let us cultivate the habit of daily looking forward to the resurrection of the dead, the gathering together of the saints, the restitution of all things, the banishment of sorrow and sin, and the re-establishment of a new kingdom, of which the rule shall be righteousness. Anything may be borne, I believe, even hell itself, if men only have a hope of an end. All the sorrows of this world will be cheerfully borne, and we shall work on with a light heart, if we thoroughly believe that Christ is coming again without sin unto salvation.

After all, one principal cause of human unhappiness is the indulgence of unwarrantable expectations from anybody or anything here below. I ask my younger readers especially to remember THAT. The less we expect from statesmen, philosophers, men of money, men of science, ay, even from visible Churches, the happier we shall be. He that leans on staffs like these will find them pierce his hand. He that drinks only of these fountains shall thirst again. Let us learn to fix our chief hopes on the second coming of Christ, and work, and watch, and wait confidently, like those who wait for the morning, and know for a certainty that in the time appointed by the Father, the Sun of Righteousness will arise, with healing on His wings. Then, and then only, we shall not be disappointed.

So much for the fourth and last look to Jesus. We ought to look habitually to His second personal coming, as the hope of the Church and world. He that looks at the cross of Christ is a wise man; he that looks at the intercession and example is wiser still; but he that lives looking at all four objects,-the death, the priesthood, the pattern, the second advent of Jesus,-he is the wisest of all.

(a) And now let me wind up all by offering a word of friendly advice to all into whose hands this paper may fall. I offer it in all affection as one who longs to help you in the right way, who desires to promote in your heart a healthy, vigorous, everyday Christianity, and would gladly guard you against mistakes.

Our greatest poet truly says, "We know what we are; but we know not what we may be." All before us is dark and uncertain, and mercifully kept from our eyes. I cannot tell you where the lot of many of my readers may be finally cast on earth, or what they may be called to do and bear before the end comes. But one thing I say confidently,-let the keynote of your Christianity, in every quarter of the globe, be the phrase of my text,- "Looking to Jesus," Jesus dying, Jesus interceding, Jesus the example, Jesus coming again. Fix your eyes firmly on Him if you would so run as to obtain. Value the pure and reformed branch of Christ's Church, to which you belong, and all her many privileges. Love her services. Labour for her peace. Contend for her prosperity. But for your own personal religion, the salvation of your own soul, take care that your ruling idea is, "Looking to Jesus."

(b) Together with friendly advice, let me offer a friendly warning. Beware, if you love life, beware of a Christless religion. A watch without a mainspring, a steam engine without a fire, a solar system without the sun,-all these are but faint and feeble images of the utter uselessness of a religion without Christ.

And next to a Christless religion, beware of a religion in which Christ is not the first, foremost, chief, principal object,-the very Alpha in the alphabet of your faith. He that enters upon a vast series of arithmetical calculations, requiring weeks and months of brain-exhausting toil, he knows well that his labour will be all in vain, and his conclusions faulty, if a single figure is wrong in his first line. And he that does not give Christ His rightful place and office in the beginning of his religion, must not be surprised if he never knows anything of joy and peace in believing, and goes cheerless and comfortless on his way to heaven, with "all the voyage of life bound in shallows and in misery."

(c) Finally, may I not say to all, both old and young, with this great text in view, that we shall do well to aim at greater SIMPLICITY in our own personal religion.

The early Christians lacked many privileges and advantages that we enjoy. They had no printed books. They worshipped God in dens and caves and upper chambers, had few and simple ecclesiastical garments, and often received the Lord's Supper in vessels of wood, and not of silver or gold. They had little money, no church endowments, no universities. Their creeds were short. Their theological definitions were scanty and few. But what they knew they knew well. They were men of one book. They knew Whom they believed. If they had wooden communion vessels, they had golden ministers and teachers. They "looked to Jesus" and realized intensely the personality of Jesus. For Jesus they lived, and worked, and died. But what are we doing? And where are we in the nineteenth century? And what deliverance are we working on earth? With all our countless advantages, our grand old cathedrals, our splendid libraries, our accurate definitions, our

elaborate liturgies, our civil liberties, our religious societies, our numerous facilities, we may well doubt whether we are making such a mark on the world as Clement and Justin Martyr, and their companions, made 1700 years ago.

I know we cannot put the clock back, and return to the A B C of early Christianity. But one thing we can do: we can grasp more firmly, with every returning Christmas, the grand old primeval principles around which our modern Christianity has clustered, and swelled, and grown to its present proportions. Such a principle is that laid down in our text, "Looking unto Jesus." Then let us covenant with ourselves, that for the time to come we will try to run our race, fight our battles, fill our position, serve our generation, like men who are ever "looking to Jesus." So looking while we live, we shall see face to face when we die. And then when the last great Christmas gathering takes place, we shall joyfully exchange faith for sight, see as we have been seen, and know as we have been known.

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Chapter 51

Many shall come

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

"Many Shall Come."

"Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."- Matthew 8:11. The words of Scripture which head this page were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. You may take them either as a prophecy or as a promise. In either point of view they are deeply interesting, and contain much food for thought. Take the words as a prophecy, and remember that they are sure to be fulfilled. The Bible contains many predictions of things most unlikely and improbable, which have yet proved true. Was it not said of Ishmael, the father of the Arabian race, that he was to be "a wild man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him?" (Genesis 16:12). We see the fulfilment of those words at this very day, when we look at the tribes in the Sudan, or observe the ways of the Bedouins. Was it not said of Egypt that it was finally to become "the basest of kingdoms," and its inhabitants a people who could neither govern themselves nor be governed? (Ezekiel 29:15). We see the fulfilment of those words at this very day along the whole valley of the Nile, and every statesman in Europe knows it to his sorrow. It will be just the same with the prophecy before our eyes. "Many shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

Take the words as a promise. It was spoken for the encouragement of the Apostles, and of all Christian ministers and teachers down to the present day. We are often tempted to think that preaching, and teaching, and visiting, and trying to bring souls to Christ does no good, and that our labour is all thrown away. But here is the promise of One who "cannot lie," and never failed to keep His word. He cheers us with a gracious sentence. He would have us not faint or give way to despair. Whatever we may think, and however little success we may see, there is a Scripture before us which cannot be broken, "Many shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

I. We have first in these words, the number of those who shall be saved. Our Lord Jesus Christ declares that they shall be "many."

How strange that word "many" sounds! Will any be saved who are not born again, washed in Christ's blood, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost? Will any be saved (except infants) who have not repented of sin, believed on the Lord Jesus for forgiveness, and been made holy in heart? None, none, certainly none. If men and women can be saved without repentance, faith and holiness, we may as well throw the Bible away, and give up Christianity altogether.

But are there many people of this kind to be seen in the world? Alas! there are very few. The believers whom we see and know are "a little flock." "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). Few are to be seen in towns, and few in country parishes! Few among the rich, and few among the poor! Few among the old, and few among the young! Few among the learned, and few among the unlearned! Few in palaces, and few in cottages! It is an abiding sorrow with all true Christians that they meet so few with whom they can pray, and praise, and read the Bible, and talk of spiritual things. They often feel to stand alone. Many are the people who never go to any place of worship from the first day of January to the last day of December, and seem to live without God in the world. Few are the communicants in any congregation-a mere handful compared to those who never go to the Lord's table at all. Few are the men and women who do anything for the cause of Christ upon earth, or appear to care whether those around them are lost or saved. Can any one deny these things? Impossible! Yet here is our Lord Jesus Christ saying, "Many shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

Now, why did our Lord say so? He never made a mistake, and all that He says is true. Let me try to throw some light on this question.

(a) There shall be "many" when all are gathered together who have died in the Lord, from Abel, the first saint, down to the last who is found alive when the trumpet sounds, and the resurrection takes place. They shall be a "multitude, which no man can number" (Revelation 7:9).

(b) There shall be "many" when all the infants who died before they knew good from evil, or their right hand from their left, are called from their little graves, and assembled. Few, probably, are aware what an enormous proportion of children never live for a year! "They shall be a multitude which no man can number."

(c) There shall be "many" when all the believers of every name, and nation, and people, and tongue-the Old Testament saints, like Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and the Prophets-the saints of the New Testament, like the Apostles-the saints among the primitive Christians, and the Reformers-when all these are brought together, they will be "a multitude which no man can number."

(d) There will be "many" when the true Christians are gathered together, who are now scattered over the face of the globe, and not known either by the Church or the world. There are not a few who belong to no congregation, and are not numbered in any list of communicants, though their names are in the Lamb's book of life. Some of them live and die in great neglected parishes unknown and unvisited. Some of them get hold of the truth by hearing the Gospel preached by missionaries at home or abroad; but the preacher has never known them, and they have never been formally enrolled in the list of converts. Some of them are soldiers and sailors, who stand alone in regiments and on board ship, and are not understood by their companions. There are myriads of such persons, I believe, who live the life of faith, and love Christ, and are known to the Lord, though not known by men. These also will make a large addition to the "multitude which no man can number."

The plain truth is, that the family of God will be found at last much larger than most of us suppose it is. We look at the things we see with our own eyes, and we forget how much there is going on in

the world, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, which our eyes never see at all. The inner life of the vast majority of all around us is a hidden thing, of which we know nothing. We do not think of the ages that are past, and the countless millions who are now "dust and ashes," though each in his turn fell asleep in Christ and was carried to heaven. No doubt it is perfectly true that "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13). It is fearful to think what an immense majority of all around us appear dead in sin, and utterly unprepared to meet God. But, for all that, we must not underrate the number of God's children. Even supposing they are in a minority, when judged by human estimate, they will still prove at last to be very many in the kingdom of glory, an enormous company, "a multitude which no man can number."

Is any reader of these pages disposed to laugh at religion, because those who profess it decidedly are few in number? Are you secretly inclined to despise those who read their Bibles, and make a conscience of keeping their Sundays holy, and trying to walk closely with God? Are you afraid of making a profession yourself, because you think there will be so few with you and so many against you, and you do not like to be singular, and stand alone? Alas! there have always been many like you! When Noah built the ark, there were few with him, and many mocked at him: but he was found to be in the right at last. When the Jews were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem after the return from Babylon, Sanballat and Tobiah scoffed at them, and said, "What do these feeble Jews?" When the Lord Jesus Christ left the world, only a hundred and twenty disciples met together in the upper chamber in Jerusalem, while the friends of the unbelieving Pharisees, and scribes, and priests were numbered by tens of thousands. But the disciples were right, and their enemies were wrong. When bloody Mary sat on the throne, and Latimer and Ridley were burnt at the stake, the friends of the Gospel seemed very few, and their enemies were a great majority. Yet the Reformers were right, and their enemies were wrong. Take care of what you are doing! Beware of judging vital Christianity by the small number of those who seem to profess it. You may have the crowd with you now, and the laugh may be on your side, but a day is coming when you will open your eyes with amazement, and find out, perhaps too late, that the very people whom you despised were not few, but many, a vast company, "a multitude which no man can number."

Is any reader of this paper disposed to be cast down and discouraged, because he loves Christ, and tries to serve Him, but finds himself almost entirely alone? Does your heart sometimes fail you, and your hands hang down, and your knees wax faint, because you so seldom meet anyone whom you can pray with, and praise with, and read with, and talk with about Christ, and open your heart to without fear? Do you ever mourn in secret for want of company? Well, you are only drinking the cup which many have drunk before you. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel, and David, and the Prophets, and Paul, and John, and the Apostles were all people who stood very much alone. Do you expect to fare better than them? Take comfort, and have faith. There is more grace in the world than you can see, and more Christians travelling towards heaven than you are aware of. Elijah thought he stood alone, when there were "seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal." Take comfort, and look forward. Your good time is coming. You will have plenty of company by-and-by. You will find many and not few in the kingdom of heaven-many to welcome you-many to rejoice and praise with-many with whom you will spend a blessed eternity. How pleasant it is to meet a single saint now for a few short hours! How it cheers and refreshes us, like snow in summer or sunshine after clouds! What, then,

will it be when we shall see an enormous company of saints, without a single unconverted sinner to spoil the harmony; all men and women of faith, and none unbelievers; all wheat and no chaff; "a multitude which no man can number!" Surely the "many" we shall see in heaven will make ample amends for the "few" that we now see upon earth.

II. We have, secondly, in our Lord Jesus Christ's words, the dwellings and position of those who shall be finally saved. It is written "that they shall come from the east and the west."

There can be little doubt that this expression is a proverbial one. It must not be taken literally, as if the saved were not to come from the north and south, but only from the rising and setting of the sun. We find the same expression in the 103rd Psalm, where it is said, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." The meaning is simply this: The saved shall come from different places-from distant places-and from places where you would have thought it most unlikely they would be found.

(a) They will not all have belonged to one church. There will be Episcopalians, and Presbyterians, and Independents, and Baptists, and Methodists, and Plymouth Brethren, and many other kinds of Christians whom I have neither space nor time to name. However much they may disagree and dispute now, they will have to agree at last. They will find to their amazement that the points upon which they were of one mind were a vast quantity, and the points on which they differed were very few. They will all be able to say with one heart, "Hallelujah! praise to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!" And they will all be able to reply with one voice, "Amen, amen!" The anthem in heaven, said good George Whitefield, will be to all eternity, "What hath God wrought!" The points of earthly disagreement will have dropped off, and melted like snow in spring. The common teaching of the Holy Ghost will stand out clear and plain before every eye in heaven. At length there will be one real "Holy Catholic Church," without spot or blemish or any such thing, without quarrelling, controversy, or dissension, all wheat and no tares, all sound members and none unsound.

(b) They will come from various countries in every part of the globe, from Greenland's icy mountains, and the scorching regions of the tropics, from India and Australia, from America and from China, from New Zealand and the islands of the Pacific Ocean, from Africa and from Mexico. Some will have laid their bones in solitary graves like Henry Martyn in Persia, with none to do them honour in their death. Some will have been buried at sea with a sailor's funeral. Some will have died the death of martyrs, and been burnt to ashes like our own Reformers. Some will have fallen victims to malignant climates, or heathen violence at missionary stations. And some will have died like Moses, in places where no human eye saw them. But they shall all come together, and meet again in the kingdom of heaven. It matters little where we are buried, and how we are buried, and in what kind of a grave. China is just as near to heaven as England is, and the sea shall give up her dead at the same moment as the land. Our coffin, and our funeral, and the burial service, and the long procession of mourners, are all matters of very secondary importance. The one point we should aim to make sure, from whatever place we may come, is to be amongst those who "shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

(c) They shall come from utterly different ranks, classes, and professions. Heaven will be a place for servants as well as masters, for maids as well as mistresses, for poor as well as rich, for the unlearned as well as the learned, for tenants as well as landlords, for subjects as well as rulers, for

the pauper as well as the queen. There is no royal road to heaven, and there will be no class distinctions when we get there. At length there will be perfect equality, perfect fraternity, and perfect freedom. It will matter nothing whether we had much money on earth, or none at all. The only question will be whether we have really repented of our sins, really believed on the Lord Jesus, and were really converted and sanctified people. There will be no preference given to those who have come from monasteries, nunneries, or hermits' caves.

It is very likely that those who have done their duty in that state of life to which God called them, and have carried Christ's cross in the Army or the Navy, in Parliament or at the Bar, in the bank or the merchant's office, behind the counter or at the bottom of a coal-pit, will be found in the first rank in the kingdom of heaven. It is not necessary to wear a peculiar dress, or to put on an austere countenance, and to retire from the world, in order to sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

(d) They shall come from most unlikely places, and from positions in which you would have thought the seed of eternal life could never have grown up in a soul. Saul, the young Pharisee, came from the feet of Gamaliel, and from persecuting Christians, and rose to be the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who turned the world upside down. Daniel lived in Babylon, and served God faithfully in the midst of idolatry and heathenism. Peter was once a fisherman on the sea of Galilee. Matthew was a public tax-gatherer, who spent his days in receiving custom. Luther and Latimer began life as devoted Papists, and ended life as devoted Protestants. John Bunyan, the author of "Pilgrim's Progress," was once a careless, thoughtless, swearing, bell-ringing young man in a country village. George Whitefield served in a public house at Gloucester, and spent his early days in cleaning pots and carrying out beer. John Newton, the author of well-known hymns and letters, was once the captain of a slave-ship on the coasts of Africa, and saw no harm in buying and selling human flesh and blood. All these truly "came from east and west," and seemed at one time in their lives the most unlikely people in the world to come to Christ, and "sit down in the kingdom of heaven." But they did come unmistakably, and they are an everlasting proof that our Lord Jesus Christ's words are strictly true. Men and women may "come from the east and west," and yet be found at last in the kingdom of eternal happiness and glory.

Let us learn never to despair of the salvation of any one as long as he lives. Fathers ought never to despair of prodigal sons. Mothers ought never to despair of self-willed, headstrong daughters. Husbands should never despair of wives, nor wives of husbands. There is nothing impossible with God. The arm of grace is very long, and can reach those who seem very far off. The Holy Ghost can change any heart. The blood of Christ can cleanse away any sin. Let us pray on, and hope on, for others, however unlikely their salvation may appear to be at present. We shall see many in heaven whom we never expected to see there. The last may yet prove first, and the first last. The famous Grimshaw, the Apostle of Yorkshire, when he died, left his only son unconverted, careless, thoughtless, and indifferent to religion. The day came when the young man's heart was changed, and he walked in the steps of his father. And when he lay upon his deathbed, one of his last words was, "What will my old father say when he sees me in heaven?"

Let us learn not to sorrow "as those who have no hope," when we part from friends who are true Christians, and part, perhaps, forever. The separations and goodbyes of this world are probably some of its most painful things. When the family circle is broken up, when the old nest begins to lose its inmates, when the young man sets sail for Australia, New Zealand, or the Fiji Islands, with

no hope of returning for ten or twelve years-when these things take place, it is a sore trial to flesh and blood. I have witnessed scenes on the landing-stage at Liverpool, when the great steamships are about to start for America, which might bring tears to the eyes of the most cold-hearted stranger. The partings of this world are terrible things; but true faith in Christ and the resurrection to eternal life through Him, takes the sting out of the worst of partings. It enables a believer to look beyond the things seen to the things unseen, to the coming of the Saviour, and our gathering together unto Him. Yes, it is a pleasant thing to remember, as the great ship moves away, and we wave our last adieux, "it is but a little time, and we shall see them all again to part no more." God's people shall come together from east and west, and we shall all meet at last "in the kingdom of heaven," and go out no more.

III. We have, thirdly, in our Lord Jesus Christ's words, the future portion and reward of those who shall be finally saved. It is written, "they shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

That expression, "sit down," is a very pleasant and comfortable one to my mind. Let us sift it, and examine it, and see what it contains. In the judgement day believers shall STAND with boldness at the right hand of Christ, and say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33-34). But when the judgement is passed and over, and the eternal kingdom begins, they shall "SIT DOWN."

(a) Sitting down implies a sense of confidence and being at home. If we were in the presence of a stern judge, or of a king clothed in awful majesty, we should not dare to sit down. But there will be nothing to make believers afraid in the kingdom of heaven. The sins of their past lives will not make them tremble and feel alarmed. However many, however great, and however black, they will all have been washed away in Christ's precious blood, and not one spot will remain. Completely justified, completely absolved, completely forgiven, completely "accepted in the Beloved," they will be counted righteous before God for the sake of Him who was made sin for us, though He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). Though the sins of their lives "were as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; and though red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Their sins will be "remembered no more," "sought for, and not found, …. blotted out as a thick cloud," "cast behind God's back," "plunged in the depths of the sea." Believers will need no purgatory after they die. It is ignorance and unbelief to think so. Once joined to Christ by faith, they are complete in the sight of God the Father, and even the perfect angels shall see no spot in them. Surely they may well sit down; and feel at home! They may remember all the sins of their past lives, and be humbled at the recollection of them. But those sins will not make them afraid.

The sense of daily failure, weakness, imperfection, and inward conflict, will no longer mar their peace. At last their sanctification will be completed. The war within shall come to a perfect end. Their old besetting sins and infirmities will have dropped off, and melted away. At length they shall be able to serve God without weariness, and attend on Him without distraction, and not be obliged to cry continually, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Who can tell the blessedness of all this while we are yet in the body? Here in this world we do not realise the completeness of our justification, and "groan, being burdened" by reason of our imperfect sanctification. Our best endeavours after holiness are accompanied by a sorrowful consciousness of daily failure. But when "the old man" is at last entirely dead, and the

flesh no longer lusts against the spirit,-when there is an end of indwelling sin, and the world and the devil can no longer tempt us, then at last we shall understand what God has prepared for them that love Him. We shall "sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

(b) But this is not all. Sitting down implies rest, and a complete cessation of work, and toil, and conflict. There is a rest that remaineth for the people of God. Here in this life we are never still. The Word of God tells us that the Christian must "walk," and "run," and "work," and "labour," and "fight," and "groan," and "carry the cross," and wear the "armour," and stand like a sentinel on guard in an enemy's land. It is not till we enter the kingdom of heaven that we must expect to "sit down." Work for Christ, no doubt, is pleasant, and even in this life brings a rich reward-the reward of a happy conscience, a reward which the mere politician, or merchant, or man of pleasure, can never reap, because they only seek a corruptible crown. "They that drink of these waters shall thirst again." But even the Christian's work is exhausting to flesh and blood; and so long as we dwell in a mortal body, work and weariness will go together. The very sight of sin in others, which we cannot check, is a daily trial to our souls. No doubt the fight of faith is a "good fight," but there never can be fighting without wounds, and pain, and fatigue. The very armour the Christian is bid to put on is heavy. The helmet and the breastplate, the shield and the sword, without which we cannot overcome the devil, can never be worn without constant exertion. Surely it will be a blessed time when our enemies will all be slain, and we can lay aside our armour in safety, and "sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

In the meantime let us never forget that the time is short. Even the devil knows that, and has great wrath because he has but a short time (Revelation 12:12). Let us work on, and fight on, in full assurance of hope, with the blessed recollection that it shall not be for ever. When the great battle of Waterloo was raging, and the event of the day seemed to tremble in the balance, it is said that the Duke of Wellington kept calmly turning his eyes to the left, in the confident expectation that in a little time his Prussian allies would appear, and his victory would be sure. Let this kind of hope animate our souls when we are bearing the labour and heat of the day. Our King is soon coming, and when he comes we shall "sit down," and toil and fight no more.

IV. The fourth and last thing which the words of our Lord Jesus Christ contain is, the company which those who are finally saved shall enjoy for ever.

Now, company is one great secret of happiness. Man is by nature a social being. It is a rare exception indeed to find any one who likes to be always alone. A palace filled with untold wealth and luxuries, would at last be little better than a prison if we lived in it entirely alone. A cottage with congenial companions is a happier dwelling-place than a royal castle with no one to speak to, no one to listen to, no one to exchange mind with, nothing to converse with, but one's own poor heart. We all want some one to live with and love, and the dweller in a solitary island, like Robinson Crusoe, is never satisfied, if he is a real man.

Our blessed Lord, who formed man out of the dust of the earth, and made him what he is, knows that perfectly well. When, therefore, it describes the future portion of His believing people, He takes care to tell us what kind of company they shall have in the kingdom of heaven. He says that the saved shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" in the world to come.

Now, what does that expression mean? Let us look at it, analyse it, and see what it contains.

The companions of the saved in the eternal world shall be all the believers who have ever lived on earth from the beginning to the end. The old soldiers, the old pilgrims, the old servants of Christ, the old members of Christ's family-all, in a word, who have lived by faith and served Christ, and walked with God, these shall form the company in which the saved shall spend an endless existence.

They shall see all the old worthies of whom they read in the Old Testament, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and the holy kings, who looked forward to the coming of Christ, but died without seeing Him. They shall see the New Testament saints, the Apostles, and the holy men and women who saw Christ face to face. They shall see the early fathers who died for the truth, and were thrown to the lions, or beheaded under the persecution of the Roman emperors. They shall see the gallant Reformers who revived the Gospel out of the dust on the Continent, and unstopped the wells of living water which Rome had filled up with rubbish.

They shall see the blessed martyrs of our own land, who brought about the glorious Protestant Reformation, and gave the Bible to our countrymen in the English tongue, and cheerfully died at the stake for the cause of the Gospel. They shall see the holy men of the eighteenth century, Whitefield, and Wesley, Romaine, and their companions, who, in the face of bitter opposition, revived religion in the Church of England. Above all, they shall see their own friends who fell asleep in Christ, and whom they once followed to their graves with many tears, and see them with the comfortable thought that they shall part no more. Surely the thought of such companionship as this should cheer us as we travel on the narrow way! It is a good thing yet to come.

There is little happiness in company unless there is entire sympathy and congeniality of taste. It is one of the heaviest trials of a true Christian upon earth that he meets so few people who are entirely of one mind with him about religion. How often in society he finds himself obliged to hold his tongue and say nothing, and to hear and see many things which make his heart ache, and send him back to his own home heavy and depressed! It is a rare privilege to meet two or three occasionally to whom he can open his heart, and with whom he can speak freely, without fear of giving offence or being misunderstood. But there will be an end of this state of things in the kingdom of heaven. Those who are saved will find none there who have not been led by the same Spirit, and gone through the same experience as themselves. There will not be a man or woman there who has not felt deeply the burden of sin, mourned over it, confessed it, fought with it, and tried to crucify it. There will not be a man or woman there who has not fled to Christ by faith, cast the whole weight of his soul upon Him, and rejoiced in Him as his Redeemer. There will not be a man or woman there who has not delighted in the Word of God, poured out his soul in prayer at the throne of grace, and striven to live a holy life. In a word, there will be none there who have not known something of repentance toward God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and holiness of life and conversation. It is pleasant to meet a few people of this kind on earth as we travel along the narrow way that leads to heaven. It refreshes us like a brook by the way, and is like a little peep within the veil. But what will it be when we see "a multitude, which no man can number," of saints completely delivered from all sin, and not one single unconverted person among them to mar the harmony!

What shall it be when we shall meet our own believing friends once more, at last made perfect, and find that their besetting sins, and our own besetting sins, have all passed away, and there is

nothing left in us but grace without corruption! Yet all this is to come when we pass within the veil. The inhabitants are not to be a mixed multitude unable to understand one another. They are all to be of one heart and of one mind. We are not to sit down amidst ignorant, godless, and unconverted people, but "with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Heaven itself would be no heaven if all sorts of characters got there, as some people falsely teach. There could be no order and no happiness in such a heaven. There must be meetness for "the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12).

(1) And now, reader, before you lay down this paper, ask yourself whether you shall be found among the many who shall "sit down in the kingdom of heaven." The question demands an answer. I charge you to give your soul no rest until you can answer it in a satisfactory way. Time is passing quickly away, and the world is growing old. The signs of the times ought to set us all thinking. "The distress of nations with perplexity" seems to increase every year. The wisdom of statesmen seems utterly unable to prevent wars and confusion in every direction. The progress of art, and science, and civilisation appear entirely powerless to prevent the existence of enormous moral evils. Nothing will ever cure the diseases of human nature but the return of the Great Physician, the Prince of Peace, the second coming of Jesus Christ Himself. And when He comes, shall you be found among the "many" who shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven?"

Why should you not be found among the many? I know no reason except your own want of will, or your own indolence and laziness, or your own determined love of sin and the world. An open door is before you: why not enter into it? The Lord Jesus Christ is able and ready to save you: why not commit your soul to Him, and lay hold on the hand which He holds out from heaven? I repeat that I know no reason why you should not be found amongst the "many" at the last day.

You fancy there is time enough, and no need of hurry or immediate decision. You had better take care what you are saying. It is not given to all men and women to live to threescore years and ten, and then die quietly in their beds. The notice to quit this mortal body sometimes comes very suddenly, and men and women are summoned to go forth in a moment into the unseen world. You had better use time while you have it, and not make shipwreck on that miserable rock, "a convenient season."

Are you afraid that people will laugh at you, and mock you, if you begin to care for your soul, and to seek a place in the kingdom of heaven? Cast the cowardly feeling behind your back, and resolve never to be ashamed of religion. Alas! Where are too many who will find at last that they were laughed out of heaven, and laughed into hell. Fear not the reproach of man, who at most can only injure your body. Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Lay hold boldly on Christ, and He will give you the victory over all that you now fear. He that enabled the Apostle Peter, who once ran away and denied his Master, to stand firm as a rock before the Jewish council, and at length to die for the Gospel, the Lord I say is still living at the right hand of God, and is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him, and to make you more than conqueror.

Do you think that you will not be happy if you seek to have your soul saved, and to sit down in the kingdom of heaven? Cast aside the unworthy thought as a lying suggestion of the devil. There are no people so truly happy as true Christians. Whatever a sneering world may please to say, they

have meat to eat which the world knows not, and inward comforts which the world cannot understand. There is no gloominess in true religion, and no religion in looking gloomy, sour, or austere. In spite of cross and conflict, the true Christian has an inward peace compared to which the world has nothing to give; for it is a peace which trouble, bereavement, sickness, and death itself cannot take away. The words of the Master are strictly true, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). If men and women want to be truly happy, they should strive to be amongst those who "shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven."

(2) Last, but not least, let me wind up all by offering a word of exhortation and encouragement to those who have reason to hope that they are among the many who shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

Would you have much joy and peace in believing? Try to do all the good you can in the world. There is always much to be done, and few to do it. There are always many living and dying in ignorance and sin, and no one goes near them, and tries to save their souls. We live in days when there is much talk about High Churchism, and Low Churchism, and Broad Churchism, and Ritualism, and Rationalism, and Scepticism, but little real Christian work done to mend the evils of the times! If all the communicants in all our churches laid themselves out to go among those who are without God in the world, with the Bible in their hands, and Christ-like loving sympathy in their hearts, they would soon be far happier than they are now, and the face of society would soon be changed. Idleness is one great cause of the low spirits of which so many complain. Too many, far too many Christians, seem quite content to go to heaven alone, and to care nothing about bringing others into the kingdom of God.

If you try to do good in the right way, you never need doubt that good will be done. Many a Sunday school teacher comes home on Sunday night with a heavy heart, and fancies that his or her labour is all in vain. Many a visitor returns from his rounds, and thinks he is producing no effect. Many a minister comes down from his pulpit desponding and cast down, imagining that his preaching is to no purpose. But all this is disgraceful unbelief. There is often far more going on in hearts and consciences than we see.

He that "goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed; he shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalms 126:6, R.V.). There are more being converted and saved than we suppose. "Many shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven" whom we never expected to see there. Let us read on, and pray on, and visit on, and speak on, and tell of Christ to every one whom we can get at. If we are only "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," we shall find, to our amazement, that our labour was not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58).

But if we try to do good, we must always cultivate patience. We cannot have two heavens, a heaven here and a heaven hereafter. The battle is not yet over. The harvest-time is not yet come. The devil is not yet bound. The time when our Lord's promise shall be fulfilled is not yet arrived. But it will arrive before long. When the late Queen Victoria at the end of the Crimean war came forward in front of the Horse Guards, and with her own royal hands gave the Victoria Cross to the gallant soldiers who had earned it, that public honour made rich amends for all that those soldiers had gone through. Balaclava, and Inkerman, and the hardships of the trenches were all forgotten for the time, and seemed comparatively small things. What, then, will be the joy when the Captain

of our salvation shall gather His faithful soldiers round Him, and give to each one a crown of glory that fadeth not away! Surely we may well wait in patience for that day. It is coming, and will surely come at last. Remembering that day, let us cast behind us doubts and unbelief, and set our faces steadily towards Jerusalem. "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." Not one word of the blessed promise before us shall fail "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

"Be not weary," toiling Christian,

Good the Master thou dost serve;

Let no disappointment move thee,

From thy service never swerve,

Sow in hope, nor cease thy sowing,

Lack not patience, faith, or prayer.

Seed-time passeth,-harvest hasteneth,-

Precious sheaves thou then shalt bear.

"Be not weary," praying Christian;

Open is Thy Father's ear

To the fervent supplication,

And the agonising prayer.

Prayer the Holy Ghost begetteth,

Be it words, or groans, or tears,

Is the prayer that's always answered:

Banish then thy doubts and fears.

"Be not weary," suffering Christian;

Scourged is each adopted child,

Else would grow, in sad profusion,

Nature's fruit, perverse and wild:

Chastening's needful for the spirit,

Though 'tis painful for the flesh,

God designs a blessing for thee ;-

Let this thought thy soul refresh.

"Be not weary," tempted Christian,

Sin can only lure on earth;

Faith is tried by sore temptation,

'Tis the furnace proves its worth:

Bounds are set unto the tempter,

Which beyond he cannot go;

Battle on, on God relying,

Faith will overcome the foe.

"Be not weary," weeping Christian,

Tears endure but for the night;

Joy, deep joy, thy spirit greeting,

Will return with morning's light.

Every tear thou shedd'st is numbered

In the register above;

Heaven is tearless, sweet the prospect:-

Sighless, tearless land of love!

"Be not weary," hoping Christian;

Though the vision tarry long,

Hope will bring the blessing nearer,

Change thy sorrow into song;

Naught shall press thy spirit downwards

If thy hopes all brightly shine:

Hold thy hope, whate'er thou losest,-

Living, precious hopes are thine!

"Be not weary," troubled Christian,

Rest remains for thee on high;

Dwell upon the untold glory

Of thy future home of joy:

There, nor sin, nor sorrow enters,-

There thy soul, attuned to praise,

Shall, in strains of heavenly fulness,

Songs of happy triumph raise.

"Be not weary," loving Christian,

In this heavenly grace abound;

Jesus, well thou knowest, loved thee,

Though in mad rebellion found:

Drink, drink deeply of His spirit,-

Jesus loves both great and small;

Nature loves but what is lovely,-

Grace embraceth one and all.

Christian, thus in grace unwearied

Pass thy sojourn here below,

Spurn lukewarmness, let thy bosom

Ever with true fervour glow!

Look to Christ, thy bright exemplar,

Copy Him in all His ways,

Let thy life and conversation

Tell to thy Redeemer's praise.

Chapter 52

Morning without clouds

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. THE MORNING WITHOUT CLOUDS.

"He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow."- 2 Samuel 23:4-5. THE text which heads this page is taken from a chapter which ought to be very interesting to every Christian. It begins with the touching expression, "These be the last words of David."

Whether that means, "these are the last words which David ever spoke by inspiration as a Psalmist," or "these are among the last sayings of David before his death," signifies little. In either point of view, the phrase suggests many thoughts.

It contains the experience of an old servant of God who had many ups and downs in his life. It is the old soldier remembering his campaigns. It is the old traveller looking back on his journeys.

I. Let us first consider David's humbling confession.

He looks forward with a prophetic eye to the future coming of the Messiah, the promised Saviour, the seed of Abraham, and the seed of David. He looks forward to the advent of a glorious kingdom in which there shall be no wickedness, and righteousness shall be the universal character of all the subjects. He looks forward to the final gathering of a perfect family in which there shall be no unsound members, no defects, no sin, no sorrow, no deaths, no tears. And he says, the light of that kingdom shall be " as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds."

But then he turns to his own family, and sorrowfully says, "My house is not so with God." It is not perfect, it is not free from sin, and it has blots and blemishes of many kinds. It has cost me many tears. It is not so as I could wish, and so as I have vainly tried to make it.

Poor David might well say this! If ever there was a man whose house was full of trials, and whose life was full of sorrows, that man was David. Trials from the envy of his own brethren,-trials from the unjust persecution of Saul,-trials from his own servants, such as Joab and Ahithophel,-trials from a wife, even that Michal who once loved him so much,-trials from his children, such as Absalom, Amnon, and Adonijah,-trials from his own subjects, who at one time forgot all he had done, and drove him out of Jerusalem by rebellion,-trials of all kinds, wave upon wave, were continually breaking on David to the very end of his days. Some of the worst of these trials, no

doubt, were the just consequences of his own sins, and the wise chastisement of a loving Father. But we must have hard hearts if we do not feel that David was indeed "a man of sorrows."

But is not this the experience of many of God's noblest saints and dearest children? What careful reader of the Bible can fail to see that Adam, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel were all men of many sorrows, and that those sorrows chiefly arose out of their own homes?

The plain truth is that home trials are one of the many means by which God sanctifies and purifies His believing people. By them He keeps us humble. By them He draws us to Himself. By them He sends us to our Bibles. By them He teaches us to pray. By them He shows us our need of Christ. By them He weans us from the world. By them He prepares us for "a city which hath foundations," in which there will be no disappointments, no tears, and no sin. It is no special mark of God's favour when Christians have no trials. They are spiritual medicines, which poor fallen human nature absolutely needs. King Solomon's course was one of unbroken peace and prosperity. But it may well be doubted whether this was good for his soul.

Before we leave this part of our subject, let us learn some practical lessons.

(a) Let us learn that parents cannot give grace to their children, or masters to their servants. We may use all means, but we cannot command success. We may teach, but we cannot convert. We may show those around us the bread and water of life, but we cannot make them eat and drink it. We may point out the way to eternal life, but we cannot make others walk in it. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Life is that one thing which the cleverest man of science cannot create or impart. It comes "not of blood, nor of the will of man" (John 1:13). To give life is the grand prerogative of God.

(b) Let us learn not to expect too much from anybody or anything in this fallen world. One great secret of unhappiness is the habit of indulging in exaggerated expectations. From money, from marriage, from business, from houses, from children, from worldly honours, from political success, men are constantly expecting what they never find; and the great majority die disappointed. Happy is he who has learned to say at all times, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; my expectation is from Him" (Psalms 62:5).

(c) Let us learn not to be surprised or fret when trials come. It is a wise saying of Job, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7) Some, no doubt, have a larger cup of sorrows to drink than others. But few live long without troubles or cares of some kind. The greater our affections the deeper are our afflictions, and the more we love the more we have to weep. The only certain thing to be predicted about the babe lying in his cradle is this-if he grows up he will have many troubles, and at last he will die.

(d) Let us learn, lastly, that God knows far better than we do what is the best time for taking away from us those whom we love. The deaths of some of David's children were painfully remarkable, both as to age, manner, and circumstances. When David's little infant lay sick, David thought he would have liked the child to live, and he fasted and mourned till all was over. Yet, when the last breath was drawn, he said, with strong assurance of seeing the child again, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). But when, on the contrary, Absalom died in battle-Absalom the beautiful-Absalom the darling of his heart-but Absalom who died in open sin

against God and his father, what did David say then? Hear his hopeless cry, "O Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee!" (2 Samuel 18:33). Alas! we none of us know when it is best for ourselves, our children, and our friends to die. We should pray to be able to say, "My times are in Thy hands," let it be when Thou wilt, where Thou wilt, and how Thou wilt (Psalms 31:15).

II. Let us consider, secondly, what was the source of David's present comfort in life. He says, "Though my house is not as I could wish, and is the cause of much sorrow, God has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." And then he adds, "this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

Now this word "covenant" is a deep and mysterious thing, when applied to anything that God does. We can understand what a covenant is between man and man. It is an agreement between two persons, by which they bind themselves to fulfil certain conditions and do certain things. But who can fully understand a covenant made by the Eternal God? It is something far above us and out of sight. It is a phrase by which He is graciously pleased to accommodate Himself to our poor, weak faculties, but at the best we can only grasp a little of it.

The covenant of God to which David refers as his comfort must mean that everlasting agreement or counsel between the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity which has existed from all eternity for the benefit of all the living members of Christ.

It is a mysterious and ineffable arrangement whereby all things necessary for the salvation of our souls, our present peace, and our final glory, are fully and completely provided, and all this by the joint work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The redeeming work of God the Son by dying as our Substitute on the cross-the drawing work of God the Father by choosing and drawing us to the Son-and the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost in awakening, quickening, and renewing our fallen nature-are all contained in this covenant, besides everything that the soul of the believer needs between grace and glory.

Of this covenant, the Second Person of the Trinity is the Mediator (Hebrews 12:24). Through Him all the blessings and privileges of the covenant are conveyed to every one of His believing members. And when the Bible speaks of God making a covenant with man, as in the words of David, it means with man in Christ as a member and part of the Son. They are His mystical body, and He is their Head, and through the Head all the blessings of the eternal covenant are conveyed to the body. Christ, in one word, is the Surety of the covenant, and through Him believers receive its benefits. This is the great covenant, which David had in view.

True Christians would do well to think about this covenant, remember it, and roll the burden of their souls upon it far more than they do. There is unspeakable consolation in the thought that the salvation of our souls has been provided for from all eternity, and is not a mere affair of yesterday. Our names have long been in the Lamb's book of life. Our pardon and peace of conscience through Christ's blood, our strength for duty, our comfort in trial, our power to fight Christ's battles, were all arranged for us from endless ages, and long before we were born. Here upon earth we pray, and read, and fight, and struggle and groan, and weep, and are often sore let and hindered in our journey. But we ought to remember that an Almighty eye has long been upon us, and that we have been the subjects of Divine provision though we knew it not.

Above all, Christians should never forget that the everlasting covenant is "ordered in all things and sure." The least things in our daily life are working together for good, though we may not see it at the time. The very hairs of our head are all numbered, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. There is no luck or chance in anything that happens to us. The least events in our life are parts of an everlasting scheme or plan in which God has foreseen and arranged everything for the good of our souls.

Let us all try to cultivate the habit of remembering the everlasting covenant. It is a doctrine full of strong consolation, if it is properly used. It was not meant to destroy our responsibility. It is widely different from Mahommedan fatalism. It is specially intended to be a refreshing cordial for practical use in a world full of sorrow and trial. We ought to remember, amid the many sorrows and disappointments of life, that "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter." There is a meaning, and a "needs be" in every bitter cup that we have to drink, and a wise cause for every loss and bereavement under which we mourn.

After all, how little we know? We are like children who look at a half-finished building, and have not the least idea what it will look like when it is completed. They see masses of stone, and brick, and rubbish, and timber, and mortar, and scaffolding, and dirt, and all in apparent confusion. But the architect who designed the building sees order in all, and quietly looks forward with joy to the day when the whole building will be finished, and the scaffolding removed and taken away. It is even so with us. We cannot grasp the meaning of many a providence in our lives, and are tempted to think that all around us is confusion. But we should try to remember that the great Architect in heaven is always doing wisely and well, and that we are always being "led by the right way to a city of habitation" (Psalms 107:7). The resurrection morning will explain all. It is a quaint but wise saying of an old divine, that "true faith has bright eyes, and can see even in the dark."

It is recorded of Barnard Gilpin, a Reformer who lived in the days of the Marian martyrdoms, and was called the Apostle of the North, that he was famous for never murmuring or complaining whatever happened to him. In the worst and blackest times he used to be always saying, "It is all in God's everlasting covenant, and must be for good." Towards the close of Queen Mary's reign he was suddenly summoned to come up from Durham to London, to be tried for heresy, and in all probability, like Ridley and Latimer, to be burned. The good man quietly obeyed the summons, and said to his mourning friends, "It is all in the covenant, and must be for good." On his journey from Durham to London his horse fell, and his leg was broken, and he was laid up at a roadside inn. Once more he was asked, "What do you think of this?" Again he replied, "It is all in the covenant, and must be for good." And so it turned out. Weeks and weeks passed away before his leg was healed, and he was able to resume his journey. But during those weeks the unhappy Queen Mary died, the persecutions were stopped, and the worthy old Reformer returned to his northern home rejoicing. "Did I not tell you," he said to his friends, "that all was working together for good?"

Well would it be for us if we had something of Barnard Gilpin's faith, and could make practical use of the everlasting covenant as he did. Happy is the Christian who can say from his heart these words,-"I know not the way I am going, But well do I know my Guide;

With a childlike trust I give my hand

To the mighty Friend by my side.

The only thing that I say to Him,

As He takes it, is-'Hold it fast

Suffer me not to lose my way,

And bring me home at last."

III. Let us consider, lastly, what was king David's hope for the future. That hope, beyond doubt, was the glorious advent of the Messiah at the end of the world, and the setting up of a kingdom of righteousness at the final restitution of all things.

Of course king David's views of this kingdom were dim and vague compared to those, which are within reach of every intelligent reader of the New Testament. He was not ignorant of the coming of Messiah to suffer, for he speaks of it in the twenty-second Psalm. But he saw far behind it the coming of Messiah to reign, and his eager faith overleaped the interval between the two Advents. That his mind was fixed upon the promise, that the "seed of the woman should" one day completely "bruise the serpent's head," and that the curse should be taken off the earth, and the effects of Adam's fall completely removed, I feel no doubt at all. The Church of Christ would have done well if she had walked in David's steps, and given as much attention to the Second Advent as David did.

The figures and comparisons that David uses in speaking of the advent and future kingdom of the Messiah are singularly beautiful, and admirably fitted to exhibit the benefits which it will bring to the Church and the earth. The Second Advent of Christ shall be "as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Those words deserve a thousand thoughts. Who can look around him, and consider the state of the world in which we live, and not be obliged to confess that clouds and darkness are now on every side? "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain" (Romans 8:22). Look where we will we see confusion, quarrels, wars between nations, helplessness of statesmen, discontent and grumbling of the lower classes, excessive luxury among the rich, extreme poverty among the poor, intemperance, impurity, dishonesty, swindling, lying, cheating, covetousness, heathenism, superstition, formality among Christians, decay of vital religion-these are the things which we see continually over the whole globe, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. These are the things which defile the face of creation, and prove that the devil is "the prince of this world," and the kingdom of God is not yet come. These are clouds indeed, which often hide the sun from our eyes.

But there is a good time coming, which David saw far distant, when this state of things shall be completely changed. There is a kingdom coming, in which holiness shall be the rule, and sin shall have no place at all.

Who can look around him in his own neighbourhood, and fail to see within a mile of his own house that the consequences of sin lie heavily on earth, and that sorrow and trouble abound? Sickness, and pain, and death come to all classes, and spare none, neither rich nor poor. The young often die before the old, and the children before the parents. Bodily suffering of the most fearful description, and incurable disease, make the existence of many miserable. Widowhood, and childlessness, and solitariness, tempt many to feel weary of life, though everything which money

can obtain is within their reach. Family quarrels, and envies, and jealousies break up the peace of many a household, and are a worm at the root of many a rich man's happiness. Who can deny that all these things are to be seen on every side of us? There are many clouds now.

Will nothing end this state of things? Is creation to go on groaning and travailing forever after this fashion? Thanks be to God, the Second Advent of Christ supplies an answer to these questions. The Lord Jesus Christ has not yet finished His work on behalf of man. He will come again one day (and perhaps very soon) to set up a glorious kingdom, in which the consequences of sin shall have no place at all. It is a kingdom in which there shall be no pain and no disease, in which "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick" (Isaiah 33:24). It is a kingdom in which there shall be no partings, no moves, no changes, and no good-byes. It is a kingdom in which there shall be no deaths, no funerals, no tears, and no mourning worn. It is a kingdom in which there shall be no quarrels, no losses, no crosses, no disappointments, no wicked children, no bad servants, and no faithless friends. When the last trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, there will be a grand gathering together of all God's people, and when we awake up after our Lord's likeness we shall be satisfied (Psalms 17:15). Where is the Christian heart that does not long for this state of things to begin? Well may we take up the last prayer in the Book of Revelation, and often cry, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus."

(a) And now, have we troubles? Where is the man or woman on earth who can say, "I have none." Let us take them all to the Lord Jesus Christ. None can comfort like Him. He Who died on the cross to purchase forgiveness for our sins, is sitting at the right hand of God, with a heart full of love and sympathy. He knows what sorrow is, for He lived thirty-three years in this sinful world, and suffered Himself being tempted, and saw suffering every day. And He has not forgotten it. When He ascended into heaven, to sit at the right hand of the Father, He took a perfect human heart with Him. He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15). He can feel. Almost His last thought upon the cross was for His Own mother, and He cares for weeping and bereaved mothers still.

He would have us never forget that our departed friends in Christ are not lost, but only gone before. We shall see them again in the day of gathering together, for them that "sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thessalonians 4:14). We shall see them in renewed bodies, and know them again, but better, more beautiful, more happy than we ever saw them on earth. Best of all, we shall see them with the comfortable feeling that we meet to part no more.

(b) Have we troubles? Let us never forget the everlasting covenant to which old David clung to the end of his days. It is still in full force. It is not cancelled. It is the property of every believer in Jesus, whether rich or poor, just as much as it was the property of the son of Jesse. Let us never give way to a fretting, murmuring, complaining spirit. Let us firmly believe at the worst of times that every step in our lives is ordered by the Lord, with perfect wisdom and perfect love, and that we shall see it all at last. Let us not doubt that He is always doing all things well. He is good in giving, and equally good in taking away.

(c) Finally, have we troubles? Let us never forget that one of the best of remedies and most soothing medicines is to try to do good to others, and to be useful. Let us lay ourselves out to make the sorrow less and the joy greater in this sin-burdened world. There is always some good to be done within a few yards of our own doors. Let every Christian strive to do it, and to relieve

either bodies or minds.

"To comfort and to bless,

To find a balm for woe,

To tend the lone and fatherless,

Is angel's work below."

Selfish feeding on our own troubles, and lazy poring over our sorrows, are one secret of the melancholy misery in which many spend their lives. If we trust in Jesus Christ's blood, let us remember His example. He ever "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, as well as to give His life a ransom for many. Let us try to be like Him. Let us walk in the steps of the good Samaritan, and give help wherever help is really needed. Even a kind word spoken in season is often a mighty blessing. That Old Testament promise is not yet worn out: "Blessed is the man that provideth for the sick and needy; the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble" (Psalms 41:1, Prayer-book version).

Chapter 53

Never perish

A Tract by Rev. J. C. Ryle

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“NEVER PERISH.”

“THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH.” John 10:28.

READER,

There are two points in religion on which the teaching of the Bible is very plain and distinct. One of these points is the fearful danger of the ungodly; the other is the perfect safety of the righteous. One is the happiness of those who are converted; the other is the misery of those who are unconverted. One is the blessedness of being in the way to heaven; the other is the wretchedness of being in the way to hell.

I hold it to be of the utmost importance that these two points should be constantly impressed on the minds of professing Christians. I believe that the exceeding privileges of the children of God, and the deadly peril of the children of the world, should be continually set forth in the clearest colours before the Church of Christ. I believe that the difference between the man in Christ, and the man not in Christ, can never be stated too strongly and too fully. Reserve on this subject is a positive injury to the souls of men. Wherever such reserve is practised, the careless will not be aroused, believers will not be established, and the cause of God will receive damage.

Reader, perhaps you are not aware what a vast store of comfortable truths the Bible contains for the peculiar benefit of real Christians. There is a spiritual treasure house in the Word which many may never enter, and some eyes have not so much as seen. There you will find many a golden verity besides the old first principles of repentance, faith and conversion. There you will see in glorious array the everlasting election of the saints in Christ,-the special love wherewith God loved them before the foundation of the world,-their mystical union with their risen Head in heaven, and His consequent sympathy with them,-their interest in the perpetual intercession of Jesus, their High Priest,-their liberty of daily communion with Father and the Son,-their full assurance of hope,-their perseverance to the end. These are some of the precious things laid up in Scripture for those who love God: these are truths which some neglect from ignorance. Like the Spaniards in California, they know not the rich mines beneath their feet. These are truths which some neglect from false humility. They look at them afar off with fear and trembling, but dare not touch them. But these are truths which God has given for our learning, and which you and I are bound to study. It is impossible to neglect them without inflicting injury upon ourselves.

It is to one special truth in the list of a believer's privileges that I now desire to direct your attention this day. That truth is the doctrine of perseverance,-the doctrine that true Christians shall never perish or be cast away. It is a truth which the natural heart has bitterly opposed in every age. It is a truth which for many reasons deserves particular attention at the present time. Above all, it is a

truth with which the happiness of all God's children is most closely connected.

There are four things which I propose to do in considering the subjects of perseverance.

I. I will explain what the doctrine of perseverance means.

II. I will show the Scriptural grounds on which the doctrine is built.

III. I will point out some reasons why many reject the doctrine.

IV. I will mention some reasons why the doctrine is of great practical importance.

I approach the subject with diffidence, because I know it is one on which holy men do not see alike. But God is my witness, that in writing this tract, I have no desire to promote any but of Scriptural truth. In pleading for perseverance, I can say with a good conscience that I firmly believe I am pleading for an important part of the Gospel of Christ. May God the Spirit guide both writer and reader into all truth! May that blessed day soon come when all shall know the Lord perfectly, and differences and divisions pass away for ever!

I. I will first explain what I mean by the doctrine of perseverance.

It is of the utmost importance to make this point clear. It is the very foundation of the subject. It lies at the threshold of the whole argument. In all discussions of disputed points in theology, it is impossible to be too accurate in defining terms. Half the abuse which has unhappily been poured on perseverance, has arisen from a thorough misunderstanding of the doctrine in question. Its adversaries have fought with phantoms of their own creation, and spent their strength in beating the air.

When I speak of the doctrine of perseverance, I mean this. I say that the Bible teaches that true Christians shall persevere in their religion to the end of their lives. They shall never perish. They shall never be lost. They shall never be cast away. Once in Christ, they shall always be in Christ. Once made children of God by adoption and grace, they shall never cease to be His children and become children of the devil. Once endued with the grace of the Spirit, that grace shall never be taken from them. Once pardoned and forgiven, they shall never be deprived of their pardon. Once joined to Christ by living faith, their union shall never be broken off. Once called by God into the narrow way that leads to life, they shall never be allowed to fall into hell. In a word, every man, woman and child on earth that receives saving grace, shall sooner or later receive eternal glory. Every soul that is once justified and washed in Christ's blood, shall be found safe at Christ's right hand in the day of judgment.

Reader, such statements as this sound tremendously strong. I know that well. But I am not going to leave the subject here: I must dwell upon it a little longer. I desire to clear the doctrine I am defending from the cloud of misrepresentation by which many darken it. I want you to see it in its own proper dress,-not as it is portrayed by the hand of ignorance and prejudice, but as it is set forth in the Scripture of truth.

Perseverance is a doctrine with which the ungodly and worldly have nothing to do. It does not belong to that vast multitude who have neither knowledge, nor thought, nor faith, nor fear, nor anything else of Christianity except the name. It is not true of them, that they will “never perish.”

On the contrary, except they repent, they will come to a miserable end.

Perseverance is a doctrine with which hypocrites and false professors have nothing to do. It does not belong to those unhappy people whose religion consists in talk, and words, and a form of godliness, while their hearts are destitute of the grace of the Spirit. It is not true of them, that they will “never perish.” On the contrary, except they repent, they will he lost for ever.1

Perseverance is the peculiar privilege of real, true, spiritual Christians. It belongs to the sheep of Christ who hear His voice and follow Him. It belongs to those who are washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God. It belongs to those who repent, and believe in Christ, and live holy lives. It belongs to those who have been born again, and converted, and made new creatures by the Holy Ghost. It belongs to those who are of a broken and contrite heart, and mind the things of the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. It belongs to the elect of God, who cry to Him night and day. It belongs to those who know the Lord Jesus by experience, and have faith, and hope, and charity. It belongs to those who are fruit-bearing branches of the vine,-the wise virgins,-the light of the world,-the salt of the earth,-the heirs of the kingdom,-the followers of the Lamb. These are they whom the Bible calls the saints. And it is the saints and the saints alone of whom it is written, that they shall “never perish.”2

Does any one suppose that what I am saying applies to none but eminent saints? Does any one think that people like apostles and prophets, and martyrs may perhaps persevere to the end, but that it cannot be said of the common sort of believers? Let him know that he is entirely mistaken. Let him know this privilege of perseverance belongs to the whole family of God,-to the youngest as well as the oldest,-to the weakest as well as the strongest,-to the babes in grace as well as to the old pillars of the Church. The least faith shall as certainly continue indestructible as the greatest. The least spark of grace shall prove as unquenchable as the most burning and shining light. Your faith may be very feeble, your grace may be very weak, our strength may be very small, you may feel that in spiritual things you are but a child. Yet fear not, neither be afraid. It is not on the quantity of a man's grace, but on the truth and genuineness of it that the promise turns. A farthing is as truly a current coin of the realm as a golden sovereign, though it is not so valuable. Wherever sin is truly repented of, and Christ is truly trusted, and holiness is truly followed, there is a work that shall never be overthrown. It shall stand when the earth and all the works thereof shall be burned up.

Reader, there are yet some things to be said about perseverance, to which I must request your special attention. Without them the account of the doctrine would be imperfect and incomplete. The mention of them may clear up some of the difficulties which surround the subject, and throw light on some points of Christian experience, which God's children find hard to understand.

Remember, then, that when I tell you believers shall persevere to the end, I do not for a moment say that they shall never fall into sin. They may fall sadly, foully, and shamefully, to the scandal of true religion, to the injury of their own deep and bitter sorrow. Noah once fell into drunkenness. Abraham twice said falsely that Sarah was only his sister. Jacob deceived his father Isaac. Moses spoke unadvisedly with his lips. David committed horrible adultery. Solomon lost his first love, and was led away by his many wives. Hezekiah forgot God, and boasted of his riches. Peter denied his Lord three times with an oath. The apostles all forsook Christ in the garden. All these are cases in point. They are all melancholy proofs that Christians may fall. But believers shall never fall totally,

finally, and completely. They shall always rise again from their falls by repentance, and renew their walk with God. Though sorely humbled and cast down, they never entirely lose grace. The comfort of it they may lose, but not the being. Like the moon under an eclipse, their light is for a season turned into darkness; but they are not rejected and cast away. Like the trees in winter, they may show neither leaves nor fruit for a time; but the life is still in their roots. But they never perish.

Remember for another thing, that when I say believers shall persevere to the end, I do not mean that they shall have no doubts and fears about their own safety. So far from this being the case, the holiest men of God are sometimes sorely troubled by anxieties about their own spiritual condition. They see so much weakness in their own hearts, and find their practice come so short of their desires, that they are strongly tempted to doubt the reality of their own grace, and to fancy they are but hypocrites, and shall never reach Heaven at all. To be safe is one thing: to feel sure that we are safe is quite another. There are many true believers who never enjoy the full assurance of hope all their days. Their faith is so weak and their sense of sin so strong, that they never feel confident of their own interest in Christ. Many a time they could say with David, “I shall one day perish” (1 Samuel 27:1); and with Job, “Where is my hope?” (Job 17:15) The joy and peace in believing, which some feel, and the witness of the Spirit, which some experience, are things which some believers, whose faith is impossible to deny, never appear to attain. Called as they evidently are by the grace of God, they never seem to taste the full comfort of the calling. But they are perfectly safe, though they themselves refuse to know it.

“ More happy, but not more secure,

The glorified spirits in heaven.” The full assurance of hope is not necessary to salvation. The absence of it is no argument against a man's perseverance to the end. That mighty master of theology, John Bunyan, knew well what he wrote when he told us that Despondency and Much-afraid got safe to the celestial city at last, as well as Mr. Valiant-for-the-truth. It is as true of the most doubting child of God, as it is of the strongest, that he shall “never perish.” He may never feel it. But it is true!3

Remember, in the last place, that the certain perseverance of believers does not free them from the necessity of watching, praying, and using means, or make it needless to ply them with practical exhortations. So far from this being the case, it is just by the use of means that God enables them to continue in the faith. He draws them with the cords of a man. He uses warnings and conditional promises as part of the machinery by which He insures their final safety. The very fact that they despised the helps and ordinances which God has appointed, would be a plain proof that they had no grace at all and were on the road to destruction. St. Paul before his shipwreck had a special revelation from God, that he and all the ship's company should get safe to land. But it is a striking fact that he said to the soldiers, “Except the seamen abide in the ship ye cannot be saved.” (Acts 27:31) He knew that the end was insured, but believed also that it was an end to be reached by the use of certain means. The cautions, and conditional promises, and admonitions to believers, with which Scripture abounds, are all part of the Divine agency by which their perseverance is effected. An old writer says, “they do not imply that the saints can fall away: but they are preservatives to keep them from falling away.” The man that thinks he can do without such cautions and despises them as legal, may well be suspected as an impostor, whose heart has never yet been renewed. The man who has been really taught by the Spirit will generally have a

humble sense of his own weakness, and be thankful for anything which can quicken his conscience and keep him on his guard. They that persevere to the end are not dependent on any means, but still they are not independent of them. Their final salvation does not hang on their obedience to practical exhortations, but it is just in taking heed to such exhortations that they will always continue to the end. It is the diligent, the watchful, the prayerful and the humble to whom belongs the promise: “They shall never perish.”

Reader, I have now given you an account of what I mean when I speak of the doctrine of perseverance. This, and this only, is the doctrine that I am prepared to defend in this tract. I ask you to weigh well what I have said, and to examine the statement I have made on every side. I believe it will stand inspection.

It will not do to tell us that this doctrine of perseverance has any tendency to encourage careless and ungodly living. Such a charge is utterly destitute of truth. It cannot justly be brought forward. I have not a word to say on behalf of any one who lives in wilful sin, however high his profession may be. He is deceiving himself. He has a lie in his hand. He has none of the marks of God's elect. The perseverance I plead for is not that of sinners, but of saints. It is not a perseverance in carnal and ungodly ways, but a perseverance in the way of faith and grace. Show me a man that deliberately lives an unholy life, and yet boasts that he is converted and shall never perish, and I say plainly, that I see nothing hopeful about him. He may know all mysteries, and speak with the tongue of angels, but so long as his life is unaltered he appears to me in the high road to hell.4

It will not do to tell us that this doctrine of perseverance, is merely a piece of Calvinism. Nothing is easier than to get up a prejudice against a truth, by giving it a bad name. Men deal with doctrines they do not like, much as Nero did when he persecuted the early Christians. They dress them up in a hideous garment and then hold them up to scorn and run them down. The perseverance of the saints is often treated in this manner. People stave it off by some sneering remark about Calvinism, or by some apocryphal old wives' fable about Oliver Cromwell's death-bed, and think they have settled the question.5 Surely it would be more becoming to inquire whether perseverance was not taught in the Bible 1400 years before Calvin was born. The question to be decided is not whether the doctrine is Calvinistic, but whether it is scriptural. The words of Bishop Horsely deserve to be widely known. “Take especial care,” he says, “before you aim your shafts at Calvinism, that you know what is Calvinism and what is not,-that in the mass of doctrine which it is of late become the fashion to abuse under the name of Calvinism, you can distinguish with certainty between that part of which is nothing better than Calvinism, and that which belongs to our common Christianity and the general faith of the reformed Churches,-lest, when you mean only to fall foul of Calvinism you should unwarily attack something more sacred and of a higher origin.”

Last, but not least, it will not do to tell us that perseverance is not the doctrine of the Church of England. Whatever men please to say against it, this is an assertion at any rate, which they will find it hard to prove. Perseverance is taught in the seventeenth Article of the Church of England, clearly, plainly, unmistakably. It was the doctrine of the first Archbishops of Canterbury, Parker, Grindal, Whitgift, Bancroft, and Abbott. It was the doctrine preached by the judicious Hooker, as any one may see by reading his sermons.6 It was the doctrine which all the leading divines of the Church of England maintained till the reign of Charles the First. The denial of the doctrine up to this time was hardly tolerated. More than one minister who called it in question was compelled to

read a public recantation before the University of Cambridge. In short, till the time when Archbishop Laud came into power, perseverance was regarded in the Church of England as an acknowledged truth of the Gospel. Together with the popish leaven which Laud brought with him, there came the unhappy doctrine that true believers may fall away and perish. This is a simple matter of history. The perseverance of the saints is the old doctrine of the Church of England. The denial of it is the new.7

Reader, I feel that it is time to leave this branch of the subject and pass on. I want no clearer and no more distinct statement of perseverance than that contained in the seventeenth Article of my own Church, to which I have already referred. The article says of God's elect -“They which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey His calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and, at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.” These are precisely the views which I maintain. This is the doctrine which I long ago subscribed. This is the truth which I believe it is my duty as a clergyman, to defend. This is the truth, which I now want you to receive and believe.8

II. I now proceed to show the Scriptural grounds on which the doctrine of perseverance is built.

I need hardly say that the Bible is the only test by which the truth of every religious doctrine can be tried. The words of the sixth Article of the Church of England deserve to be written in letters of gold: “Whatsoever is not read in the Holy Scripture, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith.” By that rule I am content to abide. I ask no man to believe the final perseverance of the saints, unless the doctrine can be proved of the Word of God. One plain verse of Scripture, to my mind, outweighs the most logical conclusions to which human reason can attain.

Reader, in bringing forward those texts of Scripture on which this tract is founded, I purposely abstain from quoting from the Old Testament. I do so, lest any should say that the Old Testament promises belong exclusively to the Jewish people as a nation, and are not available in a disputed question affecting individual believers. I do not admit the soundness of this argument, but I will not give any one the chance of using it. I find proofs in abundance in the New Testament, and to them I shall confine myself.

I shall write down the texts which appear to me to prove final perseverance, without note or comment. I will only ask you to observe as you read them, how deep and broad is the foundation on which the doctrine rests. Observe that it is not for any strength or goodness of their own that the saints shall continue to the end and never fall away. They are in themselves weak, and frail, and liable to fall like others. Their safety is based on the promise of God, which was never yet broken,-on the election of God, which cannot be in vain,-on the power of the great Mediator Christ Jesus, which is Almighty,-on the inward work of the Holy Ghost, which cannot be overthrown. I ask you to read the following texts carefully, and see whether it is not so.

“I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

“My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.” (John 10:28-29)

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

“As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

“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 things present, nor things to come,

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” (1 John 2:19)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24)

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.” (John 6:51)

“Because I live, ye shall live also.” (John 14:19)

“Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die.” (John 11:26)

“By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:14)

“He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:17)

“Sin shall not have dominion over you.” (Romans 6:14)

“The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Romans 6:14)

“A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench.” (Matthew 12:20)

“Who shall also confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:8)

“Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:5)

“Preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” (Jude 1:1.)

“The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom .” (2 Timothy 4:18)

“I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

“The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

“God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath;

“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” (Hebrews 6:17-18)

“Fear not little flock; for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

“This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” (John 6:39)

“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord Knoweth them that are His.” (2 Timothy 2:19)

“Whom He did predestinate, them that He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” (Romans 8:30)

“God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

“The vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.” (Romans 9:23)

“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” (Romans 11:29.)

“If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matthew 24:24)

“He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25)

“Able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” (Jude 1:24.)

“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)

“I have prayed for thee, That thy faith fail not.” (Luke 22:32)

“Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me.” (John 17:11)

“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” (John 17:15)

“I will that day they also whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” (John 17:24)

“If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:10)

“The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John 14:17)

“Being confident of this very thing, that He which begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Php_1:6)

“The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.” (1 John 2:27)

“The Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30)

“Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (Ephesians 1:13-14)

“Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” (1 Peter 1:23)

“He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5)

Reader, I lay before you these forty-four texts of Scripture, and ask your serious attention to them. I repeat that I will make no comment on them. I had rather leave them to the honest common sense of all who read the Bible. Some of these texts, no doubt, bring out the doctrine of final perseverance more clearly than others. About the interpretation of some of them, men's judgments may differ widely. But there are not a few of the forty-four which appear to my mind so plain, that were I to invent words to conform my views, I should despair of inventing any that would convey my meaning so unmistakably.

I am far from saying that these texts are all the Scriptural evidence that might be brought forward. I am satisfied that the doctrine maintained in this tract might be confirmed by other arguments of great might and power.

I might point to the attributes of God's character revealed in the Bible, and show how His wisdom, unchangeableness, and power, and love, and glory are all involved in the perseverance of the saints. If the elect may finally perish, what becomes of God's counsel about them in eternity, and His doings for them in time?9

I might point to all the offices which the Lord Jesus fills, and show what discredit is thrown on His discharge of them, if any of His believing people can finally be lost.

What kind of Head would He be, if any of the members of His mystical body could be torn from Him? What kind of Shepherd would He be, if a single sheep of His flock was left behind in the wilderness? what kind of Physician would He be, if any patient under His hand were at length incurable? What kind of High Priest would He be, if any name once written on His heart were found wanting when He makes up His jewels? What kind of Husband would He be, if He and any soul once united to Him by faith were ever put asunder? 10

Finally, I might point to the great fact that there is not a single example in all Scripture of any one of God's elect ever finally making shipwreck and going to hell. We read false prophets and hypocrites. We read of fruitless branches, stony ground, and thorny ground hearers, virgins without oil in their vessels, servants who bury their talents. We read of Balaam, and Lot's wife, and Saul, and Judas Iscariot, and Ananias and Sapphira, and Demas. We see their hollow characters. We are told of their end. They have no root. They are rotten at the heart. They endure for a while. They go at last to their own place. But there is not a single instance in the whole Bible of any one falling away who ever showed unquestionable evidences of grace. Men like Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Peter, and Paul always hold on their way. They may slip. They may fall for a season. But they never entirely depart from God. They never perish. Surely if the saints of God can be cast away, it is a curious and striking fact that the Bible should not have given us one single plain example of it.

But time and space would fail me if I were to enter into the field which I have just pointed out. I think it better to rest my case on the text which I have already given. The mind to which these texts carry no conviction, is not likely to be influenced by other arguments. To myself they appear, when taken altogether, to contain such an immense mass of evidence, that I dare not, as a Christian man, deny to be true. I dare not, because I feel at this rate I might dispute the truth of any doctrine in the Gospel. I feel that if I could explain away such plain texts as some of those I have quoted, I could explain away almost all the leading truths of Christianity.

Reader, I am quite aware that there are some texts and passages of Scripture which appear at first sight to teach a contrary doctrine to that which I maintain in this tract. I know that many attach great weight to these texts, and consider them to prove that the saints of God may perish and fall away. I can also say that I have examined these texts with attention, but have found in them no reason to alter my opinion on the subject of perseverance.11 Their number is small. Their meaning is unquestionably more open to dispute than that of many of the forty-four I have quoted. They all of them admit of being interpreted so as not to contradict the doctrine of perseverance. I hold it to be an infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that when two texts seem to contradict one another, the less plain must give way to the more plain, and the weak must give way to the strong. That doctrine which reconciles most texts of Scripture is most likely to be right. That doctrine which makes most texts quarrel with one another is most likely to be wrong.

I ask you, if not convinced by all I have said hitherto, to put down the texts I have quoted on behalf of perseverance, and the texts commonly quoted against it, in two separate lists. Weigh them one against another. Judge them with fair and honest judgment. Which list contains the greatest number of positive, unmistakable assertions? Which list contains the greatest number of sentences which cannot be explained away? Which list is the strongest? Which list is the weakest? Which list is the most flexible? Which list is the most unbending? If it were possible in a world like this to have this question fairly tried by an unprejudiced, intelligent jury, I have not the least doubt which way the verdict would go. It is my own firm belief and conviction that the final perseverance of the saints is so deeply founded on Scriptural grounds, that so long as the Bible is the Judge, it cannot be overthrown.

III. The third thing I propose to do, is to point out the reasons why many reject the doctrine of perseverance.

It is impossible to deny that multitudes of professing Christians entirely disagree with the views expressed in this. I am quite aware that many regard them with abhorrence, as dangerous, enthusiastic, and fanatical, and lose no opportunity of warning people against them. I am also aware that among those who hold that the saints of God may fall away and perish, are to be found many holy, self-denying, spiritually-minded persons,-persons at whose feet I would sit in Heaven, though I cannot approve of all their teaching upon earth.

This being the case, it becomes a matter of deep interest to find out, if we can, the reasons why the doctrine of perseverance is so often refused. How is it that the doctrine for which so much Scripture can be alleged, should be stoutly opposed? How is it that a doctrine which for the first hundred years of the Reformed Church of England it was hardly allowable to call in question, should now be so frequently rejected? What new views can have risen up in the last two centuries which make it necessary to discharge this good old servant of Christ? I am confident that such inquiries are of deep importance in the present day. There is far more in this question than appears at first sight. I am satisfied that I am not wasting time in endeavouring to throw a little light on the whole subject.

I desire to clear the way by conceding that many good persons refuse the doctrine of perseverance for no reason whatever excepting that it is too strong for them. There are vast numbers of true-hearted Christians just now who never seem able to bear anything strong. Their religious constitution appears so feeble, and their spiritual digestion so weak, that they must always be “fed with milk and not with meat.” Talk to them strongly about grace, and they put you down as an Antinomian! Talk strongly about holiness, and you are thought legal! Speak strongly of election, and you are considered a narrow-minded Calvinist! Speak strongly about responsibility and free agency, and you are regarded as a low Arminian! In short, they can bear nothing strong of any kind or in any direction. Of course they cannot receive the doctrine of perseverance.

I leave these people alone. I am sorry for them. There are sadly too many of them in the Churches of Christ just now. I can only wish them better spiritual health, and less narrowness of views, and a quicker growth in spiritual knowledge. The persons I have in my mind's eye in this part of my tract are of a different class, and to them I now address myself.

(1) I believe one reason why many do not hold perseverance is their general ignorance of the whole system of Christianity. They have no clear idea of the nature, place, and proportion of the various doctrines which compose the Gospel. Its several truths have no definite position in their minds. Its general outline is not mapped out in their understandings. They have a vague notion that it is a right thing to belong to the Church of Christ, and to believe all the Articles of the Christian faith. They have a floating, misty idea that Christ has done certain things for them, and that they ought to do certain things for Him, and that if they do them it will be all right at last. But beyond this they really know nothing. Of the great systematic statements in the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, they are profoundly ignorant. As to a clear account of Justification, you might as well ask them to square the circle or write a letter in Sanskrit. It is a subject they have not even touched with the tips of their fingers. This is a sore disease, and only too common in England. Unhappily it is the disease of thousands who pass muster as excellent Churchmen. It is absurd to expect such people to hold perseverance. When a man does not know what it is to be justified he cannot of course understand what it is to persevere to the end.

(2) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance, is their dislike to any system of religion which draws distinctions between man and man. There are not a few who entirely disapprove of any Christian teaching which divides the congregation into different classes, and speaks of one class of people as being in a better and more favourable state before God than another. Such people cry out, “that all teaching of this kind is uncharitable; that we ought to hope well of everybody, and suppose everybody will go to heaven.” They think it downright wrong to say that one man has faith and another not, one a child of God, and another a child of the world, one a saint and another a sinner. “What right have we to think anything about it?” they say. “We cannot possibly know. Those whom we call good, are very likely no better than others,-hypocrites, impostors, and the like. Those of whom we think badly are very probably quite as much in the way to heaven as the rest of mankind, and have got good hearts at bottom.” As to any one feeling sure of heaven, or confident of his own salvation, they consider it quite abominable. “No man can be sure. We ought to hope well of all.” There are only too many people of this sort in the present day. Of course the doctrine of perseverance is perfectly intolerable to them. When a man refuses to allow that any one is elect, or has grace, or enjoys any special mark of God's favour more than his neighbours, it stands to reason that he will deny that any one can have the grace of perseverance.

(3) I believe another common reason why many do not hold perseverance is an incorrect view of the nature of saving faith. They regard faith as nothing better than a feeling or impression. As soon as they see a man somewhat impressed with the preaching of the Gospel and manifesting some pleasure in hearing about Christ, they set him down at once as a believer. By and by the man's impressions wear away, and his interest about Christ and salvation ceases altogether. Where is the faith he seemed to have? It is gone. How can his friends, who have pronounced him a believer, account for it? They can only account for it by saying, that “a man may fall away from faith,” and that “there is no such thing as perseverance.” And in short, this becomes an established principle in their religion. Now this is a mischievous error, and I am afraid sadly common in many quarters. It manifestly may be traced to ignorance of the true nature of religious affections. People forget that there may be many religious emotions in the human mind with which grace has nothing to do. The stony ground hearers received the word with joy, but had no root in them. The history of all revivals proves that there may often be a great quantity of seemingly religious impression without any true work of the Spirit. Saving faith is something far deeper and mightier than a little sudden feeling. It is an act not of the feelings only but of the whole conscience, will, understanding, and inward man. It is the result of clear knowledge. It springs from a conscience not grazed merely, but thoroughly stirred. It shows itself in a deliberate, willing, humble dependence on Christ. Such faith is the gift of God, and is never overthrown. Make faith a mere matter of feeling, and it is of course impossible to maintain perseverance.

(4) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance is near akin to the one last mentioned. It is an incorrect view of the nature of conversion. Not a few are ready to pronounce any change for the better in a man's character a conversion. They forget that there may be many blossoms on a tree in spring, and yet no fruit in autumn, and that a new coat of paint does not make an old door new. Some, if they see any one weeping under the influence of a sermon, will set it down at once as a case of conversion. Others, if a neighbour suddenly gives up drinking or swearing, and becomes a communicant and a great professor, at once rush to the conclusion that he is converted. The natural consequence in numerous instances is disappointment. Their

supposed case of conversion often turns out nothing more than a case of outward reform, in which the heart was never changed. Their converted neighbour sometimes returns to old habits, as the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. But then unhappily the pride of the natural heart, which never likes to allow itself mistaken, induces people to form a wrong conclusion about the case. Instead of telling us that the man never was converted at all, they say that “he was converted, but afterwards lost his grace and fell away.” The true remedy for this is a right understanding of conversion. It is no such cheap and easy and common thing as many seem to fancy. It is a mighty work on heart, which none but He who made the world can effect, and a work which will abide and stand the fire. But once take a low and superficial view of conversion, and you will find it impossible to maintain final perseverance.

(5) I believe another most common reason why many do not hold perseverance is an incorrect view of the effect of baptism. They lay it down, as a cardinal point in their divinity, that all who are baptized are born again in baptism, and all receive the grace of the Holy Ghost. Without a single plain text in the Bible to support their opinions, and in the face of the 17th Article, which many of them as Churchmen have subscribed, they still tell us that all baptized persons are necessarily regenerate. Of course such a view of baptism is utterly destructive of the doctrine that true grace can never be overthrown. It is plain as daylight that multitudes of baptized persons never show a spark of grace all their lives, and never give the slightest evidence of having been born of God. They live careless and worldly, and careless and worldly they die, and to all appearance miserably perish. According to the view to which I am now referring, “they have all fallen away from grace! They have all had it! They were all made God's children! But they all lost their grace! They have all become children of the devil!” I will not trust myself to make a single remark on such doctrine. I leave those who can to reconcile it with the Bible. All I say is, that if baptismal regeneration be true, there is an end of the final perseverance.

(6) I believe another reason why many do not hold perseverance, is an incorrect view of the nature of the Church. They make no distinction between the visible Church which contains “evil as well as good,” and the invisible Church which is composed of none but God's elect and true believers. They apply to the one the privileges, and blessings, and promises which belong to the other. They call the visible Church, with its crowds of ungodly members, and baptized infidels, “the mystical body of Christ, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, the Holy Catholic Church,” and the like. They will not see what Hooker long ago pointed out, and his admirers would do well to remember,-that all these glorious titles do not properly belong to any visible Church, but to the mystical company of God's elect. The consequence of all this confusion is certain and plain. Upon this man-made system they are obliged to allow that thousands of members of Christ's body have no life, no grace, and no sympathy with their Head, and end at last by being ruined forever, and becoming lost members of Christ in hell! Of course at this rate they cannot maintain the doctrine of perseverance. Once embrace the unscriptural notion that all members of the visible Church are, by virtue of their churchmanship, members of Christ, and the doctrine of this tract must be thrown aside. Oh, what a wise remark it is of Hooker's! “For want of diligently observing the difference between the Church of God mystical and visible, the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed.”

Reader, I commend the things I have just been saying to your sincere and prayerful attention. I have gone through them at the risk of seeming wearisome, from a deep conviction of their great importance. I am sure if any of this tract deserves consideration, it is this.

I entreat you to observe how important it is for Christians to be sound in the faith, and to be armed with clear Scriptural knowledge of the whole system of the Gospel. I fear the increasing tendency to regard all doctrinal questions as matters of opinion, and to look on all earnest-minded men as right, whatever doctrines they maintain. I warn you that the sure result of giving way to this tendency will be a vague, low, misty theology,-a theology containing no positive hope, no positive motive, and no positive consolation,-a theology which will fail most, just when it is most wanted, in the day of affliction, the hour of sickness, and on the bed of death.

I know well that it is a thankless office to offer such warnings as these. I know well that those who give them must expect to be called bigoted, narrow-minded, and exclusive. But I cannot review the many errors which prevail on the subject of perseverance, without seeing more than ever the immense need there is for urging on all to be careful about doctrine. Oh, learn to know what you mean when you talk of believing the doctrines of Christianity! Be able to give a reason of your hope. Be able to say what you think is true, and what you think false in religion. And never, never forget that the only foundation of soundness in the faith, is a thorough textual knowledge of the Bible.

I entreat you, in the last place, to observe how one error in religion leads on to another. There is a close connection between false doctrines. It is almost impossible to take up one alone. Once let a man get wrong about the Church and the sacraments, and there is no saying how far he may go and where he may land at last. It is a mistake at the fountain-head and influences the whole course of his religion. The mistake about baptism is a striking illustration of what I mean. It throws a colour over the whole of a man's divinity; it insensibly affects his views of justification, sanctification, election, and perseverance; it fills his mind with a tangled maze of confusion as to all the leading articles of the faith. He starts with a theory for which no single plain text of Scripture can be alleged, and before this theory tramples plain passages of the Bible by the score! They interfere forsooth, with his favourite theory, and therefore cannot mean what common sense tells us they do! Oh, reader, be as jealous about a little false doctrine, as you would be about a little sin! Remember the words of St. Paul: “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

IV. I now proceed, in the last place, to mention some reasons why the doctrine of final perseverance is of great importance.

When I speak of the importance of perseverance, I do not for a moment mean that it is necessary to salvation to receive it. I freely grant that thousands and tens of thousands have gone to heaven, who believe all their lives that saints might fall away. But all this does not prove the doctrine maintained in this tract to be a matter of indifference. He that does not believe it and yet is saved, no doubt does well; but I am persuaded that he that believes it and is saved does far better. I hold it to be one of the chief privileges of the children of God, and I consider that no privilege contained in the Gospel can be lost sight of without injury to the soul.

(1) Perseverance is a doctrine of great importance, because of the strong colour which it throws on the whole statement of the Gospel.

The grand characteristic of the Gospel is, that it is glad tidings. It is a message of peace to a rebellious world. It is good news from a far country, alike unexpected and undeserved. It is glad tidings that there is a hope for us, lost, ruined, and bankrupt as we are by nature,-a hope of

pardon, a hope of reconciliation with God, a hope of glory. It is the glad tidings that the foundation of this hope is mighty, deep, and broad,-that it is built on the atoning death and gracious mediation of a Saviour. It is the glad tidings that this Saviour is an actual living person, Jesus the Son of God; able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him, and no less merciful, compassionate, and ready to save than able. It is the glad tidings that the way to pardon and peace by this Saviour is the simplest possible. It is not a thing high in Heaven that we cannot reach, or deep in the depths that we cannot fathom. It is simply to believe, to trust, and to cast ourselves wholly on Jesus for salvation, and salvation is all our own. It is the glad tidings that all who believe are at once justified and forgiven all things; their sins, however many, are washed away; their souls however unworthy are counted righteous before God. They believe on Jesus, and therefore they are saved. This is the good news. This is the glad tidings. This is the truth which is the grand peculiarity of the Gospel. Happy indeed is he that knows and believes it!

But think, reader, for a moment, what a mighty difference it would make in the sound of the Gospel, if I went on to tell you, that after receiving all those mercies you might by-and-by lose them entirely. What would your feelings be if I told you that you were in daily peril of forfeiting all these privileges, and having your pardon sealed in Christ's blood taken back again? What would you think if I told you that your safety was yet an uncertain thing, and that you might yet perish and never reach Heaven at all? Oh, what a falling off this would seem! Oh, how much of the grace and beauty of the glorious Gospel would disappear and fade away! Yet this is literally and exactly the conclusion to which a denial of perseverance must bring us.

Once admit that the saints of God may perish, and you seem to me to tear from the Gospel crown its brightest jewel. We are hanging on the edge of precipice. We are kept in awful suspense until we are dead. To tell us that there are plenty of gracious promises to encourage us, if we will only persevere, is but mockery. It is like telling the sick man that if he will only get well he will be strong. The poor patient feels no confidence that he will get well, and the poor weak believer feels nothing in him like power to persevere. Today he may be in Canaan, and tomorrow he may be in Egypt again, and in bondage. This week he may be in the narrow way; but for anything he knows, next week he may be back in the broad road. This month he may be a justified, pardoned, and forgiven man; but next month his pardon may be all revoked, and he himself in a state of condemnation. This year he may have faith, and be a child of God; next year he may be a child of the devil, and have no part or lot in Christ. Where is the good news in all this? What becomes of the glad tidings? Verily such doctrine seems to me to me to cut up the joy of the Gospel by the roots. Yet this is the doctrine we must hold, if we reject the final perseverance of the saints.12

I bless God that I am able to see another kind of Gospel than this in the word of God. To my eyes the Bible seems to teach that he who once begins the life of faith in Christ, shall without doubt be preserved from apostasy, and come to a glorious end. Once made alive by the grace of God, he shall live for ever. Once raised from the grave of sin and made a new man, he shall never go back to the grave and become once more the old man dead in trespasses and sins. He shall be kept by the power of God. He shall be more than conqueror through Him that loved Him. The eternal God is his refuge; underneath Him are Everlasting Arms. The love in which he is interested is eternal. The righteousness in which he is clothed is eternal. The redemption which he enjoys is eternal. The sense and comfort of it he may lose by his own carelessness. But the thing itself, after once believing, is his for evermore.

Reader look at the two ways in which the weary and heavy-laden sinner may be addressed, and judge for yourself which is most like the gospel of the grace of God. On the side stands the doctrine, which says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Once believing thou shalt never perish. Thy faith shall never be allowed entirely to fail. Thou shalt be sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption.” On the other side stands the doctrine, which says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. But after thou hast believed take care. Thy faith may fail. Thou mayest fall away. Thou mayest drive the Spirit from thee. Thou mayest at length perish everlastingly.” Which doctrine of these two contain most good news? Which is most like glad tidings? Is it all the same which way the sinner is addressed? Is it matter of indifference whether we tell him that believing he is saved, unless he falls away, or whether we tell him that believing he is saved for ever? I cannot think it. I regard the difference between the two doctrines as very great indeed. It is the difference between January and June. It is the difference between twilight and noonday.

I speak for myself. I cannot answer for the experience of others. To give me solid peace, I must know something about my future prospects as well as about my present position. It is pleasant to see my pardon today: but I cannot help thinking of tomorrow. Tell me that He who leads me to Christ, and gives me repentance and faith in Him, will never leave me nor forsake me, and I feel solid comfort. My feet are on a rock. My soul is in safe hands. I shall get safe home. Tell me, on the other hand, that after being led to Christ I am left to my own vigilance, and that it depends on my watching, and praying, and care, whether the Spirit leaves me or no, and my heart melts within me. I stand on quicksand. I lean on a broken reed. I shall never get to heaven. It is vain to tell me of the promises; they are only mine if I walk worthy of them. It is vain to talk to me of Christ's mercy; I may lose all my interest in it by indolence and self-will. Reader, the absence of the doctrine of perseverance appears to me to give a different colour to the whole Gospel. You cannot wonder if I regard it as of great importance.

(2) But the doctrine of perseverance is also of importance, because of the special influence it is calculated to have on all who halt between two opinions in religion.

There are many persons of this description in the Church of Christ. There are hundreds to be found in every congregation to which the Gospel of Christ is preached, who know well what is right, and yet have not courage to act up to their knowledge. Their consciences are awakened. Their minds are comparatively enlightened. Their feelings are partially aroused to a sense of the value of their souls. They see the path they ought to take. They hope one day to be able to take it. But at present they sit still and wait. They will not take up the cross and confess Christ.

And what keeps them back? In a vast proportion of cases they are afraid to begin, lest they should by-and-by fail and fall away. They see innumerable difficulties before them if they serve Christ. They are quite right. It is vain to deny that there are difficulties, both many and great. They stand shivering on the brink of the vast sea on which we would have them embark, and as they mark the rolling, tumbling waves, their hearts faint. They mark many a little boat on the waters of that sea, tossed to and fro, and struggling hard to make its way across, and looking as if it would be engulfed in the angry billows, and never get safe to harbour. “It is of no use,” they feel: “it is of no use. We shall certainly fall away. We cannot serve Christ yet. The thing cannot be done.”

Now, what is most likely to give courage to these halting souls? What is most likely to hearten them for the voyage? What is most likely to cheer their spirits, nerve their minds, and bring them to the point of boldly launching away? - I answer, without hesitation, the doctrine of final perseverance.

I would fain tell them that however great the difficulties of Christ's service, there is grace and strength in store to carry them triumphantly through all. I would tell them that these poor, praying, broken-spirited voyagers whom they watch and expect to see cast away, are all safe as if they were already in harbour. They have each a pilot on board, who will carry them safe through every storm. They are each joined to the everlasting God by a tie that can never be broken, and shall all appear at length safe at the right hand of their Lord. Yes: and I would fain tell them that they too shall all make a glorious end if they will only begin. I would have them know that, if they will only commit themselves to Christ, they shall never be cast away. They shall not be plucked away by Satan. They shall never be left to sink and come to shame. Trials they may have, but none that the Spirit will not give them power to endure. Temptations they may have, but none that the Spirit shall not enable them to resist. Only let them begin, and they shall be conquerors. But the great matter is to begin.

Reader, I believe firmly that one reason why so many wavering Christians hang back from making a decided profession, is the want of encouragement which the doctrine of perseverance is intended to afford.

(3) The doctrine of perseverance is of importance because of the special influence it is calculated to have on the minds of true believers.

The number of true believers is at all times very small. They are a little flock. But even out of that flock there are a few who can be called strong in faith, few who know much of uninterrupted joy and peace in believing, few who are not often cast down by their doubts, anxieties, and fears.

It is useless to deny that the way to Heaven is narrow. There are many things to try the faith of believers. They have trials the world cannot understand. They have within a heart weak, deceitful, and not to be trusted,-cold when they would fain be warm,-backward when they would fain to be forward,-more ready to sleep than watch. They have without a world that does not love Christ's truth, and Christ's people, -a world full of slander, ridicule, and persecution,-a world with which their own dearest relations often join. They have ever near them a busy devil, an enemy who has been reading men's hearts for 6,000 years, and knows exactly how to suit and time his temptations,-an enemy who never ceases to lay snares in their way,-who never slumbers and never sleeps. They have the cares of life to attend to, like other people,-the cares of children,-the cares of business,-the cares of servants,-the cares of money,-the cares of earthly plans and arrangements,-the cares of a poor, weak body, each daily thrusting itself upon their souls. Who can wonder that believers are sometimes cast down? Who ought not rather to marvel that any believers are saved? Truly I often think that the salvation of each saved person is a greater miracle than the passage of Israel through the Red Sea.13

But what is the best antidote against the believer's fears and anxieties? What is most likely to cheer him as he looks forward to the untried future and remembers the weary past? I answer without hesitation, the doctrine of the final perseverance of God's elect. Let him know that God

having begun a good work in him will never allow it to be overthrown. Let him know that the footsteps of Christ's little flock are all in one direction. They have erred. They have been vexed. They have been tempted. But not one of them has been lost. Let him know that those whom Jesus loves, He loves unto the end. Let him know that He will not suffer the weakest lamb in His flock to perish in the wilderness, or the tenderest flower in His garden to wither and die. Let him know that Daniel in the den of lions, the three children in a fiery furnace, Paul in the shipwreck, Noah in the ark, were none of them more cared for and more secure than the believer in Christ. Let him know that he is fenced, walled, protected, guarded by the Almighty power of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and cannot perish. Let him know that it is not in the power of the things in the present or things to come,-of men or of devils,-of cares within or troubles without, to separate one single child of God from the love that is in Christ Jesus.

This is strong consolation. These are the things which God has laid up in the Gospel for the establishment and confirmation of His people. Well would it be for His people if these things were more brought forward than they are in the Church of Christ. Verily I believe that one reason of the saints' weakness is their ignorance of the truths which God has revealed in order to make them strong.

Reader, I leave the subject of the importance of perseverance here. I trust I have said enough to show you that I have not called your attention to it in this tract without good cause. I feel strongly that the hardness of man's heart is such that nothing should be omitted in religious teaching which is likely to do it good. I dare not omit a single grain of truth, however strong and liable to abuse it may seem to be. Nothing appears to me of small importance which adds to the beauty of the Gospel, or gives encouragement to the halting, or confirms and builds up God's people. I desire to teach that the Gospel not only offers present pardon and peace, but eternal safety and certain continuance to the end. This I believe be the mind of the Spirit. And what the Spirit reveals I desire to proclaim.

And now, reader, I have brought before you, to the best of my ability, the whole subject of perseverance. I have told you as plainly as I can, what I believe to be the truth as it is in Jesus. If I have offended you by anything I have said, I am sorry. I have no desire to pain anyone, and least of all the children of God. If I have failed to convince you I am sorry, but I am satisfied the defect is not in the doctrine I defend, but in my manner of stating it. It only remains to conclude this tract by a few words of practical application.

(1) For one thing, let me entreat you to consider well, whether you have any part at all in the salvation of Christ Jesus.

It matters nothing what you believe about perseverance, if after all you have no faith in Christ. It matters little whether you hold the doctrine or not, so long as you have no saving faith, and your sins are not forgiven, and your heart not renewed by the Holy Ghost. The clearest head-knowledge will save no man. The most correct and orthodox views will not prevent a man perishing by the side of the most ignorant heathen if he is not born again. Oh, search and see what is the state of your own soul!

You cannot live forever. You must one day die. You cannot avoid the judgment after death. You must stand before the bar of Christ. The summons of the Archangel cannot be disobeyed. The last

great assembly must be attended. The state of your own soul must one day undergo a thorough investigation. It will be found out one day what you are in God's sight. Your spiritual condition will at length be brought to light before the whole world. Oh, find out what it is now! While you have time, while you have health, find out the state of your soul.

Your danger, if you are not converted, is far greater than I can describe. Just in proportion to the thorough safety of the believer is the deadly peril of the unbeliever. There is but a step between the unbeliever and the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched. He is literally hanging over the brink of the bottomless pit. Sudden death to the saint is sudden glory; but sudden death to the unconverted sinner, is sudden hell. Oh, search and see what is the state of your soul!

Remember that you may find out whether you have an interest in the invitations of the Gospel. It is a thing that may be known. It is nonsense to pretend that no man can tell. I never will believe that an honest man, with a Bible in his hand, will fail to discern his spiritual condition by diligent self-examination. Oh be a honest man! Search the Scriptures. Look within. Rest not till you find out the state of your soul. To live on and leave the soul's state uncertain, is not to play the part of a wise man but a fool.

(2) In the next place, if you know nothing of the privileges of the Gospel, I entreat you this day to repent and be converted, to hear Christ's voice, and follow Him.

I know no reason, human or divine, why you should not accept this invitation today and be saved, if you are really willing. It is not the quantity of your sins that need prevent you. All manner of sin may be forgiven. The blood of Jesus cleanseth away all sin.-It is not the hardness of your heart that need prevent you. A new heart God will give you, and a new spirit will He put in you.-It is not the decrees of God that need prevent you. He willeth not the death of sinners. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.-It is not any want of willingness in Christ:-He has long cried to the sons of men, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” Oh, reader, why should not you be saved?

A day must come, if you are ever to be God's child, when you will cease to trifle with your soul's interests. An hour must come when at last you will bend your knee in real earnestness, and pour out of your heart before God in real prayer. A time must come when the burden of your sins will at last feel intolerable, and when you will feel you must have rest in Christ or perish. All this must be if you are ever to become a child of God and be saved. And why not today? Why not this very night? Why not without delay seek Christ and live? Oh, reader, answer me, if you can!

(3) In the next place, let me entreat every reader who holds final perseverance, so to use this precious doctrine as not to abuse it.

There is an awful readiness in all men to abuse God's mercies. Even the children of God are not as free from the sad infection. There is a busy devil near the best of saints, who would fain persuade them to make their privileges a plea for the careless living, and to turn their soul's meat into poison. I cannot look around the church and the end to which many high professors come without feeling that there is need for caution. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

Would we know what it is to abuse the doctrine of perseverance? It is abused when believers make their safety an excuse for inconsistencies in practice. It is abused when they make their security from final ruin an apology for a low standard of sanctification, and a distant walk with God. Against both those abuses I entreat believers to be on their guard.

Would we know what it is to use the doctrine of perseverance aright? Let us watch jealously over the daily workings of our own hearts. Let us mortify and nip in the bud the least inclination to spiritual indolence. Let us settle down in our minds as a ruling principle of our lives, that the mercies of God are only turned to a good account when they have a sanctifying effect on our hearts. Let us root it finally in our inward man, that the love of Christ is never so really valued as when it constrains us to increased spiritual-mindedness. Let us set before our minds, that the more safe we feel the more holy we ought to be. The more we realise that God has done much for us, the more we ought to do for God. The greater our debt, the greater should be our gratitude. The more we see the riches of grace, the more rich should we be in good works.

Oh, for a heart like that of the Apostle Paul! To realize like he did, our perfect safety in Christ,-to labour as he did for God's glory, as if we could never do too much,-this is the mark,-this is the standard at which we ought to aim.

Reader, let us so use the doctrine of perseverance that our good may never be evil spoken of. Let us so adorn the doctrine by our lives that we may make it beautiful to others, and constrain men to say, “It is a good and holy thing to be persuaded that the saints will never perish.”

(4) In the last place, I entreat all believers who have hitherto been afraid of falling away, to lay firm hold on the doctrine of perseverance, and to realize their own safety in Christ.

I want you to know the length and breadth of your portion in Christ. I want you to understand the full amount of treasure to which faith in Jesus entitles you. You have found out that you are a great sinner. Thank God for that. You have fled to Christ for pardon and peace with God. Thank God for that. You have committed yourself to Jesus for time and eternity: you have no hope but in Christ's blood, Christ's righteousness, Christ's mediation, Christ's daily all-persevering intercession. Thank God for that. Your heart's desire and prayer is to be holy in all manner of conversation. Thank God for that. But oh, lay hold upon the glorious truth,-that believing on Jesus you shall never perish, you shall never be cast away, you shall never fall away! It is written for you as well as the apostles, “My sheep shall never perish.” Yes! reader, Jesus has spoken it, and Jesus meant it to be believed. Jesus has spoken it, who never broke His promises. Jesus has spoken it, who cannot lie. Jesus has spoken it, who has power in heaven and earth to keep His word. Jesus has spoken it for the least and lowest believers: “My sheep shall never perish.”

Wouldest thou have perfect peace in life? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Thy trials may be many and great. Thy cross may be very heavy. But the business of thy soul is all conducted according to an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. All things are working together for thy good. Thy sorrows are only purifying thy soul for glory; thy bereavements are only fashioning thee as a polished stone for the temple above, made without hands. From whatever quarter the storms blow, they only drive thee nearer to heaven: whatever weather thou mayest go through it is only ripening thee for the garner of God. Thy best things are quite safe. Come what will, thou shalt “never perish.”

Wouldest thou have strong consolation in sickness? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Think, as thou feelest the pins of this earthly tabernacle loosening one by one, “nothing can break my union with Christ.” Thy body may become useless; thy members may refuse to perform their office; thou mayest feel like an old useless log,-a weariness to others, and a burden to thyself. But thy soul is safe. Jesus is never tired of caring for thy soul. Thou shalt “never perish.”

Wouldest thou have full assurance of hope in death? Then lay hold on this doctrine of perseverance. Doctors may have given over their labours; friends may be unable to minister to thy wants; sight may depart; hearing may depart; memory may be almost gone: but the loving kindness of God shall not depart. Once in Christ thou shalt never be forsaken. Jesus shall stand by thee. Death shall not separate thee from the everlasting love of God in Christ. Thou shalt “never perish.”14

Reader, may this be your portion in life and death! And may it be mine!

FOOTNOTES

1 “We do not hold that all whom the most discerning minister or Christian considers true Christians, will be 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' God alone can search the heart, and He may see that to be a dead and temporary faith which we in the judgement of charity think living and permanent.”-Scott's reply to Tomline, page 675.

2 “It is grossly contrary to the truth of the Scriptures to imagine that they who are thus renewed, can be unborn again.”-Archbishop Leighton, 1680.

3 “Every believer doth not know that he is a believer, and therefore, he cannot know all the privileges that belong to believers.”-Traill, 1690.

4 “Let none encourage themselves to a freedom in sin, and presume upon God's preservation of them without the use of means. No! The electing counsel upon which this victory is founded, chose us to the end. He that makes such a consequence, I doubt whether he ever was a Christian. I may safely say that any person that hath settled, resolved, and wilful remissness, never yet was in the covenant of Grace.”-Charnock on Weak Grace. 1684.

5 I allude you to the common story that Cromwell on his deathbed asked Dr. Thomas Goodwin whether a believer could fall from grace. Goodwin replied he could not. Cromwell is reported to have said, that “if so he was safe, for he was sure that he had been in a state of grace.”

The truth of this story is exceedingly questionable. It is a remarkable fact that Cromwell's faithful servant, who published a collection of all the remarkable sayings and doings of his master in his last sickness, does not mention this conversation. It is more probable that it is one of those false and malicious inventions with which the great Protector's enemies laboured so hard to blacken his memory after his death.

6 “As Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more power over him; so the justified man being allied to God in Christ Jesus our Lord, doth as necessarily from that time forward always live, as Christ by whom he hath life liveth always.” (Romans 6:10; John 14:19)“As long as that abideth in us which animateth, quickeneth, and giveth life, so long as we live; and we

know that the cause of our faith abideth in us for ever.If Christ the fountain of life may flit, and leave the habitations where once He dwelleth, what shall become of His promise, 'I am with you to the world's end'? If the seed of God which containeth Christ may be first conceived and then cast out, how doth St. Peter term it immortal? (1 Peter 1:23) How doth St. John affirm that it abideth (1 John 3:9)”-Hooker's Discourse of Justification. 1590

7 There are few subjects about which English people are so ignorant as they are about the real doctrines of the Church of England. Many persons know nothing of the theological opinions of the English Reformers, and of all leading English divines for nearly a century after the Protestant Reformation. They call opinions old which in reality are new, and they call opinions new which in reality are old.

It would be a waste of time to inquire into the causes of this ignorance. Certain it is that it exists. Few people seem to be aware that those doctrines which now are commonly called evangelical, were the universally received divinity of English Churchmen throughout the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and James 1:1-27st. They are not, as many ignorantly suppose, new-fangled views of modern invention. They are simply the old paths in which the Reformers and their immediate successors walked. Tractarianism, High Churchism, and Broad Churchism are new systems. Evangelical teaching is neither more nor less than the old school.

The proof of this assertion is to be found in the Church history of the reigns of Elizabeth and James 1:1-27st, and in the writings of the divines of that period. Far be it from me to defend all the sayings and doings of theologians of that date. The student will find in their writings abundant traces of intolerance, illiberality, and bigotry, which I would be the last to defend. But that the vast majority of all Churchmen in that day held doctrines which are now called Calvinistic and Evangelical, is to my mind as clear as noon-day: and upon no point does the evidence appear to me so clear as upon the doctrine of perseverance.

(1) Is it not a historical fact, that in Queen Elizabeth's reign, in the year 1595, the University of Cambridge compelled Mr. Barret, of Caius college, to read a public recantation and apology in St. Mary's Church, for having denied the doctrines of final perseverance and election? -The Church of England's old Antithesis to new Arminianism by William Prynne, page 56.

(2) Is it not a historical fact, that the Articles drawn up by the Vice-Chancellor and heads of the University of Cambridge, against the above-mentioned Barret, conclude with the following words? “This doctrine, being not about inferior points of matters indifferent, but of the substantial ground, and chief comfort and anchor ground of our salvation, hath been to our knowledge continually and generally received, taught, and defended in this University, in lectures, disputations, and sermons, and in other places in sermons, since the beginning of her Majesty's reign, and is so still holden: and we take it agreeable to the doctrine of the Church of England-Edwards Veritas Redux, page 534

(3) Is it not a historical fact, that in the same Queen Elizabeth's reign, in the same year, 1595, the Lambeth Articles were drawn up and approved by Archbishop Whitgift and Bishop Bancroft (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury); and that they contain the following proposition: “A true living and justifying faith, and the Spirit of God who justifies, is not extinguished, falleth not away, vanisheth not in the elect, either finally or totally.” These articles were not added to our confession

of faith; but Fuller's words nevertheless are perfectly true: “The testimony of these learned divines is an infallible evidence what were the general and received doctrines of England in that age.”-Fuller's Church History. Tegg's edition. Third volume, page 150.

(4) Is it not a historical fact, that in the year 1604, in James the First's reign, this doctrine of perseverance was considered at the Hampton Court Conference. The Puritan party wished the Lambeth Articles to be added to the thirty-nine Articles. Their request was not granted: but on what grounds? Not because the doctrine of perseverance was objected to, but because King James thought it better “not to stuff the book of Articles with all conclusions theological.” While even Overall, Dean of St. Paul's, whose soundness on this point was most suspected, used these remarkable words: “Those who are justified according to the purpose of God's election, though they might fall into grievous sin, and thereby into the present estate of damnation, yet never totally nor finally fall from justification, but are in time renewed by God's Spirit unto lively faith and repentance -Fuller's Church History, third volume, page 181.

(5) Is it not a historical fact, that the first exposition of the thirty-nine Articles, published after the Reformation, contains a full and distinct assertion of the doctrine of perseverance, in the part which treats of the seventeenth Article? I allude to the work of Thomas Rogers, Chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, to whom the book was dedicated, 1607.-Rogers on the thirty-nine Articles. Parker Society Edition.

(6) Is it not a historical fact, that in the year 1612, King James the 1st published a declaration written by himself, against one Vorstius, an Arminian divine, in which he calls the doctrine, that the saints may fall away, “A wicked doctrine, a blasphemous heresy, directly contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England.” Prynne. Church of England Antithesis, etc., page 206.

(7) Is it not a historical fact, that the same King James the 1st, in the same year 1612, wrote a letter to the States of Holland, in consequence of a Dutch divine, named Bertius, having written a book on the Apostasy of the Saints, and sent it to the Archbishop of Canterbury. In this letter, the King speaks of Bertius as “a pestilent heretic,” and called his doctrine “an abominable heresy,” and in one place says, “he is not ashamed to lie so grossly as to avow that the heresies contained in the said book are agreeable with the religion and profession of the Church of England.”-Prynne. Church of England's Antithesis to Arminianism, page 206.

(8) Is it not a historical fact, that the same King James the First, in the year 1616, visited with severe displeasure a clergyman named Sympson, a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, for preaching before him, at Royston, that true believers may totally fall away?-Fuller's History of Cambridge, page 160.

(9) Is it not a historical fact, that in the Synod of Dort, in the year 1619, the doctrine of final perseverance was strongly asserted? Now several English Divines were formally deputed to attend this Synod and take part in its proceedings, and amongst others, Bishop Davenant, and Bishop Carleton. And is it not notorious that however much they differed from the conclusions of the Synod in the matters of discipline, they “approved all the points of the doctrine?”-Fuller's Church History, vol. 3, page 279.

(10) Last, but not least, is it not a historical fact, that all the leading Archbishops and Bishops in the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First, were thorough Calvinists in matters of doctrine? And is

not a notorious fact that the final perseverance of the saints is one of the leading principles of the system that is called Calvinistic? Heylin himself is obliged to confess this. He says, “It was safer for any man in those times to have been looked upon as a heathen or publican than an anti-Calvinist.” -Heylin's Life of Laud, page 52.

I lay these ten facts before the reader, and ask his serious attention to them. I am unable to understand how any one can avoid the conclusion which may be drawn from them. To me it appears an established point in history, that the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is the old doctrine of the Church of England, and the denial of this doctrine is new.

I could easily add long quotations to strengthen the evidence which I have brought forward. I could turn to marginal notes of the “Bishop's Bible”, published under the special superintendence and approval of Archbishop Parker. I could quote passage upon passage from the writings of Archbishops Cranmer, Grindal, Sandys, Abbot, Usher,-of Bishops Ridley, Latimer, Jewell, Pilkington, Babington, Hall, Davenant, Carleton, Prideaux, and Reynolds. In short, the difficulty is to find theological writers in the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First, who ever thought of disputing final perseverance. William Prynne gives the names of no less than 130 writers who held that the saints could never perish, and gives the references to their works. But at that time he wrote (1629) he could only find four writers who had denied the perseverance of the saints and taught the possibility of their apostasy. I could supply many quotations from the writers he names. But I spare the reader. He has probably heard enough.

I have made this note longer than I intended, but the importance of the facts which it contains must be my apology. The whole subject in the present day is one of the deepest moment.

The evangelical members of the Church of England are constantly taunted by their adversaries with holding new views. They are told that their opinions are not “Church opinions,” and that they ought to leave the Church of England and become dissenters without delay. I entreat all readers of these pages never to be moved by such taunts and insinuations. I tell them that those who make them are only exposing their own thorough ignorance of the first principles of their own communion. I tell them not to be ashamed of their own views, for they have no cause. I tell them that the evangelical members of the Church of England are the true representatives of the views of the Reformers and their immediate successors, and that those who oppose them know not what they are saying.

If I were in a position to offer counsel to my evangelical brethren at this crisis, I would earnestly advise them to hold fast the doctrine of final perseverance, and never let it go. There is no doctrine which so entirely overturns the modern view of baptismal regeneration. There is no doctrine in consequence which Tractarians dislike so much and labour so hard to overthrow. It is a barrier in their path. It is a thorn in their side. It is an argument which they cannot answer. The seventeenth Article of the Church of England is one of the keys of our position. He that gives up the doctrine of perseverance may rest assured that he has sold the past to his enemy. Once allow that saving grace may be totally lost, and in the day of controversy you will never hold your ground.

Last, but not least, I would counsel all clergymen who are persecuted for holding evangelical opinions to arm themselves with a thorough knowledge of old Church of England divinity, and to take comfort in the thought that they have the truth on their side. They, at all events, are explaining

the thirty-nine Articles according to the intention of those who composed them. Their opponents are either neglecting the Articles, or attaching to them a new meaning.

How far is it reasonable and fair to persecute godly men for preferring the views of the Reformers to those of Laud, I leave it to the others to decide. But those who are persecuted may take comfort in the reflection that if they err, they err in good company. And if they ever suffer loss of character and position for holding final perseverance and denying the inseparable connection of baptism and regeneration, they may boldly tell the world that they suffer because they agree with Latimer, and Hooper, and Jewell, and Whitgift, and Carleton, and Davenant, and Usher, and Leighton, and Hooker, and Hall. He that suffers in company with these good men has no cause to be ashamed.

8 I would entreat any man that hath his eyes set right in his head to read and consider the words of the seventeenth Article, the order and soundness of them; and then let him judge whether perseverance unto the end be not soundly and roundly set down and averred in this Article."-George Carleton, Bishop of Chichester, 1692. An Examination, p.63.

9 "Now if Thou shalt kill this people as one man, then the nations, which have heard the fame of Thee, will speak, saying, "Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness."- Numbers 14:15-16. "What wilt Thou do to Thy great name?"- Joshua 7:9. "If any of the elect perish, God is overcome by man's perverseness; but none of them perish, because God, who is omnipotent, can by no means be overcome."-Augustine. De Corruptione et Gratia, cap. VII

10 "How well do they consult for Christ's honour that say His sheep may die in a ditch of final apostasy?

"Christ and His members make one Christ. Now, is it possible a piece of Christ can be found at last burning in hell? Can Christ be a crippled Christ? Can this member drop off and that? How can Christ part with His mystical members and not with His glory?"-Gurnall. 1665.

11 The following texts, on which the opponents of perseverance principally rely, appear to call for a brief notice.

Ezekiel 3:20 and Ezekiel 18:24. I can see no proof in either of these cases that "the righteous" here spoken of, is anything more than one, whose outward conduct is righteous. There is nothing to show that he is one justified by faith and accounted righteous before God.

1 Corinthians 9:27. I see nothing in this but the godly fear of falling into sin, which is one of the marks of a believer, and distinguishes him from the unconverted, and a simple declaration of the means which Paul used to preserve himself from being a castaway. It is like 1 John v. 18: "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself."

John 15:2. This does not prove that the true believers shall be taken away from Christ. A branch that "does not bear fruit" is not a believer. "A lively faith," says the 12th Article, "may be as evidently known by good works, as a tree is known by the fruit."

1 Thessalonians 5:19. If "the Spirit" here means the Spirit in ourselves, it means no more than grieving the Spirit," in Ephesians 4:30. But many think it is the Spirit's gifts in others, and ought to be taken in connection with verse 20.

Galatians 5:4. The tenor of the whole Epistle seems to show that this “falling” is not from inward grace of the Spirit, but from the doctrine of grace. The same remark applies to 2 Corinthians 6:1.

Hebrews 6:4-6. The person here described as “falling away” has no characteristics which may notbe discovered in unconverted men, while it is not said that he possesses saving faith, and charity, and is elect.

John 8:31; Colossians 1:23. The conditional “if” in both these verses, and several others like them that might be quoted, does not imply uncertainty as to the salvation of those described. It simply means that the evidence of real grace is “continuance.” False grace perishes. True grace lasts. “It is frequent in Scripture,” says Charnock, “to put into promises these conditions which in other places are promised to be wrought in us.”-Charnock on Real Grace. 1684.

I readily grant that these are not all the texts that the adversaries of final perseverance generally bring forward; but I believe they are the principal ones. The weak point in their case is this: they have no text to prove that saints may fall away, which will at all compare with such an expression as, “My sheep shall never perish;” and they have no account to give of such a mighty saying as this promised of our Lord, which is at all satisfactory or even rational. John Goodwin, the famous Arminian, offers the following explanation of this text: “The promise of eternal safety made by Christ to His sheep, doth not relate to their estate in the present world, but to that of the world to come!” A man must be sorely put to straits when he can argue in such a way.

12 “They weaken Christians' comfort that make believers walk with Christ like dancers upon a rope, every moment in fear of breaking their necks.”-Manton on Jude. 1658 13 “There are as many miracles wrought as a saint is preserved minutes.”-Jenkyn on Jude. 1680.

14 The deathbed of Bruce, the famous Scotch divine, is a striking illustration of this part of my subject. Old Fleming describes it in the following words. “His sight failed him, whereupon he called for his Bible; but finding his sight gone he said, 'Cast up to me the eighth chapter of the Romans and set my finger to these words,-I am persuaded that neither death nor life, etc., shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Now,' said he, 'is my finger is upon them?' when they told him it was, he said, 'Now God be with you my children: I have breakfasted with you, and shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night,' and so gave up the Ghost.”-Fleming's Fulfilment of Prophecy, 1680.

EXPLANATORY NOTES ON

John 10:27-30. FROM Expository Thoughts on the Gospels.

27.- My sheep hear My voice, etc. Having told the Pharisees that they were not His sheep, our Lord goes on to describe the character of those who were His sheep; that is, of His own true people and servants. This He does in a verse of singular richness and fulness. Every word is instructive.

Christ calls His people “sheep.” He does so because they are in themselves singularly helpless and dependent on their Shepherd; because comparatively they are the most harmless and helpless of animals; because even at their best they are weak, and liable to go astray.

He calls them “My sheep.” They are His by God the Fathers gift,- His by redemption and purchase,- his by calling and choosing,- His by feeding, keeping, and preserving,- and His by their own consent and will. They are His peculiar property.

He says, “They hear My voice.” By this He means that they listen to His invitation, when He calls them to repent, believe, and come to Him. This supposes that Christ first speaks, and then they hear. Grace begins the work: they, through grace, obey His calling, and willingly do as He bids them. The ears of unconverted people are deaf to Christ's call, but true Christians hear and obey.

He says, “I know them,” This means that He knows them with a special knowledge of approbation, complacency, love and interest. (See the word “know” in Psalms 1:6, Psalms 31:7, Amos 3:2). Of course He knows the secret of all men's hearts, and all about all wicked people. But He knows with a peculiar knowledge those who are His people. The world knows them not, but Christ knows and cares for them (1 John 3:1).

He says, “They follow Me.” This means that His people, like sheep, obey, trust, and walk in the steps of their Divine Master. They follow Him in holy obedience to His commandments; they follow Him in striving to copy His example; and they follow Him in trusting implicitly His providential leadings,-going where He would have them go, and taking cheerfully all He appoints for them.

It is almost needless to remark that this description belongs to none but true Christians. It did not belong to the Pharisees to whom our Lord spoke. It does not belong to the multitudes of baptized people in our day.

Luther says: “The sheep, though the most simple creature, is superior to all animals in this, that he soon hears his shepherd's voice, and will follow no other. Also he is clever enough to hang entirely on his shepherd, and to seek help from him alone. He cannot help himself, nor heal himself, nor guard against wolves, but depends wholly and solely on the help of another.”

In the Greek of this verse, there is a nice distinction between the number of the verb “hear” and the verb “follow,” which the English language cannot convey. It is as if our Lord had said, My sheep are a body, which “hears” My voice, in the singular; and of which the individual members “follow” Me, in the plural.

28.-And I give, etc. From the character of Christ's sheep the Good Shepherd goes on to describe their privileges. He gives them eternal life; the precious gift of pardon and grace in this world, and a life of glory in the world to come. He says, “I give,” in the present tense. Eternal life is the present possession of every believer. He declares that they shall never perish or be lost, unto all eternity; and that no one shall ever pluck them out of His hand.

We have here the divinity and dignity of our Lord Jesus Christ. None but one who was very God could say, “I give eternal life.” No Apostle ever said so.

We have here the perpetuity of grace in believers, and the certainty that they shall never be cast away. How any one can deny this doctrine, as the Arminians do, and say that a true believer may fall away and be lost, in the face of this text, it is hard to understand. It is my own deliberate opinion that it would be almost impossible to imagine words in which a saint's “perseverance” could be more strongly asserted.

We have here a distinct promise that “no one,” man, angel, devil, or spirit, shall be able to tear from Christ His sheep. The Greek literally is not “any man,” but “any person or any one.”

The doctrine plainly taught in this text may be called “Calvinism” by some, and “of dangerous tendency” by others. The only question we ought to ask is, whether it is scriptural. The simplest answer to that question is, that the words of the text, in their plain and obvious meaning, cannot be honestly interpreted in any other way. To thrust in, as some enemies of perseverance do, the qualifying clause, “They shall never perish so long as they continue My sheep,” is adding to the Scripture, and taking unwarrantable liberties with Christ's words.

So, again, Whitby's interpretation, “They shall never perish through any defect on my part,” though they may fall away by their own fault, is a sad instance of unfair handling of scripture.

Let it only be remembered that the character of those who shall never perish is most distinctly and carefully laid down in this place. It is those who hear Christ's voice and follow Him, who alone are “sheep”: it is “His sheep,” and His sheep alone, who shall never perish. The man who boasts that he shall never be cast away, and never perish, while he is living in sin, is a miserable self-deceiver. It is the perseverance of saints, and not of sinners and wicked people, that is promised here. Doubtless the doctrine of the text may be misused and abused, like every other good thing. But to the humble, penitent believer, who puts his trust in Christ, it is one of the most glorious and comfortable truths of the Gospel. Those who dislike it would do well to study the 17th Article of the Church of England, and Hooker's Sermon on the “Perpetuity of faith in the Elect.”

Let it be noted that the last clause of the text plainly implies that many will try to pluck away Christians from Christ, and draw them back to sin. To feel that something is always “plucking” and “pulling” at us must never surprise believers. There is a devil, and saints will always feel and find his presence.

Let it be noted that to be safe in Christ's hand, and so never to perish, is one thing: but to feel that we are safe is quite another. Many true believers are safe, who do not realise and feel it.

Musculus observes that our Lord does not say in this verse that His sheep shall lose nothing in his world. They may loose property, liberty, and life, for Christ's sake. But their souls cannot be lost. He also observes that all Christ's sheep are in Christ's hand. His hand holding them, and not their hand holding Him, is the true secret of their safety and perseverance.

The importance of the doctrine contained in this text cannot, in my judgment, be overrated. The Christian who does not hold it is a great loser. It is one of the grand elements of the good news of the Gospel. It is a safeguard against much unsound doctrine. Perseverance can never be reconciled with baptismal regeneration. The advocates of an extravagant view of baptismal grace, it may be observed, always have a special dislike to the doctrine of this text.

Hengstenberg wisely remarks, “It is cold consolation to say, if and so as they remain My sheep they are secure, and shall never perish. The whole strength of our soul's desire is for a guarantee against ourselves. That there is such a guarantee is here assured to us.

29.-My Father who gave me, etc.,. Our Lord here strengthens the mighty promise just made, by declaring that His sheep are not His only, but His Father's: His Father gave them to Him. “My Father,” He declares, “is 'almighty,' or greater than all; the possessor of all power. No one is able

to pluck anything out of My Father's hand, so that My sheep's safety is doubly secured.” Let it be noted that the word “them,” in the last clause of our English version, is not in the Greek.

It is probable that both in this verse and the preceding one, there is a latent reference to the case of the man whom the Pharisees had lately “cast out” of the Church or excommunicated. Our Lord seems to say, “You may cut off and tear away from your outward church-membership whom you will; but you can never pluck away any of My people from Me.”

Let it be noted here that the Father is just as much interested in the safety of believers as the Son. To leave out of sight the Father's love, in our zeal for the glory of Christ, is 11 of the Holy Ghost: but the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.”

Augustine remarks that this text alone overthrows both the doctrine of the Sabellians and the Arians. It silences the Sabellians, who say there is only one Person in the Godhead, by speaking of two distinct Persons. It silences the Arians, who say the Son is inferior to the Father, by saying that the Father and Son are “one.”

Let it be noted that the doctrine of this verse is precisely the same that our Lord had maintained on a former occasion (in the fifth chapter) before the Sanhedrin. There it was expounded fully: here it is briefly asserted. And the interpretation put on His meaning, in both cases, by the Jews was exactly the same. They regarded it as a claim to be regarded as “God.”

The practical use of the text to the believer in Christ is far too much overlooked. It shows the entire childlike confidence with which such a one may look at the Father. “He who hath the Son hath the Father.” The remark is only too true that while some ignorantly talk of the Father, as if there was no Christ crucified, others with no less ignorance talk of Christ crucified as if there was no God and Father of Christ, who loved the world.

Chrysostom observes, “That thou mayest not suppose that Christ is weak, and the sheep are in safety through the Father's power, He addeth, 'I and the Father are one.” As though He had said, I did not assert that on account of the Father, no man plucketh them away, as though I were too weak to keep the sheep. For I and the Father are one. He speaks here with reference to power, for concerning this, was all His discourse; and if the power be the same, it is clear that the essence is also.”

Oecolampadius remarks, “He does not say we are one in the masculine gender, -that is one person; but one in the neuter gender, -that is one in nature, power, and majesty. If you were to say one Person, you would take away both, and leave neither Father nor Son.”

Maldonatus quotes a saying of Augustine's, “that it is invariably found in Scripture that things called 'one' are things of the same nature.”

It is fair to admit that Erasmus, Calvin, and a few others, think that “oneness” here only means unity of consent and will. But the vast majority of commentators think otherwise, and the Jews evidently thought so also.

Chapter 54

No Uncertain Sound

NO UNCERTAIN SOUND. His first charge to the New Diocese of Liverpool, October 19, 1881. [1] My Reverend and Lay Brethren, We are gathered together today on an occasion of much interest and real solemnity. This is the primary visitation of the first Bishop of a new English Diocese. How many visitations may be held, and how many Episcopal Charges delivered before the end of all things, no man can tell. Let us pray that there may be always found in this Diocese a trumpet which shall give no ‘uncertain sound,’ and a Bishop who shall promote the real interests of the Reformed Church of England.

I ask you to believe that I meet you with a deep sense of my own weakness and fallibility. I have been called unexpectedly to be the chief pastor of a Diocese of vast importance and very exceptional character, a Diocese in which, to use the words of Scripture, ‘there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.’ (Joshua 13:1.) I feel keenly how much is expected of a bishop in these days, and how little in reality he can do how much the difficulties of his office are increased by our unhappy divisions—and how hard it is for any bishop to do his duty without causing disappointment to some, and giving offence to others. All these things, I repeat, I feel very keenly. But I see no reason for despondency or despair. With prayer, and pains, and faith in Jesus Christ, nothing is impossible. No doubt there is much to be done by the Church in Lancashire. But He who was the Lord God of Joshua and the Israelites, when they crossed Jordan and entered Canaan, is not dead, but alive. If we have His blessing, and if we have a good understanding between Bishop, clergy, and laity, I have a firm conviction that great results will follow from the formation of the new See of Liverpool, and that in a few years the Church of England will occupy a very different, and an improved position in the West Derby Hundred of this County. In a new Diocese like ours, accurate statistics are of the utmost importance. We cannot possibly form an estimate of ‘things that are wanting’ unless we thoroughly understand our position. I make no apology, therefore, in the outset of my Charge, for calling your attention to certain broad facts which we shall do well to remember. There are some very peculiar features in the Diocese of Liverpool, which distinguish it from any other Diocese in the land, and I shall try to set them before you in order.

(1) In a geographical point of view, our Diocese covers a smaller area of ground than any other in Great Britain, with the single exception of London. There are 181,000 acres in the Diocese of London, and 262,000 in Liverpool. It consists simply of the West Derby Hundred of the County of Lancaster, a district so thoroughly intersected with railways that a Bishop residing in Liverpool may reach almost every church in his Diocese in about an hour.

(2) The population of our Diocese is little less than 1,100,000 according to the last census. Nine English dioceses show a larger return: viz., London, Winchester, Lichfield, Rochester, Worcester, York, Durham, and Manchester. In none, however, with the exception of London, is the population per acre so dense and closely packed together. Liverpool and its suburbs alone make up at least 650,000 dwellers in streets out of the 1,100,000. Wigan and its suburbs, Warrington, St. Helen’s, Southport, Farnworth, Widnes, and Garston supply an aggregate of at least 250,000 more. It is

probable that not more than 200,000 of the inhabitants of our Diocese can be found outside towns. In hardly any part of the Queen's dominions has the population increased so rapidly, chiefly from the demand for labour, and consequent immigration in order to meet that demand, during the last decennial period.

(3) The nationalities, employments, and occupations of our large population are curiously diversified. Perhaps there is hardly a district in Great Britain in which you will see such an extraordinary variety of classes. In Liverpool itself you have an enormous body of inhabitants connected with our docks and shipping, and an incessant stream of emigrants from the Continent of Europe to America. You have smoky manufactories and squalid poverty at one end of the city, and within two or three miles you have fine streets and comparative wealth. In Wigan, Warrington, St. Helen's, Widnes, and the districts round these places, you have swarms of people employed in collieries, iron foundries, cotton manufactories, glass and chemical works. Around Ormskirk, Sefton, Hale,

Chapter 55

Occupy til I come

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." I offer you some of these inspiring tracts exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland in the 19th century.

“OCCUPY TILL I COME.”

by

J. C. Ryle

Luke 19:11-13.

“And as they heard these things he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

“He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

“ And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, OCCUPY TILL I COME.”

READER,

The words before your eyes form an introduction to the parable, which is commonly called the “Parable of the Pounds.” They contain matter which deserves the prayerful consideration of every true Christian in the present day.

There are some parables of which Matthew Henry says, with equal quaintness and truth, “The key hangs beside the door.” The Holy Ghost himself interprets them. There is no room left for doubt as to the purpose for which they were spoken. Of such parables the parable of the Pounds is an example.

St. Luke tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.”

These words reveal to us the secret thoughts of our Lord's disciples at this period of His ministry. They were drawing nigh to Jerusalem. They gathered from many of their Master's sayings, that something remarkable was about to happen; they had a strong impression that one great end of His coming into the world was about to be accomplished: so far they were quite right. As to the precise nature of the event about to happen they were quite wrong.

Reader, there are three subjects opened up in the passage of Scripture, which appear to me to be of the deepest importance. Upon each of these I wish to offer a few thoughts for your private meditation. I purposely abstain from touching any part of the parable except the beginning. I want

to direct your attention to the three following points.

I. I will speak of the mistake of the disciples, referred to in the verses before us.

II. I will speak of the present position of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. I will speak of the present duty of all who profess to be Jesus Christ's disciples.

May God bless the reading of this tract to every one into whose hands it may fall. May every reader be taught to pray that the Spirit will guide him into all truth.

I. I will first speak of the mistake into which the disciples had fallen.

What was this mistake? Let us try to understand this point clearly. With what feelings ought Christians in the present day to regard this mistake? Let us try to understand this clearly also.

Our Lord's disciples seem to have thought that the Old Testament promises of Messiah's visible kingdom and glory were about to be immediately fulfilled. They believed rightly that He was indeed the Messiah,-the Christ of God. But they blindly supposed that He was going at once to take to Himself His great power, and reign gloriously over the earth. This was the sum and substance of their error.

They appear to have concluded that now was the day and now the hour when the Redeemer would build up Zion, and appear in His glory (Psalms 102:16),-when He would smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked,-when He would assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah (Isaiah 11:4, Isaiah 11:12),-when He would take the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession,-break His enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psalms 2:8-9),-when He would reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously? (Isaiah 24:23),-when the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven would be given to the saints of the Most High. (Daniel 7:27) Such appears to have been the mistake into which our Lord's disciples had fallen at the time when He spoke the parable of the Pounds.

It was a great mistake unquestionably. They did not realize that before all these prophecies could be fulfilled, “it behoved Christ to suffer.” (Luke 24:46) Their sanguine expectations overleaped the crucifixion and the long parenthesis of time to follow, and bounded onward to the final glory. They did not see that there was to be a first advent of Messiah “to be cut off,” before the second advent of Messiah to reign. They did not perceive that the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law of Moses were first to receive their fulfilment in a better sacrifice and a better high priest, and the shedding of blood more precious than that of bulls and goats. They did not comprehend that before the glory Christ must be crucified, and an elect people gathered out from among the Gentiles by the preaching of the Gospel. All these were dark things to them. They grasped part of the prophetical word, but not all. They saw that Christ was to have a kingdom, but they did not see that He was to be wounded and bruised, and be an offering for sin. They understood the end of the second Psalm, and the whole of the ninety-seventh and ninety-eighth, but not the beginning of the twenty-second. They understood the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, but not the fifty-third. They understood the dispensation of the crown and the glory, but not the dispensation of the cross and the shame. Such was their mistake.

It was a mistake which you will find partially clinging to the disciples even after the crucifixion. You see it creeping forth in the first days of the Church between the resurrection and the ascension. They said, “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”* (Acts 1:6) You have it referred to by St. Paul: “Be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there be a falling away first.” (2 Thessalonians 2:2) In both these instances the old Jewish leaven peeps out. In both you see the same tendency to misunderstand God's purposes,-to overlook the dispensation of the crucifixion, and to concentrate all thought on the dispensation of the kingdom. In both you see the same disposition to neglect the duties of the present order of things.-Those duties are to bear the cross after Christ, to take part in the afflictions of the Gospel, to work, to witness, to preach, and to help to gather out a people for the Lord.

It was a mistake, however, which I frankly say, I think we Gentile believers are bound to regard with much tenderness and consideration. It will not do to run down our Jewish brethren as “carnal” and earthly-minded in their interpretation of prophecy, as if we Gentiles had never made any mistake at all. I think we have made great mistakes, and it is high time that we should confess it.

I believe we have fallen into an error parallel with that of our Jewish brethren,-an error less fatal in its consequences than theirs, but an error far more inexcusable, because we have had more light. If the Jew thought too exclusively of Christ reigning, has not the Gentile thought too exclusively of Christ suffering? If the Jew could see nothing in Old Testament prophecy but Christ's exaltation and final power, has not the Gentile often seen nothing but Christ's humiliation and the preaching of the Gospel? If the Jew dwelt too much on Christ's second advent, has not the Gentile dwelt too exclusively on the first? If the Jew ignored the cross, has not the Gentile ignored the crown? I believe there can be but one answer to these questions. I believe that we Gentiles till lately have been very guilty concerning a large portion of God's truth. I believe that we have cherished an arbitrary, reckless habit of interpreting first advent texts literally, and second advent texts spiritually. I believe we have not rightly understood “all that the prophets have spoken” about the second personal advent of Christ, any more than the Jews did about the first. And because we have done this, I say that we should speak of such mistakes as that referred to in our text, with much tenderness and compassion.

Reader, I earnestly invite your special attention to the point on which I am now dwelling. I know not what your opinions may be about the fulfilment of the prophetical parts of Scripture. I approach the subject with fear and trembling, lest I should hurt the feelings of any dear brother in the Lord. But I ask you in all affection to examine your own views about prophecy. I entreat you to consider calmly whether your opinions about Christ's second advent and kingdom are as sound and Scriptural as those of His first disciples. I entreat you to take heed, lest insensibly you commit as great error about Christ's second coming and glory, as they did about Christ's first coming and cross.

I beseech you not to dismiss the subject which I now press upon your attention, as a matter of curious speculation, and one of no practical importance. Believe me, it affects the whole question between yourself and the unconverted Jew. I warn you, that unless you interpret the prophetical portion of the Old Testament in the simple, literal meaning of its words, you will find it no easy

matter to carry on an argument with an unconverted Jew.

You would probably tell the Jew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. To those Scriptures you would refer him for proof. You would show him Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:26, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 9:9, and Zechariah 11:13. You would tell him that in Jesus of Nazareth those Scriptures were literally fulfilled. You would urge upon him that he ought to believe these Scriptures, and receive Christ as the Messiah. All this is very good. So far you would do well.

But suppose the Jew asks you if you take all the prophecies of the old Testament in their simple literal meaning? Suppose he asks you if you believe in a literal personal advent of Messiah to reign over the earth in glory,-a literal restoration of Judah and Israel to Palestine,-a literal rebuilding and restoration of Zion and Jerusalem? Suppose the unconverted Jew puts these questions to you, what answer are you prepared to make?

Will you dare to tell him that Old Testament prophecies of this kind are not to be taken in their plain literal sense? Will you dare to tell him that the words Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, Judah, Ephraim, Israel, do not mean what they seem to mean, but mean the Church of Christ? Will you dare to tell him that the glorious kingdom and future blessedness of Zion, so often dwelt upon in prophecy, mean nothing more than the gradual Christianizing of the world by missionaries and Gospel preaching? Will you dare to tell him that you think it “carnal” to take such Scriptures literally,- “carnal” to expect a literal rebuilding of Jerusalem,- “carnal” to expect a literal coming of Messiah to reign,- “carnal” to look for a literal gathering and restoration of Israel? Oh, reader, if you are a man of this mind, take care what you are doing? I say again, take care.

Do you not see that you are putting a weapon in the hand of the unconverted Jew, which he will probably use with irresistible power? Do you not see that you are cutting the ground from under your own feet, and supplying the Jew with a strong argument for not believing your own interpretation of Scripture? Do you not see that the Jew will reply, that it is “carnal” to tell him that the Messiah has come literally to suffer, if you tell him that it is “carnal” to expect Messiah to come literally to reign? Do you not see that the Jew will tell you that it is far more “carnal” in you to believe that Messiah could come into the world as a despised, crucified man of sorrows, than it is in him to believe that He will come into the world as a glorious King? Beyond doubt He will do so, and you will find no answer to give.

Reader, I commend these things to your serious attention. I entreat you to throw aside all prejudice, and view the subject I am dwelling upon with calm and dispassionate thought. I beseech you to take up anew the prophetical Scriptures, and pray that you may not err in interpreting their meaning. Read them in the light of those two great pole-stars, the first and second advents of Jesus Christ. Bind up with the first advent the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, the preaching of the Gospel as a witness to the world, and the gathering out of the election of grace. Bind up with the second advent the restoration of the Jews, the pouring out of judgments on unbelieving Christians, the conversion of the world, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth. Do this, and you will see a meaning and fulness in prophecy which perhaps you never yet discovered.

I am quite aware that many good men do not see the prophetical subject as I do. I am painfully sensible that I seem presumptuous in differing from them. But I dare not refuse anything which appears to me plainly written in Scripture. I consider the best of men are not infallible. I think we should dread Protestant traditions not according to the Bible, as much as the traditions of the Church of Rome.

I believe it is high time for the Church of Christ to awake out of its sleep about Old Testament prophecy. From the time of the old Father, Jerome, down to the present day, men have gone on in a pernicious habit of “spiritualizing” the words of the Prophets, until their true meaning has been well nigh buried. It is high time to lay aside traditional methods of interpretation, and to give up our blind obedience to the opinions of such writers as Poole, Henry, Scott, and Clarke, upon unfulfilled prophecy. It is high time to fall back on the good old principle that Scripture generally means what it seems to mean, and to beware of that semi-sceptical argument, “such and such an interpretation cannot be correct, because it seems to us “carnal!”

It is high time for Christians to interpret unfulfilled prophecy by the light of prophecies already fulfilled. The curses on the Jews were brought to pass literally:-so also will be the blessings. The scattering was literal:-so also will be the gathering. The pulling down of Zion was literal:-so also will be the building up. The rejection of Israel was literal:-so also will be the restoration.

It is high time to interpret the events that shall accompany Christ's second advent by the light of those accompanying His first advent. The first advent was literal, visible, personal:-so also will be His second. His first advent was with a literal body:-so also will be His second. At His first advent the least predictions were fulfilled to the very letter:-so also will they be at His second. The shame was literal and visible:-so also will be the glory.

It is high time to cease from explaining Old Testament prophecies in a way not warranted by the New Testament. What right have we to say that Judah, Zion, Israel, and Jerusalem, ever mean anything but literal Judah, literal Zion, literal Israel, and literal Jerusalem? What precedent shall we find in the New Testament? Hardly any, if indeed any at all. Well, says an admirable writer on this subject:-”There are really only two or three places in the whole New Testament-Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation-where such names are used decidedly in what may be called a spiritual or figurative state.”-The word “Jerusalem” occurs eighty times, and all of them unquestionably literal, save when the opposite is expressly pointed out by the epithets “heavenly,” or “new”, or “holy.” “Jew” occurs a hundred times, and only four are even ambiguous, as Romans 2:28. “Israel” and “Israelite” occur forty times, and all literal. “Judah” and “Judea” above twenty times, and all literal. -Bonar's “Prophetical Landmarks.” p.300.

It is no answer to all this to tell us that it is impossible to carry out the principle of a literal interpretation, and that Christ was not a literal “door,” nor a literal “branch,” nor the bread in the sacrament His literal “body.” I reply that when I speak of literal interpretation, I require no man to deny the use of figurative language. I fully admit that emblems, figures, and symbols are used in foretelling Messiah's glory, as well as in foretelling Messiah's sufferings. I do not believe that Jesus was a literal “root out of dry ground,” or a literal “lamb.” (Isaiah 53) All I maintain is, that prophecies about Christ's coming and kingdom do foretell literal facts, as truly as the prophecy about Christ being numbered with the transgressors. All I say is, that prophecies about the Jews being gathered, will be as really and literally made good as those about the Jews being scattered.

It is no good argument to tell us that the principle of literal interpretation deprives the Church of the use and benefit of many parts of the Old Testament. I deny the justice of the charge altogether. I consider that all things written in the Prophets concerning the salvation of individual souls, may be used by Gentiles as freely as by Jews. The hearts of Jews and Gentiles are naturally just the same. The way to heaven is but one. Both Jews and Gentiles need justification, regeneration, sanctification. Whatever is written concerning such subjects, is just as much the property of the Gentile as the Jew. Moreover, I hold Israel to be a people specially typical of the whole body of believers in Christ. I consider that believers now may take the comfort of every promise of pardon, comfort, and grace which is addressed to Israel. Such words I regard as the common portion of all believers. All I maintain is, that whenever God says He shall do or give certain things to Israel and Jerusalem in this world, we ought entirely to believe that to literal Israel and Jerusalem those things will be given and done.

It is no valid argument to say that many who think as I do about prophecy, have said and written very foolish things, and have often contradicted one another. All this may be very true, and yet the principles for which we contend may be scriptural, sound and correct. The infidel does not overturn the truth of Christianity when he points to the existence of Antinomians, Jumpers, and Shakers. The worldly man does not overturn the truth of real evangelical religion when he sneers at the differences of Calvinists and Arminians. Just in the same way one writer on prophecy may interpret Revelation or Daniel in one way, and another in another. One man may take on him to fix dates, and prove at last to be quite wrong; another may apply prophecies to living individuals, and prove utterly mistaken. But all these things do not affect the main question. They do not in the least prove that the advent of Christ before the millennium is not a Scriptural truth, and that the principle of interpreting Old Testament prophecy literally is not a sound principle.

Reader, I say once more, we ought to regard the mistakes of our Lord's disciples with great tenderness and consideration. We Christians are the last who ought to condemn them strongly. Great as their mistakes were, our own have been almost as bad. We have been very quick in discovering the beam in our Jewish brother's eyes, and have forgotten a large mote in our own. We have been long putting a great stumbling-block in his way, by our arbitrary and inconsistent explanations of Old Testament prophecy.

Reader, let us do our part to remove that great stumbling-block. If we would help to remove the veil which prevents the Jews seeing the cross, let us also strip off the veil from our own eyes, and look steadily and unflinchingly at the second advent and the crown.*

II. The second question I wish to consider is this, what is the present position of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The parable appears to me to answer that question distinctly in the twelfth verse. “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.” This nobleman represents the Lord Jesus Christ, and that in two respects.

Like the nobleman, the Lord Jesus is gone into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom. He has not received it yet in possession, though He has it in promise. He has a spiritual kingdom unquestionably: He is king over the hearts of His believing people, and they are all His faithful subjects. He has a controlling power over the world, without controversy: He is King of kings and

Lord of lords. “By Him all things consist,” and nothing can happen without His permission. But His real, literal, visible, complete kingdom the Lord Jesus has not yet received. To use the words of Hebrews 2:8, “We see not yet all things put under Him.” To use the words of Psalms 110:1, “He sits on the right hand of the Father till His enemies are made His footstool.”

The devil is the prince of this world during the present dispensation. (John 14:30) The vast majority of the inhabitants of the earth choose the things that please the devil far more than the things that please God. Little as they may think it, they are doing the devil's will, behaving as the devil's subjects, and serving the devil far more than Christ. This is the actual condition of Christendom as well as of heathen countries. After 1900 years of Bibles and Gospel preaching, there is not a nation, or a country, or a parish, or a long established congregation, where the devil has not more subjects than Christ. So fearfully true is it that the world is not yet the kingdom of Christ.

The Lord Jesus during the present dispensation is like David between the time of His anointing and Saul's death. He has the promise of the kingdom, but He has not yet received the crown and throne. (1 Samuel 22:1-2)

He is followed by a few, and those often neither great nor wise, but they are a faithful people. He is persecuted by His enemies, and ofttimes driven into the wilderness, and yet His party is never quite destroyed. But He has none of the visible signs of the kingdom at present: no earthly glory, majesty, greatness, obedience. The vast majority of mankind see no beauty in Him: they will not have this man to reign over them. His people are not honoured for their Master's sake: they walk the earth like princes in disguise. His kingdom is not yet come: His will is not yet done on earth excepting by a little flock. It is not the day of “His power.” The Lord Jesus is biding His time.

Reader, I entreat you to grasp firmly this truth, for truth I believe it to be. Great delusion abounds on the subject of Christ's kingdom. Take heed lest any man deceive you by purely traditional teachings about prophetical truth. Hymns are composed and sung which darken God's counsel on this subject by words without knowledge. Texts are wrested from their true meaning, and accommodated to the present order of things, which are not justly applicable to any but the period of the second advent. Beware of the mischievous infection of this habit of text-wresting. Beware of the sapping effect of beautiful poetry, in which unfulfilled promises of glory are twisted and adapted to the present dispensation. Settle it down in your mind that Christ's kingdom is yet to come. His arrows are not yet sharp in the hearts of His enemies. The day of His power has not yet begun. He is gathering out a people to carry the cross and walk in His steps; but the time of His coronation has not yet arrived.

But just as the Lord Jesus, like the nobleman, “went to receive a kingdom,” so, like the nobleman, the Lord Jesus intends one day “to return.”

The words of the Angels (Acts 1:11) shall have a complete fulfilment: “This same Jesus which was taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” As His going away was a real literal going away, so His return shall be a real literal return. As He came personally the first time with a body, so He shall come personally the second time with a body. As He came visibly to this earth and visibly went away, so when He comes the second time He shall visibly return. And then, and not till then, the complete kingdom of Christ shall begin. He left His servants as “a nobleman,” He returns to His servants as “a King.”

Then He intends to cast out that old usurper the devil, to bind him for a thousand years, and strip him of his power. (Revelation 20:1)

Then He intends to make a restitution of the face of creation. (Acts 3:21) It shall be the world's jubilee day. Our earth shall at last bring forth her increase: the King shall at length have His own again. At last the ninety-seventh Psalm shall be fulfilled, and men shall say, “The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice!”

Then He intends to fulfil the prophecies of Enoch, John the Baptist, and St. Paul: “to execute judgment upon all the ungodly” inhabitants of Christendom- “to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,”-and “in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel.” (Jude 1:15; Matthew 3:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:8)

Then He intends to raise His dead saints and gather His living ones, to gather together the scattered tribes of Israel, and to set up an empire on earth in which every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord.

When, how, where, in what manner, all these things shall be, we cannot say particularly: enough for us to know that they shall be. The Lord Jesus has undertaken to do them, and they shall be performed: the Lord Jesus waits for the time appointed by the Father, and then they shall all come to pass. As surely as He was born of a pure virgin, and lived on earth thirty three years as a servant, so surely He shall come with clouds in glory, and reign on the earth as a king.

Reader, I charge you to establish in your mind among the great verities of your religion, that Christ is one day to have a complete kingdom in this world,-that His kingdom is not yet set up,-but that it will be set up in the day of His return. Know clearly whose kingdom it is now: not Christ's, but the usurper Satan's. Know clearly whose kingdom it is to be one day: not Satan the usurper's, but Jesus Christ's. Know clearly when the kingdom is to change hands, and the usurper to be cast out: when the Lord Jesus returns in person, and not before. Know clearly what the Lord Jesus is doing now: He is sitting at the right hand of the Father,-interceding as a high priest in the holy of holies for His people,-adding to their number such as shall be saved by the preaching of the Gospel,-and waiting till the appointed “day of His power,” when He shall come forth to bless His people, and sit as a priest upon His throne. Know these things clearly, and you will do well.

Know these things clearly, and then you will not cherish extravagant expectations from any Church, minister, or religious machinery in this present dispensation: you will not marvel to see ministers and missionaries not converting all to whom they preach; you will not wonder to find that while some believe the Gospel, many believe not; you will not be depressed and cast down when you see the children of the world in every place many, and the children of God few. You will remember that “the days are evil,” and that the time of general conversion is not yet arrived. You will thank God that any are converted at all, and that while the Gospel is hid to the wise and prudent, it is yet revealed to babes. Alas, for the man who expects a millennium before the Lord Jesus returns! How can this possibly be, if the world in the day of His coming is to be found as it was in the days of Noah and Lot? (Luke 18:26-30)

Know these things clearly, and then you will not be confounded and surprised by the continuance of immense evils in the world. Wars, and tumults, and oppression, and dishonesty, and selfishness, and covetousness, and superstition, and bad government, and abounding heresies,

will not appear to you unaccountable. You will not sink down into a morbid, misanthropic condition of mind when you see laws, and reforms, and education, not making mankind perfect; you will not relapse into a state of apathy and disgust when you see Churches full of imperfections, and theologians making mistakes. You will say to yourself, “The time of Christ's power has not yet arrived. The devil is still working among his children, and sowing darkness and division broadcast among the saints: the true King is yet to come.”

Know these things clearly, and then you will see why God delays the final glory, and allows things to go on as they do in this world. It is not that He is not able to prevent evil,-it is not that He is slack in the fulfilling of His promises,-but the Lord is taking out for Himself a people by the preaching of the Gospel. (Acts 16:14; 2 Peter 3:9) He is longsuffering to unconverted Christians. The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Once let the number of the elect be gathered out of the world,-once let the last elect sinner be brought to repentance, and then the kingdom of Christ shall be set up, and the throne of grace exchanged for the throne of glory.

Know these things clearly, and then you will work diligently to do good to souls. The time is short. “The night is far spent: the day is at hand.” The signs of the times call loudly for watchfulness, and speak with no uncertain voice. The Turkish empire is drying up; the Jews are cared for as they never have been for nineteen hundred years; the Gospel is being preached as a witness in almost every corner of the world. Surely if we would pluck a few more brands from the burning before it is too late, we must work hard and lose no time. We must preach,-we must warn,-we must exhort,-we must give money to religious societies,-we must spend and be spent far more than we have ever done yet.

Know these things clearly, and then you will be often looking for the coming of the day of God. You will regard the second advent as a glorious and comfortable truth, around which your best hopes will all be clustered. You will not merely think of Christ crucified, but you will think also of Christ coming again. You will long for the days of refreshing and the manifestation of the sons of God. (Acts 3:19; Romans 8:19) You will find peace in looking back to the cross, and you will find joyful hope in looking forward to the kingdom.

Once more, I repeat, know clearly Christ's present position. He is like one who is “gone into a far country to receive a kingdom, and then to return.”

III. The third and last question I wish to consider, is this: What is the present duty of all Christ's professing disciples?

When I speak of present duty, I mean, of course, their duty between the period of Christ's first and second advent. And I find an answer in the words of the nobleman, in the parable, to his servants: he “delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.”

Reader, I know few words more searching and impressive than these four: “Occupy till I come.” They are spoken to all who profess and call themselves Christians. They address the conscience of every one who has not renounced his baptism, and formally turned his back on Christianity. They ought to stir up all hearers of the Gospel to examine themselves whether they are in the faith, and to prove themselves. Listen to me for a few minutes, while I try to impress them on your attention. For your sake, remember, these words were written: “Occupy till I come.”

The Lord Jesus bids you “occupy.” By that He means that you are to be “a doer” in your Christianity, and not merely a hearer and professor. He wants His servants not only to receive His wages, and eat His bread, and dwell in His house, and belong to His family,-but also to do His work. You are to “let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works.” (Matthew 5:16) Have you faith? It must not be a dead faith: it must “work by love.” (Galatians 5:6) Are you elect? You are elect unto “obedience.” (1 Peter 1:2) Are you redeemed? You are redeemed that you may be “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14) Do you love Christ? Prove the reality of your love by keeping Christ's commandments. (John 14:15) Oh, reader, do not forget this charge to “occupy!” Beware of an idle, talking, gossiping, sentimental, do-nothing religion. Think not because your doings cannot justify you, or put away one single sin, that therefore it matters not whether you do anything at all. Away with such a delusion! Cast it behind you as an invention of the devil. Think of the house built upon the sand, and its miserable end. (Matthew 7:24-27) As ever you would “make your calling and election sure,” be a doing Christian.

But the Lord Jesus also bids you “occupy your pound.” By this He means that He has given each one of His people some opportunity of glorifying Him. He would have you understand that everyone has got his own sphere,-the poorest as well as the richest; that everyone has an open door before him, and may, if he will, show forth his Master's praise. Your bodily health and strength, your mental gifts and capacities, your money and your earthly possessions, your rank and position in life, your example and influence with others, your liberty to read the Bible and hear the Gospel, your plentiful supply of means of grace,-all these are your “pounds.” All these are to be used and employed with a continual reference to the glory of Christ: all these are His gifts. “Of Him come riches and honour.” (1 Chronicles 29:12) “His is the silver, and His the gold.” (Haggai 2:8) “His is your body, and His is your spirit.” (1 Corinthians 6:20) “He appoints your habitation: He gives you life and breath.” (Acts 17:25-26) You are not your own: you are bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:20) Surely it is no great matter if He bids you honour Him and serve Him with all that you have. Breathes there the man or woman among the readers of this tract that has received nothing at the Lord's hand! Not one, I am sure. Oh, see to it, that you pay out your Lord's money well and honestly! Take heed that you do not bury your pound!

But the Lord Jesus bids you also to “occupy till He comes.” By that He means that you are to do His work on earth, like one who continually looks for His return. You are to be like the faithful servant, who knows not what hour his master may come home, but keeps all things in readiness, and is always prepared. You are to be like one who knows that Christ's coming is the great reckoning day, and to be ready to render up your account at any moment. You are not to suppose that you have any freehold in this world, nor even a lease: the greatest and the richest of mankind is only God's tenant-at-will. You are not to neglect any social duty or relation of life because of the uncertainty of the Lord's return. You are to fill the station to which God has called you in a godly and Christian way; and you are to be ready to go from the place of business to meet Christ in the air, if the Lord shall think fit. You are to be like a man who never knows what a day might bring forth and, therefore, to put off nothing till a “convenient season.” You are to rise and go forth in the morning, ready, if need be, to meet Christ at noon. You are to lie down in bed at night, ready, if need be, to be awakened by the midnight cry, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh!” You are to keep your spiritual accounts in a state of constant preparation, like one who never knows how soon they may be called for. You are to measure all your ways by the measure of Christ's appearing, and to

do nothing in which you would not like Jesus to find you engaged. This is to “occupy” till Jesus comes.

Think, reader, how condemning are these words to thousands of professing Christians! What an utter absence of preparation appears in their daily walk and conversation! How thoroughly unfit they are to meet Christ! They know nothing of occupying the gifts of God as loans for which they must give account. They show not the slightest desire to glorify Him with “body and spirit which are His.” They give no sign of readiness for the second advent. Well says old Gurnal, “It may be written on the grave of every unconverted man, Here lies one who never did for God an hour's work.” Who can wonder in a world like this, if a minister often cries to his congregation, “Ye must he born again:” “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (John 3:7; Matthew 18:3)

Think again, how arousing these words ought to be to all who are rich in this world, but do not know how to spend their money rightly. Alas, there are many who live on as if Christ had never said anything about the difficulty of rich men being saved! They are rich towards their own pleasures, or their own tastes, or their own families, but not rich towards God! They live as if they would not have to give an account of their use of money; they live as if there was no reckoning day before the bar of Christ: they live as if Christ had never said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35) “Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not.” (Luke 12:33) Oh, if this tract should by chance fall into the hands of such a one, I do beseech you consider your ways and be wise. Cease to be content with giving God's cause a few shillings, or an occasional guinea; give far more liberally than you have done yet: give hundreds where you now give tens; give thousands where you now give hundreds. Then, and not till then, I shall believe you are “occupying,” as one who looks for Christ's return. Alas, for the covetousness and narrow-mindedness of the Church of these days! May the Lord open the eyes of rich Christians.

Think again, how instructive are these words to all who are troubled by doubts about mingling with the world, and taking part in its vain amusements. It is useless to tell us that races, and balls, and theatres, and operas, and cards, are not forbidden by name in Scripture. The question we should ask ourselves is simply this,-”Am I occupying, as one who looks for Christ's return, when I take part in these things? Should I like Jesus to return suddenly and find me on the race-course, or in the ball-room, or at the theatre, or at the card-table? Should I think I was in my right place, and where my Lord would have me to be?” Oh, dear reader, this is the true test by which to try all our daily occupations and employment of time! That thing which we would not do if we thought Jesus was coming tonight, that thing we ought not to do at all. That place to which we would not go if we thought Jesus was coming this day, that place we ought to avoid. That company in which we would not like Jesus to find us, in that company we ought never to sit down. Oh, that men would live as in the sight of Christ! not as in the sight of man, or of the Church, or of ministers,-but as in the sight of Christ! This would be “occupying till He comes.”

But think how encouraging are these words to all who seek first the kingdom of God; and love the Lord Christ in sincerity. What though the children of the world regard them as “righteous overmuch!” What though mistaken friends and relations tell them they pay too much attention to religion, and go too far! Those words, “Occupy till I come,” are words which justify their conduct.

They may well reply to their persecutors, “I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down: I am striving to live so as to be ready when the Lord comes, 'I must be about my Father's business.'“

Let me conclude this tract by a few words of general application.

(1) First, let me draw from the whole subject a word of solemn warning for every one into whose hands this tract may fall. That warning is,-that there is a great change yet to come on this world, and a change we ought to keep constantly before our mind's eye.

That change is a change of MASTERS. That old rebel, the devil, and all his adherents, shall be cast down. The Lord Jesus, and all His saints, shall be exalted and raised to honour. “The kingdoms of this world” shall “become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.” (Revelation 11:15)

That change is a change of manners. Sin shall no longer be made light of and palliated. Wickedness shall no longer go unpunished and unreproved. Holiness shall become the general character of the inhabitants of the earth: “ The new heaven and new earth” shall be the dwelling of “righteousness.” (2 Peter 3:13)

That change is a change of opinion. There shall be no more Socinianism, or Deism, or Scepticism, or Infidelity. All nations shall do honour to the crucified Lamb of God: all men shall know Him, from the least to the greatest. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Him, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:9)

I say nothing as to the time when these things shall take place. I object, on principle, to all dogmatism about dates. All I insist upon is this,-that there is a great change before us all,-a change for the earth, a change for man, and above all, a change for the saints.

I accept the prediction that “there is a great improvement and development of human nature yet to take place.” I accept it with all my heart. But how and when shall it be brought about? Not by any system of education! Not by any legislation of politicians! Not by anything short of the appearing of the kingdom of Christ. Then, and then only, shall there be universal justice, universal knowledge, and universal peace.

I accept the common phrase of many, “There is a good time coming.” I accept it with all my heart. I do verily believe there shall one day be no more poverty, -no more oppression, -no more ignorance, -no more grinding competition, -no more covetousness. But when shall that good time come? Never,-never till the return of Jesus Christ at His second advent! And for whom shall that time be good? For none but those who know and love the Lord.

I accept the common phrase, “There is a man coming who will set all right that is now wrong. We wait for the coming man.” I accept it with all my heart. I do look for one who shall unravel the tangled skein of this world's affairs, and put everything in its right place. But who is the great physician for an old, diseased, worn-out world? It is the man Christ Jesus who is yet to return.

Oh, reader, let us realize this point! There is before us all a great change. Surely, when a man has notice to quit his present dwelling-place, he ought to make sure that he has before him another home.

(2) Next, let me draw from the whole subject a solemn question for all into whose hands this tract may fall. That question is simply this: ARE YOU READY FOR THE GREAT CHANGE? Are you ready for the coming and kingdom of Christ?

Remember, I do not ask what you think about controversial points in the subject of prophecy. I do not ask your opinion about preterism and futurism; I do not ask whether you think revelation fulfilled or unfulfilled,-or whether you consider the Man of Sin to be an individual,-or whether you hold prophetical days to be years. About all these points you and I may err, and yet be saved. The one point to which I want to fix you down is this, “Are you ready for the kingdom of Christ?”

It is useless to tell me, that, in asking this, I put before you too high a standard. It is vain to tell me that a man may he a very good man, and yet not be ready for the kingdom of Christ. I deny it altogether. I say that every justified and converted man is ready, and that if you are not ready, you are not a justified man. I say that the standard I put before you is nothing more than the New Testament standard, and that the Apostles would have doubted the truth of your religion if you were not looking and longing for the coming of the Lord. I say, above all, that the grand end of the Gospel is to prepare men to meet God. What has your Christianity done for you if it has not made you meet for the kingdom of Christ. Nothing: nothing! Nothing at all! Oh, that you may think on this matter, and never rest till you are ready to meet Christ!

(3) In the next place let me offer an invitation to all readers who do not feel ready for Christ's return. That invitation shall be short and simple. I beseech you to know your danger, and come to Christ without delay, that you may be pardoned, justified, and made ready for things to come. I entreat you this day to “flee from the wrath to come,” to the hope set before you in the Gospel. I pray you in Christ's stead, to lay down enmity and unbelief, and at once “to be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20)

I tremble when I think of the privileges which surround you in this country, and of the peril in which you stand so long as you neglect them. I tremble when I think of the possibility of Christ coming again, and of your being found unpardoned and unconverted in the day of His return. Better a thousand times will be his lot who was born a heathen, and never heard the Gospel, than the lot of him who has been a member of a Church, but not a living member of Christ. Surely the time past may suffice you to have delayed and lingered about your soul. Awake this day! “Awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light.” (Ephesians 5:14)

Lay aside everything that stands between you and Christ. Cast away everything that draws you back, and prevents you feeling ready for the Lord's appearing. Find out the besetting sin that weighs you down, and tear it from your heart, however dear it may be. Cry mightily to the Lord Jesus to reveal Himself to your soul. Rest not till you have got a real, firm, and reasonable hope, and know that your feet are on the Rock of Ages: rest not till you can say, “The Lord may come; the earth may be shaken; the foundations of the round world may be overturned; but thank God I have got treasure in heaven, and an advocate with the Father, and I will not be afraid.”

Do this, and you shall have got something from reading a simple tract.

(4) Last of all, let me draw from the subject an exhortation to all who know Christ indeed, and love His appearing. That exhortation is simply this,-that you will strive more and more to be a “doing” Christian. (James 1:22) Labour more and more to show forth the praises of Him who hath called

you out of darkness into marvellous light; improve every talent which the Lord Jesus has committed to your charge to the setting forth of His glory; let your walk declare plainly that you seek a country; let your conformity to the mind of Christ be unquestionable and unmistakable. Let your holiness be a clear plain fact, which even the worst enemies of the Gospel cannot deny.

Above all, if you are a student of prophecy, I entreat you never to let it be said that prophetical study prevents practical diligence. If you do believe that the day is really approaching, then labour actively to provoke others unto love and good works; if you do believe that the night is far spent, be doubly diligent to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. Never was there a greater mistake than to fancy the doctrine of the personal return of Christ is calculated to paralyse Christian diligence. Surely there can be no greater spur to the servant's activity than the expectation of his master's speedy return.

This is the way to attain a healthy state of soul. There is nothing like the exercise of our graces for promoting our spiritual vigour. Alas, there are not a few of God's saints who complain that they want spiritual comfort in their religion, while the fault is altogether in themselves. “Occupy,” “Occupy,” I would say to such persons. Lay yourselves out more heartily for the glory of God, and these uncomfortable feelings will soon vanish away.

This is the way to do good to the children of the world. Nothing, under God, has such an effect on unconverted people as the sight of a real, thorough-going live Christian. There are thousands who will not come to hear the Gospel, and do not know the meaning of justification by faith, who yet can understand an uncompromising, holy, consistent walk with God. “Occupy,” “Occupy,” I say again, if you want to do good.

This is the way to promote meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. There will be no idleness in the kingdom of Christ: the saints and angels shall there wait on their Lord with unwearied activity, and serve Him day and night. It is a fine saying of Bernard, that Jacob in his vision saw some angels ascending, and some descending, but none standing still. “Occupy,” “Occupy,” I say again, if you would be thoroughly trained for your glorious home.

Oh, brethren believers, it would be well indeed if we did but see clearly how much it is for our interest and happiness to occupy every farthing of our Lord's money,-to live very near to God!

So living we shall find great joy in our work-great comfort in our trials-great doors of usefulness in the world-great consolation in our sicknesses-great hope in our death-leave great evidences behind us when we are buried-have great confidence in the day of Christ's return-and receive a great crown in the day of reward.

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE

Chapter 56

One Blood

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. THE substance of this paper was preached as a sermon at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, London, on March 2, 1884.

"One Blood"

"One blood"- Acts 17:26. THIS is a very short and simple text, and even a child knows the meaning of its words. But simple as it is, it supplies food for much thought and it forms part of a speech delivered by a great man on a great occasion.

The speaker is the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul. The hearers are the cultivated men of Athens, and specially the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The place is Mars' Hill at Athens, in full view of religious buildings and statues, of which even the shattered remains are a marvel of art at this day. Never perhaps were such a place, such a man, and such an audience brought together! It was a strange scene. And how did St. Paul use the occasion? What did this Jewish stranger, this member of a despised nation, this little man, whose "bodily presence was weak," and very unlike the ideal figure in one of Raphael's cartoons, coming from an obscure corner of Asia, what does he say to these intellectual Greeks?

He tells them boldly the unity of the true God. There is only one God, the maker of heaven and earth,-and not many deities, as his hearers seemed to think,-a God who needed no temples made with hands, and was not to be represented by images made of wood or metal or stone. Standing in front of the stately Parthenon and the splendid statue of Minerva, he sets before his refined hearers the ignorance with which they worshipped, the folly of idolatry, the coming judgment of all mankind, the certainty of a resurrection, and the absolute need of repentance. And not least, he tells the proud men of Athens that they must not flatter themselves that they were superior beings, as they vainly supposed, made of finer clay, and needing less than other races of men. No! he declares that "God has made of one blood all nations." There is no difference. The nature, the needs, the obligation to God of all human beings on the globe are one and the same.

I shall stick to that expression "one blood," and confine myself entirely to it. I see in it three great points,-1, a point of fact; 2, a point of doctrine; 3, a point of duty. Let me try to unfold them.

I. In the first place comes the point of fact. We are all made "of one blood." Then the Bible account of the origin of man is true. The Book of Genesis is right. The whole family of mankind, with all its thousand millions, has descended from one pair-from Adam and Eve.

This is a humbling fact, no doubt; but it is true. Kings and their subjects, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, prince and pauper, the educated Englishman and the untutored negro, the fashionable lady at the West End of London and the North American squaw,-all, all might trace their pedigree, if they could trace it through sixty centuries, to one man and one woman. No doubt in the vast period of six thousand years immense varieties of races have gradually been developed. Hot climates and cold climates have affected the colour and physical peculiarities of nations. Civilisation and culture have produced their effect on the habits, demeanour, and mental attainment of the inhabitants of different parts of the globe. Some of Adam's children in the lapse of time have been greatly degraded, and some have been raised and improved. But the great fact remains the same. The story written by Moses is true. All the dwellers in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America originally sprung from Adam and Eve. We were all "made of one blood."

Now why do I dwell on all this? I do it because I wish to impress on the minds of my readers the plenary inspiration and divine authority of the Book of Genesis. I want you to hold fast the old teaching about the origin of man, and to refuse steadily to let it go.

I need hardly remind you that you live in a day of abounding scepticism and unbelief. Clever writers and lecturers are continually pouring contempt on the Old Testament Scriptures, and especially on the Book of Genesis. The contents of that venerable document, we are frequently told, are not to be read as real historical facts, but as fictions and fables. We are not to suppose that Adam and Eve were the only man and woman originally created, and that all mankind sprung from one pair. We are rather to believe that different races of human beings have been called into existence in different parts of the globe, at different times, without any relationship to one another. In short, we are coolly informed that the narratives in the first half of Genesis are only pleasing oriental romances, and are not realities at all! Now, when you hear such talk as this, I charge you not to be moved or shaken for a moment. Stand fast in the old paths of the faith, and especially about the origin of man. There is abundant evidence that Moses is right, and those who impugn his veracity and credibility are wrong. We are all descended from one fallen father. We are all "of one blood."

It would be easy to show, if the limits of this paper permitted, that the oldest traditions of nations all over the globe confirm the account given by Moses in the most striking manner. Geikie, in his Hours with the Bible, has briefly shown that the story of the first pair, the serpent, the fall, the flood, and the ark, are found cropping up in one form or another in almost every part of the habitable world. But the strongest proof of our common origin is to be found in the painful uniformity of man's moral nature, whatever be the colour of his skin. Go where you will on the globe, and observe what men and women are everywhere. Go to the heart of Africa or China, or to the remotest island of the Pacific Ocean, and mark the result of your investigations. I boldly assert that everywhere, and in every climate, you will find the moral nature of the human race exactly the same. Everywhere you will find men and women are naturally wicked, corrupt, selfish, proud, lazy, deceitful, godless,-servants of lusts and passions. And I contend that nothing can reasonably account for this but the first three chapters of Genesis. We are what we are morally, because we have sprung from one parent, and partake of his nature. We are all descendants of one fallen Adam, and in Adam we all died. Moses is right. We are all of "one blood."

After all, if doubt remains in any man's mind, and he cannot quite believe the narratives of Genesis, I ask him to remember what a deadly blow his unbelief strikes at the authority of the New Testament. It is easy work to point out difficulties in the first book of the Bible; but it is not so easy to explain away the repeated endorsement which Genesis receives from Christ and the apostles. There is no getting over the broad fact that creation, the serpent, the fall, Cain and Abel, Enoch, Noah, the flood, the ark, Abraham, Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, are all mentioned in the New Testament as historical things or historical persons. What shall we say to this fact? Were Christ and the apostles deceived and ignorant? The idea is absurd. Did they accommodate themselves to the popular views of their hearers, in order to procure favour with them, knowing all the time that the things and persons they spoke of were fictitious and not historical at all? The very idea is wicked and profane. We are shut up to one conclusion, and I see no alternative. If you give up the Old Testament, you must give up the New also. There is no standing ground between disbelief of the supernatural narratives of Genesis and disbelief of the gospel. If you cannot believe Moses, you ought not to trust Christ and the apostles, who certainly did believe him. Are you really wiser than Jesus or St. Paul? Do you know better than they do? Cast such notions behind your back. Stand firm on the old foundation, and be not carried away by modern theories. And as a great corner-stone place beneath your feet the fact of our text, the common origin of all mankind. "We are all made of one blood."

II. From the point of fact in our text I now pass on to the point of doctrine. Are we all of "one blood"? Then we all need one and the same remedy for the great family disease of our souls. The disease I speak of is sin. We inherit it from our parents, and it is a part of our nature. We are born with it, whether gentle or simple, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, as children of fallen Adam, with his blood in our veins. It is a disease which grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength, and unless cured before we die, will be the death of our souls.

Now, what is the only remedy for this terrible spiritual disease? What will cleanse us from the guilt of sin? What will bring health and peace to our poor dead hearts, and enable us to walk with God while we live, and dwell with God when we die? To these questions I give a short but unhesitating reply. For the one universal soul-disease of all Adam's children, there is only one remedy. That remedy is "the precious blood of Christ." To the blood of Adam we owe the beginning of our deadly spiritual ailment. To the blood of Christ alone must we all look for a cure.

When I speak of the "blood of Christ," my readers must distinctly understand that I do not mean the literal material blood which flowed from His hands and feet and side as He hung on the cross. That blood, I doubt not, stained the fingers of the soldiers who nailed our Lord to the tree; but there is not the slightest proof that it did any good to their souls. If that blood were really in the communion cup at the Lord's Supper, as some profanely tell us, and we touched it with our lips, such mere corporeal touch would avail us nothing. Oh no! When I speak of the "blood" of Christ as the cure for the deadly ailment which we all inherit from the blood of Adam, I mean the life-blood which Christ shed, and the redemption which Christ obtained for sinners when He died for them on Calvary,-the salvation which He procured for us by His vicarious sacrifice,- the deliverance from the guilt and power and consequences of sin, which He purchased when He suffered as our substitute. This and this only is what I mean when I speak of "Christ's blood" as the one medicine needed by all Adam's children. The thing that we all need to save us from eternal death is not merely Christ's incarnation and life, but Christ's death. The atoning "blood" which Christ shed

when He died, is the grand secret of salvation. It is the blood of the second Adam suffering in our stead, which alone can give life or health and peace to all who have the first Adam's blood in their veins.

I can find no words to express my deep sense of the importance of maintaining in our Church the true doctrine of the blood of Christ. One plague of our age is the widespread dislike to what men are pleased to call dogmatic theology. In the place of it, the idol of the day is a kind of jelly-fish Christianity-a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or sinew,-without any distinct teaching about the atonement or the work of the Spirit, or justification, or the way of peace with God,-a vague, foggy, misty Christianity, of which the only watchwords seem to be, "You must be earnest, and real, and true, and brave, and zealous, and liberal, and kind. You must condemn no man's doctrinal views. You must consider everybody is right, and nobody is wrong." And this creedless kind of religion, we are actually told, is to give us peace of conscience! And not to be satisfied with it in a sorrowful dying world, is a proof that you are very narrow-minded! Satisfied, indeed! Such a religion might possibly do for unfallen angels. But to tell sinful, dying men and women, with the blood of our father Adam in their veins, to be satisfied with it, is an insult to common sense, and a mockery of our distress. We need something far better than this. We need the blood of Christ.

What saith the Scripture about "that blood"? Let me try to put my readers in remembrance. Do we want to be clean and guiltless now in the sight of God? It is written that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;"-that "it justifies;"-that "it makes us nigh to God;"-that "through it there is redemption, even the forgiveness of sin;"-that it "purges the conscience;"-that "it makes peace between God and man;"-that it gives "boldness to enter into the holiest." Yes! it is expressly written of the saints in glory, that "they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and that they had "overcome their souls' enemies by the blood of the Lamb" (1 John 1:7; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 10:19; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:4; Ephesians 2:13; Romans 5:9; Revelation 7:14; Revelation 12:11). Why, in the name of common sense, if the Bible is our guide to heaven, why are we to refuse the teaching of the Bible about Christ's blood, and turn to other remedies for the great common soul-disease of mankind?-If, besides this, the sacrifices of the Old Testament did not point to the sacrifice of Christ's death on the cross, they were useless, unmeaning forms, and the outer courts of tabernacle and temple were little better than shambles. But if, as I firmly believe, they were meant to lead the minds of Jews to the better sacrifice of the true Lamb of God, they afford unanswerable confirmation of the position which I maintain this day. That position is, that the one "blood of Christ" is the spiritual medicine for all who have the "one blood of Adam" in their veins.

Does any reader of this paper want to do good in the world? I hope that many do. He is a poor style of Christian who does not wish to leave the world better when he leaves it, than it was when he entered it. Take the advice I give you this day. Beware of being content with half-measures and inadequate remedies for the great spiritual disease of mankind. You will only labour in vain if you do not show men the blood of the Lamb. Like the fabled Sisyphus, however much you strive, you will find the stone ever rolling back upon you. Education, teetotalism, cleaner dwellings, popular concerts, blue ribbon leagues, white cross armies, penny readings, museums,-all, all are very well in their way; but they only touch the surface of man's disease: they do not go to the root. They cast out the devil for a little season; but they do not fill his place, and prevent him coming back again. Nothing will do that but the story of the cross applied to the conscience by the Holy Ghost, and

received and accepted by faith. Yes! it is the blood of Christ,-not His example only, or His beautiful moral teaching,-but His vicarious sacrifice that meets the want of the soul. No wonder that St. Peter calls it "precious." Precious it has been found by the heathen abroad, and by the peer and the peasant at home. Precious it was found on a death-bed by the mighty theologian Bengel, by the unwearied labourer John Wesley, by the late Archbishop Longley, and Bishop Hamilton in our own days. May it ever be precious in our eyes! If we want to do good, we must make much of the blood of Christ. There is only one fountain that can cleanse any one's sin. That fountain is the blood of the Lamb.

III. The third and last point which arises out of our text is a point of duty. Are we all of "one blood"? Then we ought to live as if we were. We ought to behave as members of one great family. We ought to "love as brethren." We ought to put away from us anger, wrath, malice, quarrelling, as especially hateful in the sight of God. We ought to cultivate kindness and charity to wards all men. The dark-skinned African negro, the dirtiest dweller in some vile slum of London, has a claim upon our attention. He is a relative and a brother, whether we like to believe it or not. Like ourselves, he is a descendant of Adam and Eve, and inherits a fallen nature and a never-dying soul.

Now what are we Christians doing to prove that we believe and realize all this? What are we doing for our brethren? I trust we do not forget that it was wicked Cain who asked that awful question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

What are we doing for the heathen abroad? That is a grave question, and one which I have no time to consider fully this day. I only remark that we do far less than we ought to do. The nation whose proud boast it is that her flag is to be seen in every port on the globe, gives less to the cause of Foreign Missions than the cost of a single first-class ironclad man-of-war.

But what are we doing for the masses at home? That is a far graver question, and one which imperiously demands a reply. The heathen are out of sight and out of mind. The English masses are hard by our own doors, and their condition is a problem which politicians and philanthropists are anxiously trying to solve, and which cannot be evaded. What are we doing to lessen the growing sense of inequality between rich and poor, and to fill up the yawning gulf of discontent? Socialism, and communism, and confiscation of property are looming large in the distance, and occupying much attention in the press. Atheism and secularism are spreading fast in some quarters, and specially in overgrown and neglected parishes. Now, what is the path of duty?

I answer without hesitation, that we want a larger growth of brotherly love in the land. We want men and women to grasp the great principle that we are all of "one blood," and to lay themselves out to do good. We want the rich to care more for the poor, and the employer for the employed, and wealthy congregations for the working-class congregations in the great cities, and the West End of London to care more for the East and the South. And, let us remember, it is not merely temporal relief that is wanted. The Roman emperors tried to keep the proletarians and the lower classes quiet by the games of the circus and largesses of corn. And some ignorant modern Britons seem to think that money, cheap food, good dwellings, and recreation are healing medicines for the evils of our day in the lowest stratum of society. It is a complete mistake. What the masses want is more sympathy, more kindness, more brotherly love, and more treatment as if they were really of "one blood" with ourselves. Give them that, and you will fill up half the gulf of discontent.

It is a common saying in this day, that the working classes have no religion, that they are alienated from the Church of England, that they cannot be brought to church, and that it is hopeless and useless to try to do them good. I believe nothing of the kind. I believe the working classes are not one jot more opposed to religion than the upper ten thousand, and that they are just as open to good influences, and even more likely to be saved if they are approached in the right way. But what they do like is to be treated as "one blood," and what is wanted is a great increase of sympathy and personal friendly dealing with them. I confess that I have immense faith in the power of sympathy and kindness. I believe the late Judge Talfourd hit the right nail on the head when he said, in almost his last charge to a Grand Jury at Stafford Assizes,-Gentlemen, the great want of the age is more sympathy between classes." I entirely agree with him. I think an increase of sympathy and fellow-feeling between high and low, rich and poor, employer and employed, parson and people, is one healing medicine which the age demands. Sympathy, exhibited in its perfection, was one secondary cause of the acceptance which Christ's gospel met with on its first appearance in the heathen world. Well says Lord Macaulay,-"It was before Deity taking a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the fasces of the lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust." And sympathy, I firmly believe, can do as much in the nineteenth century as it did in the first. If anything will melt down the cold isolation of classes in these latter days, and make our social body consist of solid cubes compacted together, instead of spheres only touching each other at one point, it will be a large growth of Christ-like sympathy.

Now I assert confidently that the English working man is peculiarly open to sympathy. The working man may live in a poor dwelling; and after toiling all day in a coal pit, or cotton mill, or iron foundry, or dock, or chemical works, he may often look very rough and dirty. But after all he is flesh and blood like ourselves. Beneath his outward roughness he has a heart and a conscience, a keen sense of justice, and a jealous recollection of his rights, as a man and a Briton. He does not want to be patronised and flattered, any more than to be trampled on, scolded, or neglected; but he does like to be dealt with as a brother, in a friendly, kind, and sympathizing way. He will not be driven; he will do nothing for a cold, hard man, however clever he may be. But give him a Christian visitor to his home, who really understands that it is the heart and not the coat which makes the man, and that the guinea's worth is in the gold, and not in the stamp upon it. Give him a visitor who will not only talk about Christ, but sit down in his house, and take him by the hand in a Christ-like familiar way. Give him a visitor, and specially a clergyman, who realizes that in Christ's holy religion there is no respect of persons, that rich and poor are "made of one blood," and need one and the same atoning blood, and that there is only one Saviour, and one Fountain for sin, and one heaven, both for employers and employed. Give him a clergyman who can weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice, and feel a tender interest in the cares, and troubles, and births, and marriages, and deaths of the humblest dweller in his parish. Give the working man, I say, a clergyman of that kind, and, as a general rule, the working man will come to his church, and not be a communist or an infidel. Such a clergyman will not preach to empty benches. How little, after all, do most people seem to realize the supreme importance of brotherly love, and the absolute necessity of imitating that blessed Saviour who "went about doing good" to all, if we would prove ourselves His disciples! If ever there was a time when conduct like that of the Good Samaritan in the parable was rare, it is the time in which we live. Selfish indifference to the wants

of others is a painful characteristic of the age. Search the land in which we live, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland, and name, if you can, a single county or town in which the givers to good works are not a small minority, and in which philanthropic and religious agencies are not kept going, only and entirely, by painful begging and constant importunity. Go where you will, the report is always the same. Hospitals, missions at home and abroad, evangelistic and educational agencies, churches, chapels, and mission halls,-all are incessantly checked and hindered by want of support. Where are the Samaritans, we may well ask, in this land of Bibles and Testaments? Where are the Christians who live as if we are "all of one blood." Where are the men who love their neighbours, and will help to provide for dying bodies and souls? Where are the people always ready and willing to give unasked, and without asking how much others have given? Millions are annually spent on deer forests, and moors, and hunting, and yachting, and racing, and gambling, and balls, and theatres, and dressing, and pictures, and furniture, and recreation. Little, comparatively, ridiculously little, is given or done for the cause of Christ. A miserable guinea subscription too often is the whole sum bestowed by some Crœsus on the bodies and souls of his fellow-men. The very first principles of giving seem lost and forgotten in many quarters. People must be bribed and tempted to contribute by bazaars, as children in badly-managed families are bribed and tempted to be good by sugar-plums! They must not be expected to give unless they get something in return! And all this goes on in a country where people call themselves Christians, and go to church, and glory in ornate ceremonials, and histrionic rituals, and what are called "hearty services," and profess to believe the parable of the Good Samaritan. I fear there will be a sad waking up at the last day.

Where, after all, to come to the root of the matter, where is that brotherly love which used to be the distinguishing mark of the primitive Christians? Where, amidst the din of controversy and furious strife of parties, where is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the primary mark of spiritual regeneration? Where is that charity, without which we are no better than "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals"? Where is the charity which is the bond of perfectness? Where is that love by which our Lord declared all men should know His disciples, and which St. John said was the distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil? Where is it, indeed? Read in the newspapers the frightfully violent language of opposing politicians. Mark the hideous bitterness of controversial theologians, both in the press and on the platform. Observe the fiendish delight with which anonymous letter-writers endeavour to wound the feelings of opponents, and then to pour vitriol into the wound. Look at all this ghastly spectacle, which any observing eye may see any day in England. And then remember that this is the country in which men are reading the New Testament and professing to follow Christ, and to believe that they are all of "one blood." Can anything more grossly inconsistent be conceived? Can anything be imagined more offensive to God? Truly, it is astonishing that such myriads should be so keen about Christian profession and external worship, and yet so utterly careless about the simplest elements of Christian practice. Where there is no love there is no spiritual life. Without brotherly love, although baptized and communicants, men are dead in trespasses and sins.

I shall wind up all I have to say on the point of duty by reminding my readers of the solemn words which St. Matthew records to have been spoken by our Lord in the twenty-fifth chapter of his Gospel. In the great and dreadful day of judgment, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, there are some to whom He will say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,

prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me" (Matthew 25:41-46).

I declare I know very few passages of Scripture more solemn and heart-searching than this. It is not charged against these unhappy lost souls that they had committed murder, adultery, or theft, or that they had not been churchgoers or communicants. Oh, no! nothing of the kind. They had simply done nothing at all. They had neglected love to others. They had not tried to lessen the misery, or increase the happiness, of this sin-burdened world. They had selfishly sat still, done no good, and had no eyes to see, or hearts to feel, for their brethren, the members of Adam's great family. And so their end is everlasting punishment! If these words cannot set some people thinking when they look at the state of the masses in some of our large towns, nothing will.

And now I shall close this paper with three words of friendly advice, which I commend to the attention of all who read it. They are words in season for the days in which we live, and I am sure they are worth remembering.

(a) First and foremost, I charge you never to give up the old doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the whole Bible. Hold it fast, and never let it go. Let nothing tempt you to think that any part of the grand old volume is not inspired, or that any of its narratives, and especially in Genesis, are not to be believed. Once take up that ground, and you will find yourself on an inclined plane. Well will it be if you do not slip down into utter infidelity! Faith's difficulties, no doubt, are great; but the difficulties of scepticism are far greater.

(b) In the next place, I charge you never to give up the old doctrine of the blood of Christ, the complete satisfaction which that atoning blood made for sin, and the impossibility of being saved except by that blood. Let nothing tempt you to believe that it is enough to look at the example of Christ, or to receive the sacrament which Christ commanded to be received, and which many nowadays worship like an idol. When you come to your deathbed, you will want something more than an example and a sacrament. Take heed that you are found resting all your weight on Christ's substitution for you on the cross, and His atoning blood, or it will be better if you had never been born.

(c) Last, but not least, I charge you never to neglect the duty of brotherly love, and practical, active, sympathetic kindness towards every one around you, whether high or low, or rich or poor. Try daily to do some good upon earth, and to leave the world a better world than it was when you were born. If you are really a child of God, strive to be like your elder brother in heaven. For Christ's sake, do not be content to have religion for yourself alone. Love, charity, kindness, and sympathy are the truest proofs that we are real members of Christ, genuine children of God, and rightful heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Of "one blood" we were all born. In "one blood" we all need to be washed. To all partakers of Adam's "one blood" we are bound, if we love life, to be charitable, sympathizing, loving, and kind. The time is short. We are going, going, and shall soon be gone to a world where there is no evil to

remedy, and no scope for works of mercy. Then for Christ's sake let us all try to do some good before we die, and to lessen the sorrows of this sin-burdened world.

Chapter 57

Only One Way

ONLY ONE WAY.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”— Acts 4:12.

THESE words are striking in themselves. But they are much more striking if you consider when and by whom they were spoken.

They were spoken by a poor and friendless Christian, in the midst of a persecuting Jewish Council. It was a grand confession of Christ.

They were spoken by the lips of the Apostle Peter. This is the man who, a few weeks before, forsook Jesus and fled: this is the very man who three times over denied his Lord. There is another spirit in him now. He stands up boldly before priests and Sadducees, and tells them the truth to their face: “This is the stone that was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Now I need hardly tell you this text is one of the principal foundations on which the eighteenth Article of the Church of England is built. That Article runs as follows: “They also are to be had accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved.”

There are few stronger assertions than this throughout whole Thirty-nine Articles. It is the only anathema pronounced by our Church from one end of her confession of faith to the other. The Council of Trent in her decrees anathematizes continually: the Church of England does it once, and once only. And that she does it on good grounds, I propose to show you, by an examination of the Apostle Peter’s words. In considering this solemn subject there are three things I wish to do.

I. First, to show you the doctrine here laid down by the Apostle.

II. Secondly, to show you some reasons why this doctrine must be true.

III. Thirdly, to show you some consequences which naturally flow from the doctrine.

I. First, let me show you the doctrine of the text.

Let us make sure that we rightly understand what the Apostle Peter means. He says of Christ, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” Now what is this? On our clearly seeing this very much depends.

He means that no one can be saved from sin, its guilt, power, and consequences,—excepting by Jesus Christ.

He means that no one can have peace with God the Father,—obtain pardon in this world, and escape wrath to come in the next,—excepting through the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ. In Christ alone God's rich provision of salvation for sinners is treasured up: by Christ alone God's abundant mercies come down from Heaven to earth.

Christ's blood alone, can cleanse us; Christ's righteousness alone can clothe us; Christ's merit alone can give us a title to heaven. Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned, kings and poor men,—all alike must either be saved by Jesus or lost for ever. And the Apostle adds emphatically, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is no other person commissioned, sealed, and appointed by God the Father to be the Saviour of sinners, excepting Christ. The keys of life and death are committed to His hand, and all who would be saved must go to Him.

There was but one place of safety in the day when the flood came upon the earth, and that was Noah's ark. All other places and devices,—mountains, towers, trees, rafts, boats,—all were alike useless. So also there is but one hiding-place for the sinner who would escape the storm of God's anger,—he must venture his soul on Christ.

There was but one man to whom the Egyptians could go in the time of famine, when they wanted food,—they must go to Joseph: it was a waste of time to go to any one else. So also there is but One to whom hungering souls must go, if they would not perish for ever,—they must go to Christ.

There was but one word that could save the lives of the Ephraimites in the day when the Gileadites contended with them, and took the fords of Jordan (Judges 11),—they must say "Shibboleth," or die, just so there is but one name that will avail us when we stand at the gate of heaven,—we must name the name of Jesus as our only hope, or be cast away everlastingly.

Such is the doctrine of the text. "No salvation but by Jesus Christ: in Him plenty of salvation,—salvation to the uttermost, salvation for the very chief of sinners;—out of Him no salvation at all." It is in perfect harmony with our Lord's own words in St. John: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." (John 14:6) It is the same thing that Paul tells the Corinthians: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:1) And the same that John tells us in his first Epistle: "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John 5:12) All these texts come to one and the same point,—No salvation but by Jesus Christ.

Reader, make sure that you understand this before you pass on. Perhaps you think this is all old news. Perhaps you feel, "These are ancient things: who knoweth not such truth as these? Of course we believe there is no salvation but by Christ." But mark well what I say: make sure that you understand this doctrine, or else by and by you will stumble, and be offended at what I have yet to say.

Remember that you are to venture the whole salvation of your soul on Christ, and on Christ only . You are to cast loose completely and entirely from all other hopes and trusts. You are not to rest

partly on Christ,—partly on doing all you can,—partly on keeping your church,—partly on receiving the sacrament. In the matter of your justification Christ is to be all. This is the doctrine of the text.

Remember that heaven is before you, and Christ the only door into it; hell beneath you, and Christ alone able to deliver you from it; the devil behind you, and Christ the only refuge from his wrath and accusations; the law against you, and Christ alone able to redeem you; sin weighing you down, and Christ alone able to put it away. This is the doctrine of the text.

Now do you see it? I hope you do. But I fear many think so who may find, before laying down this paper, they do not.

II . Let me show you, in the second place, some reasons why the doctrine of the text must be true.

I might cut short this part of the subject by one simple argument: “God says so.” “One plain text,” said an old divine, “is as good as a thousand reasons.” But I will not do this. I wish to meet the objections that are ready to rise in many hearts against this doctrine, by pointing out the strong foundations on which it stands.

(1) Let me then say, for one thing, the doctrine of the text must be true, because man is what man is.

Now, what is man? There is one broad, sweeping answer, which takes in the whole human race: man is a sinful being. All children of Adam born into the world, whatever be their name or nation, are corrupt, wicked, and defiled in the sight of God. Their thoughts, words, ways, and actions are all, more or less, defective and imperfect. Is there no country on the face of the globe where sin does not reign? Is there no happy valley, no secluded island, where innocence is to be found? Is there no tribe on earth where, far away from civilization, and commerce, and money, and gunpowder, and luxury, and books, morality and purity flourish? No, reader: there is none. Look over all the voyages and travels you can lay your hand on, from Columbus down to Cook, and you will see the truth of what I am asserting. The most solitary islands of the Pacific Ocean,—islands cut off from all the rest of the world, islands where people were alike ignorant of Rome and Paris, London and Jerusalem,—these islands have been found full of impurity, cruelty, and idolatry. The footprints of the devil have been traced on every shore. The veracity of the third of Genesis has everywhere been established. Whatever else savages have been found ignorant of, they have never been found ignorant of sin. But are there no men and women in the world who are free from this corruption of nature? Have there not been high and exalted souls who have every now and then lived faultless lives? Have there not been some, if it be only a few, who have done all that God required, and thus proved that sinless perfection is a possibility? No, reader: there have been none. Look over all the biographies and lives of the holiest Christians; mark how the brightest and best of Christ’s people have always had the deepest sense of their own defectiveness and corruption. They groan, they mourn, they sigh, they weep over their own shortcomings: it is one of the common grounds on which they meet. Patriarchs and Apostles, Fathers and Reformers, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Luther and Calvin, Knox and Bradford, Rutherford and Bishop Hall, Wesley and Whitefield, Martyn and M’Cheyne,—all are alike agreed in feeling their own sinfulness. The more light they have, the more humble and self-abased they seem to be; the more holy they are, the more they seem to feel their own unworthiness, and to glory, not in themselves, but in Christ.

Now what does all this seem to prove? To my eyes it seems to prove that human nature is so tainted and corrupt that, left to himself, no man could be saved. Man's case appears to be a hopeless one without a Saviour,—and that a mighty Saviour too. There must be a Mediator, an Atonement, an Advocate, to make such poor sinful beings acceptable with God: and I find this nowhere, excepting in Jesus Christ. Heaven for man without a mighty Redeemer, peace with God for man without a mighty Intercessor, eternal life for man without an eternal Saviour,—in one word, salvation without Christ,—all alike appear to me utter impossibilities.

I lay these things before you, and ask you to consider them. I know it is one of the hardest things in the world to realize the sinfulness of sin. To say we are all sinners is one thing; to have an idea what sin must be in the sight of God is quite another. Sin is too much part of ourselves to allow us to see it as it is: we do not feel our own moral deformity. We are like those animals in creation which are vile and loathsome to our senses, but are not so to themselves, nor yet to one another: their loathsomeness is their nature, and they do not perceive it. Our corruption is part and parcel of ourselves, and at our best we have but a feeble comprehension of its intensity. But this you may be sure of,—if you could see your own lives with the eyes of the angels who never fell, you would never doubt this point for a moment. Depend on it, no one can really know what man is, and not see that the doctrine of our text must be true. There can be no salvation except by Christ.

(2) Let me say another thing. The doctrine of our text must be true, because God is what God is.

Now what is God? That is a deep question indeed. We know something of His attributes: He has not left Himself without witness in creation; He has mercifully revealed to us many things about Himself in His Word. We know that God is a Spirit,—eternal, invisible, almighty,—the Maker of all things, the Preserver of all things,—holy, just, all-seeing, all-knowing, all-remembering,— infinite in mercy, in wisdom, in purity.

But, alas, after all, how low and grovelling are our highest ideas, when we come to put down on paper what we believe God to be! How many words and expressions we use whose full meaning we cannot fathom! How many things our tongues say of Him which our minds are utterly unable to conceive!

How small a part of Him do we see! How little of Him can we possibly know! How mean and paltry are any words of ours to convey any idea of Him who made this mighty world out of nothing, and with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day! How weak and inadequate are our poor feeble intellects to conceive of Him who is perfect in all His works,—perfect in the greatest as well as perfect in the smallest, perfect in appointing the days and hours in which Jupiter, with all his satellites, shall travel round the sun,—perfect in forming the smallest insect that creeps over a few feet of our little globe! How little can our busy helplessness comprehend a Being who is ever ordering all things, in heaven and earth, by universal providence: ordering the rise and fall of nations and dynasties, like Nineveh and Carthage; ordering the exact length to which men like Alexander and Tamerlane and Napoleon shall extend their conquests; ordering the least step in the life of the humblest believer among His people: all at the same time, all unceasingly, all perfectly,—all for His own glory. The blind man is no judge of the paintings of Rubens or Titian; the deaf man is insensible to the beauty of Handel's music; the Greenlander can have but a faint notion of the climate of the tropics; the Australian savage can form but a remote conception of a locomotive engine, however well you may describe it: there is no place in their

minds to take in these things; they have no set of thoughts which can comprehend them; they have no mental fingers to grasp them. And, just in the same way, the best and brightest ideas that man can form of God, compared to the reality which we shall one day see, are weak and faint indeed.

But, reader, one thing, I think, is very clear; and that is this. The more any man considers calmly what God really is, the more he must feel the immeasurable distance between God and himself: the more he meditates, the more he must see that there is a great gulf between him and God. His conscience, I think, will tell him, if he will let it speak, that God is perfect, and he imperfect; that God is very high, and he very low; that God is glorious majesty and he a poor worm: and that if ever he is to stand before Him in judgment with comfort, he must have some mighty helper, or he will not be saved. And what is all this but the very doctrine of our text? What is all this but coming round to the conclusion I am urging upon you? With such a one as God to give account to, we must have a mighty Saviour. To give us with such a glorious Being as God, we must have an Almighty Friend and Advocate on our side—who can answer every charge that can be laid against us, and plead our cause with God on equal terms. We want this, and nothing less than this. Vague notions of mercy will never give true peace. And such a Saviour, such a Friend, such an Advocate is nowhere to be found except in the person of Jesus Christ.

I lay this reason also before you. I know well that people may have false notions of God as well as everything else, and shut their eyes against truth; but I say boldly and confidently, No man can have really high and honourable views of what God is, and escape the conclusion that the doctrine of our text must be true. There can be no possible salvation but by Jesus Christ.

(3.) Let me say, in the third place, this doctrine must be true, because the Bible is what the Bible is.

All through the Bible, from Genesis down to Revelation, there is only one simple account of the way in which man must be saved. It is always the same: only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ,—through faith; not for our own works and deservings.

You see it dimly revealed at first: it looms through the mist of a few promises, but there it is.

You have it more plainly afterwards: it is taught by the pictures and emblems of the law of Moses, the schoolmaster dispensation.

You have it still more clearly by and by: the Prophets saw in vision many particulars about the Redeemer yet to come.

You have it fully at last, in the sunshine of New Testament history: Christ incarnate,—Christ crucified, —Christ rising again, Christ preached to the world. But one golden chain runs through the whole volume; no salvation excepting by Jesus Christ. The bruising of the serpent’s head foretold in the day of the fall; the clothing of our first parents with skins, the sacrifices of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the passover, and all the particulars of the Jewish law,— the high priest, altar, the daily offering of the lamb, the holy of holies entered only by blood, the scapegoat, the cities of refuge,—all are so many witnesses to the truth set forth in the text: all preach with one voice, salvation only by Jesus Christ. In fact, this truth appears to me the grand object of the Bible, and all the different parts and portions of the book are meant to pour light upon it. I can gather from it no ideas of pardon and peace with God excepting in connection with this truth. If I could read of

one soul in it who was saved without faith in a Saviour, I might perhaps not speak so confidently. But when I see that faith in Christ,—whether a coming Christ or a crucified Christ,—was the prominent feature in the religion of all who went to heaven; when I see Abel owning Christ in his better sacrifice, at one end of the Bible, and the saints in glory in John's vision rejoicing in Christ, at the other end of the Bible; when I see a man like Cornelius, who was devout, and feared God, and gave alms and prayed, not told that he had done all, and would of course be saved, but ordered to send for Peter, and hear of Christ; when I see all these things I say, I feel bound to believe that the doctrine of the text is the doctrine of the whole Bible. No salvation, no way to heaven, excepting by Jesus Christ.

Reader, I do not know what use you make of your Bible,—whether you read it or whether you do not,—whether you read it all, or whether you only read such parts as you like; but this I tell you plainly, if you read and believe the whole Bible, you will find it hard to escape the doctrine of the eighteenth Article of the Church of England, already quoted. I do not see how you can consistently reject what I have been endeavouring to prove. Christ is the way, and the only way; Christ the truth, and the only truth; Christ the life, and only life.

Such are the reasons which seem to me to confirm the truth laid down in our text. What man is,—what God is,—what the Bible is,—all appear to me to lead us on to the same great conclusion: no possible salvation without Christ. I leave them with you, and pass on.

III. And now, in the third and last place, let me show you some consequences which flow naturally out of our text.

There are few parts of this subject which seem to be more important than this. The truth I have been trying to set before you bears so strongly on the condition of a great proportion of mankind that I consider it would be mere affectation on my part not to say something about it. If Christ is the only way of salvation, what are we to feel about many people in the world? This is the point I am now going to take up.

I believe that many persons would go with me so far as I have gone, and would go no further. They will allow my premises: they will have nothing to say to my conclusions. They think it uncharitable to say anything which appears to condemn others. For my part I cannot understand such charity: it seems to me the kind of charity which would see a neighbour drinking slow poison, but never interfere to stop him; which would allow emigrants to embark in a leaky, ill-found vessel, and not interfere to prevent them; which would see a blind man walking near a precipice, and think it wrong to cry out, and tell him there was danger.

I believe the greatest charity is to tell the greatest quantity of truth. I believe it is no charity to hide the legitimate consequences of such a text as we are now considering, or to shut our eyes against them. And I solemnly call on every one who really believes there is no salvation in any but Christ and none other name, given under heaven whereby we be saved,—I solemnly call on that person to listen to me, while I set before him some of the tremendous consequences which the text involves.

I am not going to speak of the heathen who have never heard the Gospel. Their final state is a great depth, which the mightiest minds have been unable to fathom: I am not ashamed of leaving it alone. One thing only I will say. If any of the heathen, who die heathen, are saved, I believe they

will owe their salvation, however little they may know it on this side of the grave, to the work and atonement of Christ. Just as infants and idiots among ourselves will find at the last day they owed all to Christ, though they never knew Him, so I believe it will be with the heathen, if any of them are saved, whether many or few; for this I am sure of there is no such thing as creature merit. My own private opinion is that the highest Archangel (though, of course, in a very different way and degree from us) will be found in some way to owe his standing to Christ; and that things in heaven, as well as things on earth, will ultimately be found all indebted to the name of Jesus. But I leave the case of the heathen to others, and will speak of matters nearer home.

One mighty consequence then, which seems to be learned from this text, is the utter uselessness of any religion without Christ.

There are many to be found in Christendom at this day who have a religion of this kind. They would not like to be called Deists, but Deists they are. That there is a God, that there is what they are pleased to call Providence, that God is merciful, that there will be a state after death,—this is about the sum and substance of their creed; and as to the distinguishing tenets of Christianity, they do not seem to recognise them at all. Now I denounce such a system as a baseless fabric,—its seeming foundation man's fancy,—its hopes an utter delusion. The god of such people is an idol of their own invention, and not the glorious God of the Scriptures,—a miserably imperfect being, even on their own showing: without holiness, without justice, without any attribute but that of vague indiscriminate mercy. Such a religion may possibly do as a toy to live with: it is far too unreal to die with. It utterly fails to meet the wants of man's conscience: it offers no remedy; it affords no rest for the soles of our feet; it cannot comfort, for it cannot save. Reader beware of it if you love life. Beware of a religion without Christ.

Another consequence to be learned from the text is, the folly of any religion in which Christ has not the first place.

I need not remind you how many hold a system of this kind. The Socinian tells us that Christ was a mere man; that His blood had no more efficacy than that of another; that His death on the cross was not a real atonement and propitiation of man's sins; and that, after all, doing is the way to heaven, and not believing. I solemnly declare that I believe such a system is ruinous to men's souls. It seems to me to strike at the root of the whole plan of salvation which God has revealed in the Bible, and practically to nullify the greater part of the Scriptures. It overthrows the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, and strips Him of His office; it converts the whole system of the law of Moses touching sacrifices and ordinances, into a meaningless form; it seems to say that the sacrifice of Cain was just as good as the sacrifice of Abel; it turns a man adrift on the sea of uncertainty, by plucking from under him the finished work of a divine Mediator. Beware of it, reader, no less than of Deism. If you love life, beware of the least attempt to depreciate and undervalue Christ's person, offices or work. The name whereby alone you can be saved is a name above every name, and the slightest contempt poured upon it is an insult to the King of Kings. The salvation of your soul has been laid by God the Father on Christ, and no other; and if He were not very God, He never could accomplish it: there could be no salvation at all.

Another consequence to be learned from our text is the great error, committed by those who add anything to Christ, as necessary to salvation.

It is an easy thing to profess belief in the Trinity, and reverence for our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet to make some addition to Christ as the ground of hope, and so to overthrow the doctrine of the text as really and completely as by denying it altogether. The Church of Rome does this systematically. She adds things over and above the requirements of the Gospel, of her own invention. She speaks as if Christ's finished work was not a sufficient foundation for a sinner's soul, and as if at were not enough to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shaft be saved." She sends men to penances and absolution, to masses and extreme unction, to fasting arid bodily mortification, to the Virgin and the saints,—as if these things could add to the safety there is in Christ Jesus. And in doing this she sins against our text with a high hand. Let us beware of any Romish hankering after additions to the simple way of the Gospel, from whatever quarter it may come. But I fear the Church of Rome does not stand alone in this matter: I fear there are thousands of professing Protestants who are often erring in the same direction, although, of course, in a very different degree; they get into a way of adding, perhaps insensibly, other names to the name of Christ, or attaching any importance to them which they never ought to receive. The ultra Churchman in England who thinks God's covenanted mercies are tied to episcopacy,—the ultra Presbyterian in Scotland, who cannot reconcile prelacy with an intelligent knowledge of the Gospel,—the ultra Free-kirk man by his side, who seems to think lay patronage and vital Christianity almost incompatible,—the ultra Dissenter, who traces every evil in the Church to its connection with the State, and can talk of nothing but the voluntary system,—the ultra Baptist, who shuts out from the Lord's table every one who has not received his views of adult baptism,—the ultra Plymouth Brother, who believes all knowledge to reside with his own body, and condemns every one outside as a poor weak babe;—all these, I say, however unwittingly, appear to me to have a most uncomfortable tendency to add to the doctrine of our text. All seem to me to be practically declaring that salvation is not to be bound simply and solely in Christ; all seem to me to be practically adding another name to the name of Jesus whereby men must be saved,—even the name of their own party and sect; all seem to me to be practically replying to the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" not merely, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but also "Come and join us."

Now I call upon every true Christian to beware of such ultraism, in whatever form he may be inclined to it. In saying this I would not be misunderstood. I like everyone to be decided in his views of ecclesiastical matter, and to be fully persuaded of their correctness; all I ask is that you will not put these things in the place of Christ, or place them anywhere near Him, or speak of them as if you thought them needful to salvation. However dear to us our own peculiar views may be, let us beware of thrusting them in between the sinner and the Saviour, let us beware, in short, of adding to the doctrine of the text. In the things of God's Word, be it remembered, addition, as well as subtraction, is a great sin. The last consequence which seems to me to be learned from our text is, the utter absurdity of supposing that we ought to be satisfied with a man's state of soul if he is only sincere. This is a very common heresy indeed, and one against which we all need to be on our guard. There are thousands who say in the present day, "We have nothing to do with the opinions of others. They may perhaps be mistaken, though it is possible they are right and we wrong: but if they are sincere, we hope they will be saved, even as we." And all this sounds liberal and charitable, and people like to fancy their own views are so.

Now I believe such notions are entirely contradictory to the Bible, whatever else they may be. I cannot find in Scripture that any one ever got to heaven merely by sincerity, or was accepted with God if he was only earnest in maintaining his own views. The priests of Baal were sincere when they cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out; but still that did not prevent Elijah from commanding them to be treated as wicked idolaters. Manasseh, King of Judah, was doubtless sincere when he burned his children in the fire to Molock; but who does not know that he brought on himself great guilt by so doing. The apostle Paul when a Pharisee was sincere while he made havoc of the Church, but when his eyes were opened he mourned over this as a special wickedness. Let us beware of allowing for a moment that sincerity is everything, and that we have no right to speak ill of a man's spiritual state because of the opinions he holds, if he is only earnest in holding them. On such principles, the Druidical sacrifices, the car of Juggernaut, the Indian suttees, the systematic murders of the Thugs, the fires of Smithfield, might each and all be defended. It will not stand: it will not bear the test of Scripture. Once allow such notions to be true, and you may as well throw your Bible aside altogether. Sincerity is not Christ, and therefore sincerity cannot put away sin.

I dare be sure these consequences sound very unpleasant to the minds of some who may read them. But I tell you of them advisedly and deliberately. I say calmly that a religion without Christ, a religion that takes away from Christ, a religion that adds anything to Christ, a religion that puts sincerity in the place of Christ,—all are dangerous: all are to be avoided, and all are alike contrary to the doctrine of our text.

You may not like this: I am sorry for it. You think me uncharitable, illiberal, narrow-minded, bigoted, and so forth: be it so. But you will not tell me my doctrine is not that of the Word of God, and of the Church of England whose minister I am. That doctrine is, salvation in Christ to the very uttermost,—but out of Christ no salvation at all.

I feel it a duty to bear my solemn testimony against the spirit of the day you live in; to warn you against its infection. It is not Atheism I fear so much, in the present times, as Pantheism. It is not the system which says nothing is true, so much as the system which says everything is true; it is not the system which says there is no Saviour, so much as the system which says there are many saviours and many ways to peace. It is the system which is so liberal that it dares not say anything is false; it is the system which is so charitable that it will allow everything to be true; it is the system which seems ready to honour others as well as our Lord Jesus Christ, class them all together, and hope well of all. Confucius and Zoroaster, Socrates and Mahomet, the Indian Brahmins and the African devil-worshippers, Arius and Pelagius, Ignatius Loyola and Socinus,—all are to be treated respectfully: none are to be condemned. It is the system which bids us smile complacently on all creeds and systems of religion: the Bible and the Koran, the Hindu Vedus and the Persian Zendavesta, the old wives' fables of Rabbinical writers and the rubbish of Patristic traditions, the Racovian catechism and the thirty-nine Articles, the revelations of Emanuel Swedenborg and the book of Mormon of Joseph Smith,—all are to be listened to: none are to be denounced as lies. It is the system which is so scrupulous about the feelings of others, that we are never to say they wrong; it is the system which is so liberal that it calls a man a bigot if he dares to say, "I know my views are right." This is the system, this is the tone of feeling which I fear in this day. This is the system which I desire emphatically to testify against and denounce.

What is it but a bowing down before a great idol specially called liberality? What is it all but a sacrificing of truth upon the altar of a caricature of charity? Beware of it, reader, beware that the rushing stream of public opinion does not carry you away. Beware of it, if you believe the Bible: beware of it, if you are a consistent member of the Church of England. Has the Lord God spoken to us in the Bible, or has He not? Has He shown us the way of salvation plainly in that Bible, or has He not? Has He declared to us the dangerous state of all out of that way, or has He not? Gird up the loins of your mind, and look these questions fairly in the face, and give them an honest answer. Tell us that there is some other inspired book beside the Bible, and then we shall know what you mean; tell us that the whole Bible is not inspired, and then we shall know where to meet you: but grant for a moment that the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is God's truth., and then I know not in what way you can escape the doctrine of the text. From the liberality which says everybody is right, from the charity which forbids you to say anybody is wrong, from the peace which is bought at the expense of truth,—may the good Lord deliver you!

I speak for myself: I find no resting-place between downright Evangelical Christianity and downright infidelity, whatever others may find. I see no half-way house between them, or houses that are roofless and cannot shelter my weary soul. I can see consistency in an infidel, however much I may pity him; I can see consistency in the full maintenance of Evangelical truth: but as to a middle course between the two,—I cannot see it; and I say so plainly. Let it be called illiberal and uncharitable. I can hear God's voice nowhere except in the Bible, and I can see no salvation for sinners in the Bible excepting through Jesus Christ. In Him I see abundance: out of Him I see none. And as for those who hold religions in which Christ is not all, whoever they may be, I have a most uncomfortable feeling about their safety. I do not for a moment say that none of them are saved, but I say that those who are saved are saved by their disagreement with their own principles, and in spite of their own system. The man who wrote the famous line, "He can't be wrong whose life is in the right," was a great poet undoubtedly, but he was a wretched divine.

Let me conclude with a few words by way of application.

First of all, if there is no salvation excepting in Christ, make sure that you have an interest in that salvation yourself. Do not be content with hearing, and approving, and assenting to the truth, and going no further. Seek to have a personal interest in this salvation: lay hold by faith for your own soul; rest not till you know and feel that you have got actual possession of that peace with God which Jesus offers, and that Christ is yours, and you are Christ's. If there were two, or three, or more ways of getting to heaven, there would be no necessity for pressing this matter upon you. But if there is only one way, you will hardly wonder that I say, "Make sure that you are in it."

Secondly, if there is no salvation excepting in Christ, try to do good to the souls of all who do not know Him as a Saviour. There are millions in this miserable condition,—millions in foreign lands, millions in your own country, millions who are not trusting in Christ. You ought to feel for them if you are a true Christian; you ought to pray for them; you ought to work for them, while there is yet time. Do you really believe that Christ is the only way to heaven? Then live as if you believed it.

Look round the circle of your own relatives and friends: count them up one by one, and think how many of them are not yet in Christ. Try to do good to them in some way or other: act as a man should act who believes his friends to be in danger. Do not be content with their being kind and amiable, gentle and good-tempered, moral, and courteous; be miserable about them till they come

to Christ, and trust in Him: for miserable you ought to be. Let nobody alone who is out of Christ, if only you have opportunities of reaching him. I know all this may sound like enthusiasm and fanaticism. I wish there was more of it in the world: anything, I am sure, is better than a quiet indifference about the souls of others, as if everybody was in the way to heaven. Nothing, to my mind, so proves our little faith, as our little feeling about the spiritual condition of those around us.

Thirdly, if there is no salvation excepting in Christ, let us love all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and exalt Him as their Saviour, whoever they may be. Let us not draw back and look shy on others, because they do not see eye to eye with ourselves in everything. Whether a man be a Free-kirk man or an Independent, a Wesleyan or a Baptist, let us love him if he loves Christ, and gives Christ His rightful place. We are all fast travelling towards a place where names and forms and Church government will be nothing, and Christ will be all: let us get ready for that place betimes, by loving all who are in the way that leads to it. This is the true charity: to believe all things and hope all things, so long as we see Bible doctrines maintained and Christ exalted. Christ must be the single standard by which all opinions must be measured. Let us honour all who honour Him: but let us never forget that the same apostle Paul who wrote about charity, says also, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema.” If our charity and liberality are wider than that of the Bible, they are worth nothing at all: indiscriminate love is no love at all, and indiscriminate approbation of all religious opinions, is only a new name for infidelity. Let us hold out the right hand to all who love the Lord Jesus, but let us beware how we go beyond this.

Lastly, if there is no salvation excepting by Christ, you must not be surprised if ministers of the Gospel preach much about Him. We cannot tell you too much about the name which is above every name: you cannot hear of Him too often. You may hear too much about controversy in our sermons,—you may hear too much of men and books, of works and duties, of forms and ceremonies, of sacraments and ordinances,—but there is one subject which you never hear too much of: you can never hear too much of Christ. When we are wearied of preaching Him, we are false ministers: when you are wearied of hearing of Him, your souls are in an unhealthy state. When we have preached Him all our lives, the half of His excellence will remain untold. When you see Him face to face in the day of His appearing, you will find there was more in Him than your heart ever conceived.

Let me leave you with the words of an old writer, to which I desire humbly to subscribe. “I know no true religion but Christianity; no true Christianity but the doctrine of Christ: the doctrine of His divine person, of His divine office, of His divine righteousness, and of His divine Spirit, which all that are His receive. I know no true ministers of Christ but such as make it their business, in their calling, to commend Jesus Christ, in His saving fulness of grace and glory, to the faith and love of men; no true Christian but one united to Christ by faith and love, unto the glorifying of the name of Jesus Christ, in the beauty of Gospel holiness. Ministers and Christians of this spirit have been for many years my brethren and companions, and I hope shall ever be, whithersoever the hand of God shall lead me.” —(ROBERT TRAILL.)

Owe Reformation

WHAT DO WE OWE TO THE REFORMATION? by JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.

Lord Bishop of Liverpool. OUR lot is cast in days when it is the fashion to despise everything that is old. There is a morbid readiness to throw aside all things which bear about them the least mark of antiquity, and to treat them with as little respect as last year's almanacs or worn-out clothes. The only exceptions I can think of are, old lace, old coins, old pictures, and old wine! But as a general rule, old opinions and old institutions are often condemned as useless lumber, and shovelled out of the way, simply because they are old.

Now, I am not one of those who object to all changes and reform of old things. Nothing of the kind. I heartily thank God for most of the changes of the last half-century, whether political, or social, or scientific, or educational. I should not be an honest man if I did not declare my conviction that on the whole they are great improvements. But there is one subject about which I cannot take up new views, and that subject is the English Reformation. I cannot agree with those who now tell us that the Reformation was a blunder-that the Reformers are overpraised-that Protestantism has done this country no good-and that it would matter little if England placed her neck once more under the foot of the Pope of Rome. Against these new-fangled opinions I enter my solemn protest. I want no departure from the old Protestant paths which were made by Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, three hundred years ago. In short, about the value of the English Reformation I want no new views. I unhesitatingly affirm that the “old are better.”

I fear there is a strange disposition to undervalue the Protestant Reformation. Time has a wonderful power of dimming men's eyes, and deadening their recollection of benefits and making them thankless and ungrateful. Three busy centuries have slipped away since England broke with Rome, and a generation has arisen which, like Israel under the Judges, knows little of the days of the Protestant Exodus, and of the struggles in the wilderness. Partly, too, from a cowardly dislike to religious controversy, partly from a secret desire to appear liberal and condemn nobody's opinions, the Reformation period of English history is sadly slurred over, both in Universities and Public Schools. It seems an inconvenient subject, and men give it the cold shoulder. Be the cause what it may, the Reformation period is too often shunted on a siding, and has not that prominent place, in the education of young England, which such a character-forming period most richly deserves. The whole result is, that few people seem to understand either the evils from which the Reformation delivered us or the blessings which the Reformation brought in. To remove some of this ignorance is my aim. I want to make some of my countrymen understand that

WE OWE AN ENORMOUS DEBT TO THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

Let me clear the way by saying that I do not pretend to endorse the character of all the agents by whom the English Reformation was carried out, or to approve of everything which they did. I do not for a moment maintain that Henry VIII was a godly man. No! Too often he was a brutal tyrant-I do not say that the statesmen who surrounded him were faultless characters. Far from it. Too many of

them made a market of the Reformation, and enriched their families by plundering abbey lands. I do not ask you to believe that Cranmer, and other Reformers, either in the days of Henry VIII, or Edward VI, or Elizabeth, were angels, and made no mistakes. I frankly admit that they did some things which they ought not to have done, and left undone some things which they ought to have done. But you must remember that God does a great deal of good work with imperfect tools, such as Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyrus. All I do maintain is, that the whole result of the Protestant Reformation was an enormous gain to this country. And I confidently assert that England before the Reformation was as unlike England after the Reformation as black and white, darkness and light, night and day. Facts, stubborn facts, exist to prove the correctness of this assertion. THE REFORMATION DELIVERED ENGLAND FROM AN IMMENSE QUANTITY OF EVILS.

For one thing the Reformation delivered England from gross religious ignorance and spiritual darkness.

No doubt there was a professing Church of Christ in the land when Henry VIII ascended the throne, a Church abounding in wealth, and garrisoned by a whole army of Bishops, Abbots, Friars, Priests, Monks, and Nuns. But money and clergymen do not make a Church of Christ, any more than “men with muskets” make up an army. For any useful and soul-saving purposes the English Church was practically dead, and if St. Paul had come out of his grave and visited it, I doubt if he would have called it a Church at all. The plain truth is, that it was a Church without a Bible; and such a Church is as useless as a lighthouse without a light-a candlestick without a candle-or a steam-engine without a fire. Except a few scattered copies of Wycliffe's translation of the Vulgate, there were no English Bibles in the land, and the natural consequence was, that priests and people knew scarcely anything about God's truth, and the way to be saved.

As to the Clergy, as a general rule, their religion was the merest form, and scarcely deserved to be called Christianity at all. Most of them were pitiful turncoats without a conscience, and were ready to change sides in religion at word of command. In fact, they did so no less than four times-once under Henry VIII, once under Edward VI, once under Bloody Mary, and once more under Elizabeth.

The immense majority of the clergy did little more than say masses and offer up pretended sacrifices-repeat Latin prayers and chant Latin hymns, which of course the people could not understand-hear confessions, grant absolutions, give extreme unction, and take money to get dead people out of Purgatory. Preaching was utterly at a discount. As Bishop Latimer truly remarked, “When the devil gets influence in a church, up go candles and down goes preaching.” Quarterly sermons were indeed prescribed to the clergy, but not insisted on. Latimer says that while mass was never left unsaid for a single Sunday, sermons might be omitted for twenty Sundays in succession, and nobody was blamed. After all, when sermons were preached they were utterly unprofitable; and latterly, to preach much was to incur the suspicion of being a heretic.

To cap all, the return that Bishop Hooper got from the rich diocese of Gloucester, no barbarous and uncivilized corner of England, when he was first appointed Bishop in 1551, will give a pretty clear idea of the ignorance of the pre-Reformation times. He found that out of 311 clergy in his diocese, 168 were unable to repeat the Ten Commandments; 31 of the 168 could not say in what part of the Scripture they were to be found; 40 could not tell where the Lord's prayer was written,

and 31 of the 40 did not know who was the author of the Lord's Prayer.

As to the laity, it is not too much to say that the bulk of them, except in the hour of trial, sickness and death, had no religion at all. Even at such seasons as those there was no one to tell them of the love of God, the mediation of Christ, the glad tidings of free salvation, the precious blood of atonement, and justification by faith. They could only send for the priest, who knew nothing himself and could tell nothing to others; and then at last they received absolution and extreme unction and took a leap in the dark.

To sum up all in a few words, the religion of our English forefathers before the Reformation was a religion without knowledge, without faith, and without lively hope-a religion without justification, regeneration. and sanctification-a religion without any clear views of Christ and the Holy Ghost. Except in rare instances it was little better than an organized system of Mary-worship, saint-worship, image-worship, relic-worship, pilgrimages, almsgivings, formalism, ceremonialism, processions, penances, absolutions, masses and blind obedience to the priests. It was a huge higgledy-piggledy of ignorance and idolatry, and serving an unknown God by deputy. The only practical result was that the priests took the people's money, and undertook to secure their salvation, and the people flattered themselves that the more they gave to the priests, the more sure they were to go to heaven. As to the grand cardinal question, “What must I do to be saved?” probably not one Englishman in fifty could have given you half as good an answer as an ordinary Sunday School child would give in our own day. Such was the IGNORANCE which was scattered to the winds by the English Reformation.

For another thing, the Reformation delivered England from the most grovelling, childish and superstitious practices in religion.

I allude especially to the worship of relics. Destitute of the slightest Scriptural knowledge, our forefathers were taught by the priests to seek spiritual benefit from the so-called relics of dead saints, and to treat them with divine honour. The accounts which those trustworthy old historians, Strype, and Fuller, and Burnet, have handed down to us about these wretched relics, up to Henry VIII's reign, are extraordinary.

At Reading Abbey, in Berkshire, the following things among many others were exhibited by the monks on great occasions, and most religiously honoured by the people. An angel with one wing-the spear-head which pierced our Saviour's side-two pieces of the Holy Cross-St. James' hand-St. Philip's stole-a bone of Mary Magdalene, and a bone of Salome.-(Strype, i., 390).

At Bury St. Edmund's, in Suffolk, the priests exhibited the coals that roasted St. Laurence, the parings of St. Edmund's toe nails, Thomas a Becket's penknife and boots, and as many pieces of our Saviour's cross as would have made, if joined together, one large whole cross. They had also relics whose help was invoked at times when there was an excessive growth of weeds, or heavy falls of rain!-(Burnet's Ref., i., 486).

At Maiden Bradley Priory, in Somersetshire, the worshippers were privileged to see the Virgin Mary's smock, a piece of the stone upon which our Lord was born at Bethlehem, and a part of the bread used by Christ and the Apostles at the first Lord's Supper.-(Strype, i., 391).

At Bruton Priory, in Somerset, was kept a girdle of the Virgin Mary, made of red silk. This solemn relic was lent as a special favour to women in childbirth, to ensure them a safe delivery. The like was done with a girdle of Mary Magdalene, at Farley Abbey, Wiltshire.-(Strype, i., 391).

Even in the Midland Counties, superstition was just as bad as in the South of England. Strype records that at St. Mary's Nunnery, in Derby, the nuns had a piece of St. Thomas' shirt and that it was worshipped by women expecting their confinement. At Dale Abbey, near Derby, they worshipped part of the girdle of the Virgin Mary, and some of her milk! At Repton Monastery the bell of St. Guthlac was held in special honour, and people put their heads under it to cure the headache. At Grace Dieu Nunnery, in Leicestershire, they worshipped part of the coat of St. Francis.-(Strype, i., 396).

Records like these are so amazingly silly, as well as painful, that one hardly knows whether to laugh or to cry over them. But it is positively necessary to bring them forward, in order that men may know what was the religion of our forefathers, in the days when Rome ruled the land, before the Reformation. Wonderful as these things may seem, we must never forget that Englishmen at that time had no Bibles and knew no better. A famishing man in sieges and blockades has been known to eat rats and mice, and all manner of garbage, rather than die of hunger. A conscience-stricken soul, famishing for lack of God's Word, must not be judged too hardly, if it struggles to find comfort in the most debasing superstition. Only let us never forget that this was the SUPERSTITION which was shattered to pieces by the Reformation.

For another thing, the Reformation delivered England from the degrading tyranny and swindling impostures of the Romish priesthood.

In the last days of the Pope's supremacy in this land, the laity were thoroughly “sat upon” by the clergy, and could hardly call their souls their own. The power of the priests was practically despotic, and was used for every purpose except the advancement of true religion. Like the frogs in the plague of Egypt, they made their way everywhere, both in the palace and the cottage, met you at every turn of life, and had a finger in every transaction. They interfered by the confessional between husbands and wives-between parents and children-between masters and servants-between landlords and tenants-between subjects and sovereigns-between souls and God. Obey them and you might do anything. Resist, and you had no safety either for property or life.

One great object, which they steadily kept in view, was to enrich the Church and fill the pockets of their own order. To accomplish this end they employed many devices. Sometimes they persuaded tender-hearted affectionate persons to give money to get the souls of their relatives out of purgatory by procuring masses to be said for them. Sometimes they advised weak people to give huge sums to the shrine of some favourite saint, such as Thomas a Becket at Canterbury, in order to merit Heaven by good works. Sometimes they induced dying sinners to give vast tracts of land to abbeys and monasteries, in order to atone for their bad lives. In one way or another they were continually drawing money out of the laity, and accumulating property in their own hands. “In fact,” says Burnet, “if some laws had not restrained them, the greater part of all estates in England had been given to religious houses.”-(Burnet's Ref., i., 378).

The other object, which they never forgot for a moment, was to keep their own power. For this purpose they claimed to hold the keys of heaven literally and really. To them confession must be made. Without their absolution and extreme unction, no professing Christian could be saved. Without their masses no soul could be redeemed from purgatory. In short, they were to all intents and purposes the mediators between Christ and man. To please and honour them were the first duties; to injure them was the greatest of sins. Fuller, the historian, tells us that in 1498 a certain Italian priest got an immense sum of money in England by obtaining power from the Pope "To absolve people from usury, theft, manslaughter, fornication, and all crime whatsoever, except smiting the clergy and conspiring against the Pope."-(Fuller's Church Hist., i., 532, Tegg's Edit.).

As to the gross and ridiculous impostures which the priests practised on our ignorant forefathers before the Reformation, the catalogue would fill a volume. At the Abbey of Hales, in Gloucestershire, a vial was shown by the priests on great occasions to those who offered alms which was said to contain the blood of Christ. This notable vial was examined by the Royal Commissioners in Henry VIII's time, and was found to contain the blood of a duck, renewed every week.

In the city of Worcester there was a huge image of the Virgin Mary in one of the churches, which was held in special reverence. This was also examined by the same Royal Commissioners, in order to ascertain what it really was. But when it was stripped of certain veils which covered it, it turned out to be no image of the Virgin, but of some old Bishop.

At Boxley, in Kent, a great crucifix was exhibited, which received peculiar honour and large offerings, because of a continual miracle which was said to attend its exhibition. When the worshippers before it offered copper coin, the face of the figure on the cross looked grave; when they offered silver it relaxed its severity; when they offered gold it openly smiled. In Henry VIII's time this famous crucifix was also examined, and wires were found within it, by which the attendant priests could move the face of the image, and make it assume any expression they pleased.-(Burnet's Ref., i., 486).

He that desires to pursue this disgraceful subject any further will find it truly handled in Calvin's Inventory of Relics and Hobart Seymour's Pilgrimage to Rome. He will learn there, that all over Europe things were shown as holy relics, so manifestly false and fictitious, that the priests who showed them can only be regarded as cheats and rogues, who in this day would be sent to the treadmill or obliged to pick oakum. Wood of the true cross, enough to load a ship, though we know that one person alone could carry it-thorns professing to be part of the Saviour's crown of thorns, enough to make a large faggot at least fourteen nails, said to have been used at the crucifixion, though we know four must have been sufficient-four spearheads, said to be points of the spear which pierced our Lord's side-though of course it had only one-at least three seamless coats of Christ for which the soldiers cast lots, though there could only have been one-all these are only select specimens of the profane and vile inventions with which Romish priests imposed on people before the Reformation. They must have known that they were telling lies, and yet they persisted in telling them, and required the ignorant laity to believe them. I remind you that for deliverance from this miserable system of PRIESTLY TYRANNY AND PRIESTLY IMPOSITION we are indebted to the Reformation.

The Reformation delivered England from the worst plague that can afflict a nation, I mean the plague of unholiness and immorality among the clergy.

The lives of the clergy, as a general rule, were simply scandalous, and the moral tone of the laity was naturally at the lowest ebb. Of course, grapes will never grow on thorns, nor figs on thistles. To expect the huge roots of ignorance and superstition which filled our land to bear any but corrupt fruit would be unreasonable and absurd. But a more thoroughly corrupt set than the English clergy were in the palmy days of undisturbed Romanism, with a few brilliant exceptions, it would be impossible to imagine.

The parochial priesthood became unhappily notorious for gluttony, drunkenness, and gambling. “Too often,” says Professor Blunt, “they were persons taken from the lowest of the people, with all the gross habits of the class from which they sprang-loiterers on the alehouse bench-dicers, scarce able to say by rote their paternoster, often unable to repeat the Ten Commandments-mass priests who could just read their breviaries, and no more-men often dubbed by the uncomplimentary names of Sir John Lack-Latin, Sir John Mumble-Mattins, or Babbling and Blind St. John. In fact, the carnal living and general secularity of ministers of religion were proverbial before the Reformation.”-(Professor Blunt's History of the Reformation, p. 66).

I might tell you of the shameless covetousness which marked the pre-Reformation priesthood. So long as a man gave liberal offerings at the shrine of such saints as Thomas a Becket, the clergy would absolve him of almost any sin. So long as a felon or malefactor paid the monks well, he might claim sanctuary within the precincts of religious houses, after any crime, and hardly any law could reach him. Yet all this time for Lollards and Wycliffites there was no mercy at all! The very carvings still extant in some old ecclesiastical buildings tell a story in stone and wood which speak volumes to this day. Friars were often represented in these carvings as foxes preaching with the neck of a stolen goose peeping out of the hood behind-as wolves giving absolution, with a sheep muffled up in their cloaks-as apes sitting by a sick man's bed, with a crucifix in one hand and with the other in the sufferer's pocket. Things must have been at a low ebb when the faults of ordained ministers were so publicly held up to scorn!

But the blackest spot on the character of our pre-Reformation clergy in England is one of which it is painful to speak. I mean the impurity of their lives and their horrible contempt of the Seventh Commandment. The results of auricular confession, carried on by men bound by their vow never to marry, were such that I dare not enter into them. The consequences of shutting up herds of men and women in the prime of life, in monasteries and nunneries, were such that I will not defile my paper by dwelling upon them. The details will be found in Strype, Burnet, and Fuller, by those who care to look them up. Suffice it to say, that the discoveries made by Henry VIII's Commissioners, of the goings-on in many of the so-called religious houses, were such as it is impossible to describe. It is a shame even to speak of them. Anything less “holy” than the practice of many of the “holy” men and women in the professedly “holy” retreats from sin and the world the imagination cannot conceive. If ever there was a plausible theory weighed in the balance and found utterly wanting, it is the favourite theory that celibacy and monasticism promote holiness. Romantic young men and sentimental young ladies may mourn over the ruins of such abbeys as Battle, and Glastonbury, and Bury, and Tintern. But I venture to conjecture that many of these houses are more useful now in their ruined condition than they ever were in the days of affluence and prosperity. Monasteries

and nunneries were frequently sinks of iniquity.

All monasteries and nunneries were not equally bad. I admit that there were religious houses like Godstow nunnery, near Oxford, which had a stainless reputation. But I fear these were but bright exceptions which only prove the truth of the rule. The preamble of the Act for Dissolution of Religious Houses, founded on the Report of Henry VIII Commissioners, contains broad, general statements, which cannot be got over. It declares “that manifest sin, vicious, carnal, and abominable living, is daily used and committed in abbeys, priories, and other religious houses of monks, canons, and nuns, and that albeit many continual visitations have been had, by the space of two hundred years or more, for an honest and charitable reformation of such unthrifty, carnal, and abominable living, yet that, nevertheless, little or none amendment was hitherto had, but that their vicious living shamefully increased and augmented.”-(Fuller, ii., 208).

After all, there is no surer receipt for promoting immorality than “fulness of bread and abundance of idleness” (Ezekiel 16:49). Take anywhere a number of men and women, of any nation, rank or class-bind them by a vow of celibacy-shut them up in houses by themselves-give them plenty to eat and drink, and give them little or nothing to do-and above all give them no Bibles, no true religion, no preaching of the Gospel, no inspection, and no check from public opinion, and if the result of all this be not abundant breach of the Seventh Commandment, I can only say I have read human nature in vain.

I make no apology for dwelling on these things. Painful and humbling as the picture is. It is one that in these times ought to be carefully looked at, and not thrown aside. I do not want men to pass severe judgment on our poor ancestors, and say they were all lost. We are not their Judge. To whom little light has been given, of them little will be required. But I do want modern Churchmen to understand from what the Reformation delivered us. Before we make up our minds to give up Protestantism and receive back Monasticism and the “Catholic system,” let us thoroughly understand what the state of England was when Popery had its own way unchecked and uncontrolled. My own belief is, that there never was a change so imperatively needed as the Reformation, and that no Englishmen ever did such good service to their country as the Reformers.

But what shall we say of the modern proposal, to give up the principles of the Reformation, and to return to the communion of the Church of Rome? What shall we say, indeed! I say the man who makes such a proposal must have taken leave of his senses, or be utterly ignorant of the facts of history. Are we to return to a Church which boasts that she is infallible and never changes-to a Church which has never repented her pre-Reformation superstitions and abominations-to a Church which has never confessed and abjured her countless corruptions? Are we really to go back to gross ignorance of true religion? Shame on us, I say, if we entertain the idea for a moment! Let the Israelite return to Egypt, if he will. Let the prodigal go back to his husks among the swine. Let the dog return to his vomit. But let no Englishman with brains in his head ever listen to the idea of exchanging Protestantism for Popery, and returning to the bondage of the Church of Rome. No, indeed! We owe a debt to the Reformation for having delivered us from an enormous mass of evil. THE REFORMATION CONFERRED POSITIVE BLESSINGS UPON THIS COUNTRY.

First and foremost we owe to the Reformation an English Bible, and liberty for every man, woman, and child in the land to read it.

With an English Bible came in the right and duty of private judgment, and the assertion of the great principle of our VIth Article, that “Holy Scripture contains all things needful to salvation,” and the only rule of faith and practice.

Of all the agencies which brought about the overthrow of Popery in this country, the translation of the Bible was the earliest and most powerful. It struck a blow at the root of the whole Romish system. Before a free Bible, and fair play for all who used it, the Pope's champions could not long stand. The huge fabric of Popery cracked, shivered, and came to the ground like a pack of cards. With a Bible in every parish church, every thoughtful man soon saw that the religion of the priests had no warrant of Holy Scripture.

It is a striking and instructive fact, that of all the agencies which combined to win the English Reformation, hardly any called forth such bitter opposition as the translation and circulation of the Scriptures. Even in 1519, long before Cranmer began his good work, Foxe records that six men and a woman were burned at Coventry for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. And the charge against the accused persons was, not the possession of a Bible, but of an English Bible, or “book of the new law in England.”

Afterwards, when the Reformation fairly began, nothing seems to have alarmed and enraged the Romish priesthood so much as the spread of English Bibles. It was this which cost the martyred Reformer Tyndale his life. He was burned because he would translate and circulate the Scriptures. The relentless enmity with which he was persecuted and finally hunted to death, by Sir Thomas More and others, tells a tale which he who runs may read. The priests knew and felt that their game was up if the people once saw the inside of the Bible. You might as well have tried to stop the tide rising at Chepstow, or prevent Jupiter's satellites revolving round him, as to stop the progress of the Protestant cause when the laity once began to read the Scriptures. In vain Bishop Tunstall seized the book, and Bishop Bonner burned it at Paul's Cross. Its leading contents and principles ran through the land like fire, and from that period the Pope's cause in England was shaken to the centre. You that read the Bible daily and “delight in the law of the Lord,” never forget you owe that Bible to the Reformation.

For another thing, we owe to the Reformation an open road to the throne of grace and the great fountain of peace with God.

That blessed road had been long blocked up and made impassable by heaps of rubbish of man's invention. Under pretence of mending and improving the road, the divines of Rome had spoiled it altogether. He who desired to obtain forgiveness had to seek it through a jungle of priests, saints, Mary-worship, masses, penances, confession, absolution, and the like, so that there might as well have been no Throne of Grace at all.

The huge mass of rubbish was shovelled out of the way by the Reformers. The doctrine of our glorious XIIth Article was everywhere preached, published, and proclaimed. People were taught that justification was by faith without the deeds of the law, and that every heavy-laden sinner on earth had a right to go straight to the Lord Jesus Christ for remission of sins, without waiting for Pope or priest, confession or absolution, masses or extreme unction. From that time the backbone of English Popery was broken. You that are walking by faith and enjoying peace with God, by simple trust in the precious blood of Atonement, never forget that you owe this priceless privilege

to the Reformation.

We owe to the Reformation a true idea of Christian worship.

In the days when Romanism ruled England undisturbed, the service of God's House must have been to most Englishmen a mysterious performance, which left them entirely in the hands of the priests. If they were present at any Church service, they could only be present as sleeping partners, or passive, ignorant spectators. It was a mere formal, histrionic worship, to which the laity could only bring their bodies, but in which their minds, and reason, and spirit, and understanding could take no part at all.

This solemn farce was completely stopped by our Reformers. They laid down the great principle of our XXIVth Article, that “it is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God and the custom of the Primitive Church to have public prayer in the Church or to minister the sacraments in a tongue not understanded of the people.” They introduced into every English parish the English Bible, and English Prayer-book, English preaching, simple, plain services, and a simple untheatrical administration of Christ's two Sacraments. Of course they could not make the people Christians. But from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from Land's End to the North Foreland, a worship was set up in every parish church which the poorest labourer might understand. You that really enjoy the simple service of our Liturgy (and when heartily and devoutly performed there is nothing like it), do not forget every 'Sunday that for this also you are indebted to the Reformation.

We owe to the Reformation a true notion of the office of a Christian Minister.

Before the eyes of Englishmen were opened by the Bible, it was a settled idea in all men's minds that the Christian ministry was a sacerdotal ministry, like that of the Jews, and that every clergyman was a sacrificing priest. The clergy were supposed to hold the keys of heaven, and to be practically mediators between God and man. The natural result was that they generally became spiritual tyrants, and were exalted to a position which was enough to turn the head of any mortal man. Placed far too high, the priests became despots. Placed far too low, the laity became slaves.

The Reformers brought the office of the clergy down to its Scriptural level. They stripped it entirely of any sacerdotal character. They cast out the words “sacrifice” and “altar” from the Prayer Book, and though they retained the word “priest,” retained it only in the sense of “presbyter” or “elder.” They taught the people everywhere that the clergy were not the lords of the Church, but, like Paul and Timothy, its servants (Php_1:1), ambassadors, messengers, witnesses, evangelists, teachers, and ministers of the Word and sacraments. Above all, they declared, as the ordination service of our Church shows, that the chief business of a Christian minister is “to preach the Word, to be diligent in prayer and reading the Scriptures, and to lay aside the study of the world and the flesh.” And as to any power of the keys, and binding and loosing, they taught, as Jewell's Apology distinctly informs us, that it was to be exercised by preaching the Gospel to the penitent, and setting before him an open door, and by warning open sinners that, continuing in sin, they would find heaven's gates shut against them. You that know the value of a true Christian minister, and the immense superiority of the pulpit to the confessional, never forget that for clear light on this point you are indebted to the Reformation.

Finally, we owe to the Reformation a right standard of Christian holiness.

Before the days of Henry VIII it was held by all that a monastic life and vows of celibacy were the only ways to attain eminent sanctity and escape sin. Myriads of men and women were continually becoming monks and nuns, under the vain idea of becoming “religious.”

The Reformers cut up by the roots this most fallacious idea by dissolving religious houses and dispersing their inhabitants. The thing was done roughly, no doubt, and the property of the abbeys and monasteries was disgracefully misapplied. But the measure was a wise one, and like a severe surgical operation, it saved health at the cost of temporary suffering. The great Scriptural principle was established, that true religion is to be seen, not in retiring into holes and corners, and fleeing from difficulties, but in doing our duty in every position to which God calls us, and manfully facing our foes. It is not by running away from the devil, and giving up the management of the world to him, but by man-fully resisting the devil, and overcoming him, that true holiness is to be exhibited. The Reformers ordered the Ten Commandments to be set up in every parish church and taught to every child, and the duty toward God and our neighbour to be set forth in the old Catechism. They refused to give the slightest encouragement to the plausible notion of becoming saints by shirking the duties of our station. It is not too much to say that in process of time this new principle had an elevating and purifying effect on the whole tone of English morals. If England, with all her many faults, has a higher standard of daily life than most countries, let us never forget that we owe it to the Reformation.

Such is the brief and condensed account of the positive blessings which the Reformation has conferred upon England. I have purposely done little more than name them, because they are not bygone things like Popish superstitions, but living privileges with which we are all familiar. We bask in the full sunshine of them. They are part of the air we breathe. They are a rich inheritance which every resident in England unconsciously, I fear, in many cases-enjoys at this day. We have neither an adequate conception of the evils from which the Reformation freed us, nor of the enormous good which it brought in. But this I am bold to assert: whatever England is among the nations of the earth as a Christian country-whatever political liberty we have-whatever light and freedom in religion-whatever purity and happiness there is in our homes-whatever protection and care for the poor-we owe it to the Protestant Reformation.

The Reformation found Englishmen steeped in ignorance, and left them in possession of knowledge-found them without Bibles, and left them with a Bible in every parish-found them in darkness, and left them in comparative light-found them priest-ridden, and left them enjoying the liberty which Christ bestows-found them strangers to the blood of Atonement, to faith, and grace, and holiness, and left them with the key to those things in their hands-found them blind and left them seeing-found them slaves and left them free.

For ever let us thank God for the Reformation. It lighted a candle which ought never to be extinguished or allowed to grow dim. And forever let us remember that the Reformation was won for us by the blood of the martyrs, quite as much as by their preaching and praying, and writing and legislation. It was forged in the fires of Oxford, and Smithfield. It cost the lives of one Archbishop, four Bishops, and 280 other men and women, who died rather than give place to Popery. Shall we in this century talk lightly of the great work which they did? Shall we hold cheaply the privileges which they won? Shall we entertain for a moment the idea of forsaking Reformation principles and going back to Rome? Once more I say, God forbid! The man who counsels such

base apostasy and suicidal folly must be judicially blind. The iron collar has been broken; let us not put it on again. The prison has been thrown open; let us not resume the yoke and return to our chains. The last thing is the danger in which the cause of the Reformation is placed at this day, by that mischievous Romanizing movement within the Church of England, which is now called Anglo-Catholicism.

Is the movement towards Rome or not? Do they really wish to suppress Protestantism, and reintroduce Popery? Hundreds of well-meaning and simple-minded Churchmen reply, No! They would have us believe the movement only aims at a more ornate ceremonial, and that they are not Romanizers at all. It is only, they say, a question of more or less flowers, more or less ornament, and more or less aestheticism and high art. It is not a question of Popery at all. With these amiable apologists I have no sympathy. I believe they are utterly and entirely mistaken. That it is a Romeward movement and a departure from the Reformation, and that it leads to Popery, is as clear to my mind as the sun at noonday. The proofs, in my humble judgment, are clear, full and unanswerable.

(a) It is proved by the writings of the leaders. Let any honest and impartial Churchman study such papers as the Church Times, read some of the Catechisms and Manuals of Devotion, published by Ritualistic clergymen, peruse the debates of proceedings of such bodies as the Church Union, and tell us plainly the impressions these writings have on his mind. I defy him to avoid the conclusion that Ritualism is the highway to Rome.

(b) It is proved by the repeated secessions from the Church of England to the Church of Rome. Why have numbers gone over to the Pope's camp? Simply because they have found the principles of their school could land them in no other logical conclusion.

(c) It is proved by the repeated reference to the subject which Bishops have made in their Charges for years. Mild, and gentle, and conciliatory to an extreme, as these documents have too often been, it is impossible not to see that most of our Prelates detect a Romeward tendency in Ritualism. Their cautions, you will notice, are most always in one direction. “Take care, my dear children,” they seem to say, “that you do not go too far in a Romish direction. You are excellent, learned, charming, delightful, earnest, useful fellows; but don't go too near the edge. Your danger, is tumbling over into the arms of Rome.”

(d) It is proved by the rejoicings of the Roman Catholics themselves over the whole Ritualistic movement, and the disgust with which it is regarded by Scotch Presbyterians, real old-fashioned Nonconformists, and most English Methodists. Both the joy of the one party and the disgust of the other arise from the same cause. Both see clearly that Ritualism damages Protestantism, and helps the Pope.

(e) It is proved, above all, by the unvarying character of all the ceremonial novelties which Ritualists1 have thrust into our Church worship. They have all been in one direction, whether of dress, or gesture, or posture, or action, or anything else. They have all been as un-Protestant as possible. They have all been borrowed or imitated from Popery. They have all exhibited one common bias and animus-an anxious desire to get as far as possible from the ways of the Reformers, and to get as near as possible, whether legally or illegally, to the ways of Rome. They have all shown one common, systematic determination to unProtestantize, as far as possible, the

simple worship of the Church of England, and to assimilate it to the worship of Rome.

The Reformers found the sacrifice of the mass in our Church. They cast it out as a “blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit,” and called the Lord's Supper a Sacrament. The Ritualists have re-introduced the word “sacrifice,” and glory in calling the Lord's Supper a “mass.”

The Reformers found altars in all our Churches. They ordered them to be taken down, and cast the word “altar “entirely out of our Prayer-book, and spoke only of the Lord's table and the Lord's board. The Ritualists delight in calling the Lord's table “the altar.”

The Reformers found our clergy sacrificing priests, and made them prayer-reading, preaching ministers, ministers of God's Word and Sacraments. The Ritualists glory in calling every clergyman a sacrificing priest!

The Reformers found in our Church the doctrine of a real corporal presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, under the forms of bread and wine, and laid down their lives to oppose it. They would not even allow the expression “real presence” a place in our Prayer-book. The Ritualists have re-introduced the doctrine, and adore the consecrated elements as if Christ's natural body and blood were in them.

The Reformers found in all our Churches images, rood' screens, crucifixes and holy places, and indignantly cast them out or prohibited them. The Ritualists are incessantly trying to bring them back.

The Reformers found our worship stuffed with processions; incense burning, flag carrying, candles, gestures, postures, flowers, and gaudy sacrificial garments, and ordered them all to be put away. The Ritualists are always labouring to re-introduce them.

The Reformers found prayers to the dead saints a regular part of English worship, and cast them out. They declared the invocation of saints, in our XXIInd Article, to be “a fond thing vainly invented, grounded on no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God” The Ritualists now advocate praying to the saints.

The Reformers found prayers to the dead saints a regular authority and chief power in this realm in all causes ecclesiastical as well as civil. The Ritualists maintain that the Church is above the State. The decisions of the Ecclesiastical Courts are treated by them with undisguised contempt. They forget that the attempt to make Convocation independent of Parliament, in 1640, was one of the very things which cost Archbishop Laud his head, and brought on the Wars of the Commonwealth.

Last, and worst of all, the Ritualists are reviving the detestable practice of Auricular Confession. This is the practice which is distinctly denounced by the Reformers, in the Homily of Repentance, and in Jewell's Apology. This is the practice which has been tried in days gone by, and has led to such abominable immorality, that even a Pope of Rome issued a Bull against things connected with it and arising out of it in Spain. This miserable, detestable practice the Ritualists have galvanised into fresh existence, and are trying everywhere to re-introduce. Of all the mischievous, Popish revivals for which they are responsible, this is the worst.

Can anyone in his senses doubt what all this means? Straws show which way the wind blows. Ceremonial trifles show the current of religious feeling. He that looks at the catalogue of facts

which I have brought forward, and then tells us that there is no tendency towards Rome, is past all argument. Even Dean Burgon, the Dean of Chichester, an unmistakable High Churchman, published a sermon on the subject called, “Romanising in the Church of England.” It exposes in scathing language the Mary-worship and the unscriptural teaching about Confession and Holy Communion which disgrace the Ritualist body. It contains among scores of true and good things this notable sentence: “The only logical result of such principles and practices within the Church of England will be to betray many unstable souls into the hands of the Church of Rome.” Surely in the face of such a witness as this it is absurd to tell us that Anglo-Romanism is not the highway to Rome!

But after all, is Anglo-Romanism doing any harm to the Church of England? With all its faults and defects, does not the movement do more good than evil? Is it not better to “believe all things, and hope all things,” and to leave Anglo-Romanism alone? Is it not unkind to interfere with such earnest, devoted men? These are questions which many in their simplicity are continually asking.

Some tell us that Anglo-Romanism has revived the Church, rallied the laity, infused a new spirit into the Establishment, lengthened her cords and strengthened her stakes. Some tell us that the existence of an Anglo-Romanistic party in our Church is an excellent and healthy symptom, that parties keep each other in check, and act as counter-irritants in the constitution, and that except Anglo-Romanism abides in the Church we shall not be saved. My own opinion is diametrically the reverse. I believe that Anglo-Romanism has done, and is doing, enormous damage to the Church of England, and that unless checked or removed, it will prove the destruction of the Establishment.2

We are drifting towards an internecine conflict. So long as the difference was only between different sections little harm was done. But when the struggle is between Popery and Protestantism, union is impossible. The Master Himself has declared, “If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” (Mark 3:25).

Anglo-Romanism is gradually robbing our Church of some of its best members among the laity. Not a few bankers, lawyers, doctors, and merchants are dropping off and leaving the ship. Their confidence is thoroughly shaken. They cannot understand an Established Church in which the service is Popish in one parish and Protestant in another. They are becoming disgusted with the continued toleration of Popish novelties, which their own common sense tells them are as thoroughly unchurchmanlike as they are unscriptural. Some of them go off to the Plymouth Brethren, some join the Nonconformists, and some stand aloof altogether, and refuse to take any part in the Church's affairs. The life blood of the Church is being drained away.

Moreover, thousands of tradesmen, and farmers, and artisans have an instinctive horror of Popery. They may not be very intelligent or deeply read in theological matters, but they are determined not to put up with Popery. They cannot draw nice distinctions: they are apt to call a spade a spade, and to give things their right names. And if they see the slightest attempt to re-introduce Popish ceremonies into their parish churches their suspicions are aroused, and they walk off to chapel. The Churchman who allows these suspicions to be roused, be he Bishop or Presbyter, may be earnest and zealous, but he is no true friend to the Church of England.

If anyone supposes that in saying this I wish to narrow the limits of English Churchmanship, or to confine it to one party, he is totally mistaken. I never met a sensible Evangelical Churchman who did not admit fully that the Church of England is a comprehensive Church. But though our mother has wide arms and a large heart, I am sure she never meant to embrace both Lambeth and the Vatican. I maintain that the Church of England was never meant to comprehend downright Popery, and those who hold all Romish doctrines have no lawful place in her ministry.

My chief fears of Anglo-Romanism arise from the effect which it has on the minds of the masses of the people. They do not like it. They will not have it. They call it POPERY.

Shallow-minded members of the aristocracy-ill-taught ascetics-self-willed and half-instructed members of Evangelical families who want to mix worldliness with religious formalism, and to compound for the one by supporting the other-idle young ladies and thoughtless young men, who love anything gaudy, showy, sensational, and theatrical in worship, or like to show their independence by disagreeing with their parents-all these may stick to Anglo-Romanism and stoutly support it. They are like children who admire poppies more than corn, and like babies who care for toys more than food. But Anglo-Romanism does not meet the wants of the hard-handed masses of the middle classes and intelligent artisans, the brain and muscle of England. These men want food for their souls and rest for their consciences.

Only let Anglo-Romanism grow and spread for a few more years and the end will come. The Church will perish for want of Churchmen. Generals and colonels and bands of music do not make up an army, and Bishops and choristers and clergy alone do not make up a Church. The Church of England will never stand if it disgusts and drives away its congregations. Disestablishment will come as a matter of course. The Church of a minority will not be spared in England: any more than in Ireland. The voice of the people will demand our destruction; and on modern principles it will be obeyed. The Church of England once disestablished, will split into pieces or become a mere sect, like the Scottish Episcopal Church; and the pages of history will then record that she made a shipwreck of all her greatness, by the suicidal attempt to recede from the principles of the Reformation.

Whether my fears are well founded time alone will show. But I should not be doing my duty as an honest man if I did not state most distinctly my impression that we are in a most critical position, and that the future must be regarded with deep anxiety. I have a firm belief that unless Anglo-Romanism is checked, the Established Church will be broken to pieces. The Duty of All.

1. For one thing, I advise you to resist manfully the efforts now being made to un-Protestantize England, and to bring her once more into subjection to Popery. Let us not go back to ignorance, superstition, priestcraft, and immorality. Our forefathers tried Popery long ago, and threw it off with disgust and indignation. Let us have no peace with Rome till Rome abjures her errors and is at peace with Christ. When Rome does that, and not till then, it will be time to talk of re-union with her. But till then the vaunted movement for a “Reunion of Western Churches” is an insult to Christianity.

Read your Bibles and be armed with Scriptural arguments. A Bible-reading laity is a nation's surest defence against error.

Read history, and see what Rome did in days gone by. Read how she trampled on your country's liberties, plundered your forefather's pockets, and kept the whole nation ignorant-and immoral. Read Foxe, and Strype, and Fuller, and Burnett, and Soames, and Professor J. J. Blunt, and Froude's Life of Queen Mary. And do not forget that Rome never changes. It is her boast and glory that she is infallible and always the same. Only give her power in England, and she will soon play the old game; first soothe us to sleep, and then put out the eyes of our country, and make her, like Samson, a degraded slave.

Read facts standing out on the face of the globe. What has made Italy what she was until very lately? Popery.-What has made Mexico and the South American States what they are? Popery.-What makes Scotland, the United States, and our own beloved England the powerful, prosperous countries they are at present, and I pray God they may long continue? I answer in one word, PROTESTANTISM-a free Bible, and the principles of the Reformation.3

2. For another thing, I charge you to beware of Anglo-Romanism, and do all you can to resist it.

Resist it in little things. Resist strange dresses, sacrificial garments, the eastward position in consecrating the bread and wine, idolatrous reverence of the consecrated elements, processions, banners, incense, candles on the communion table, turning to the East, crosses and crucifixes in the chancels, and extravagant Church decorations.

Resist it in great things. Oppose with might and main the attempt to re-introduce the Mass and Auricular Confession in our parishes. Send your boy to no school where auricular confession is ever tolerated. Allow no clergymen to draw your wife and daughter to private confession. Oppose sternly, but firmly, the attempt to change the Lord's Supper at your parish churches, into the Romish sacrifice of the mass. Draw back from the communion in such churches, and go elsewhere. The laity have a great deal of power in this matter, even without going to law. They should tell the clergy their minds. They cannot do without the laity any more than officers in a regiment can do without privates. Let the English laity all over England rise in their might, and say, “We will not have the mass and auricular confession.”

Resist it for Christ's sake. His Priestly and Mediatorial offices are being injured and dishonoured. They are offices He has never deputed to any order of ordained men.

Resist it for the clergy's sake. The worst and cruellest thing that can be done is to lift us out of our proper places, and make us lords over your consciences, and mediators between yourselves and God.

Resist it for the laity's sake. The most degrading position in which laymen could be put, is that of being cringing slaves at the foot of a brother sinner.

Resist it, not least, for your children's sake. Do what in you lies to provide that, when you are dead and gone, they shall not be left to the tender mercies of Popery. As ever you would meet your boys and girls in heaven, take care that the Church of England in your day is maintained a Protestant Church, and preserves her Articles and the principles of the Reformation wholly uninjured and undefiled.

3. My third piece of advice is this. Do not be in a hurry to leave the Church of England because many of her clergy are unfaithful. It is cheap and easy policy for Churchmen to shirk trouble, and

run away in the hour of conflict; but it is neither manly, nor Christian, nor kind. It is a short-cut road out of difficulties to launch the long boat when the good ship is in jeopardy, and to leave your companions to sink. But it is not the line of action which becomes an Englishman. As Nelson said at Trafalgar, “England expects every man to do his duty.”

4. My fourth and last piece of advice is this. Work, every one, both publicly and privately, for the defence of Christ's truth and the maintenance of Reformation principles. But work together in an organized and systematic way, or else you will do little. Associate, unite, organize, work together, keep together, and much may be done.

Things look black in every direction, I freely admit. But there is no reason to despair. The day is not lost. As Napoleon said on a memorable occasion, “There is yet time to win a battle.” Come what will, let us not desert our position. Let us not please our enemies by spiking our guns and marching out of our fortress without a fight. Rather let us stand to our guns, like Latimer and Ridley, and in God's strength show a bold front to the foe. The Church of England has done some good in days gone by, and the Church is still worth preserving. If we fall in the struggle, let us fall with face to the foe and colours flying; but, like the gallant sentinel of Pompeii, who would not stir when Vesuvius was in eruption, let no man leave his post. My own mind is fully made up. I say the Church of England had better perish and go to pieces than forsake the principles of the Reformation, and tolerate the Sacrifice of the Mass and Auricular Confession. But whether she is to perish or not depends, under God, on the action of her members.

FOOTNOTES

1 In the latter portion of this tract the Editor has turned the word Ritualists into Anglo-Romans as being nowadays better understood.

[Evangelical Tracts' editor has restored “Ritualists” which is the word J. C. Ryle used.-July 2006AD]

2 The late Bishop of Hereford (Dr. Percival) appearing before the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline (1906) said:

“I do hope that anything which can be done to stop this habit of spectacular Communions will be done, because I believe this type of Communion tends to become a debased form of worship in connection with the most solemn portion of our worship. And in connection with that I should like to do anything that can be done to stop the multiplication of the ornamental accompaniments of worship, mitres, crosses, banners, censers, vestments and decorations of all sorts, because it is the tendency of all such physical accompaniments to go from one thing to another.”

“So far as possible a policy tending towards what is called home reunion, by maintaining the reformed character of our Church, by resisting this back current towards mediaevalism and Romanism, by emphasising our reliance on Holy Scripture. . . . I am afraid the policy of drifting in the other direction would be drifting towards Niagara.”

3 The most remarkable sign of National progress in these latter days, is the manner in which the old Roman Catholic countries like Spain, Portugal, Italy, Mexico, and South American States have revolted against political Romanism and set up barriers against priestly interferences in National life.

Chapter 59

Peace be still!

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold". Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

"PEACE! BE STILL!"

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Mark 4:37-40

"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

"And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

"And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

I WISH professing Christians in this day studied the four Gospels more than they do. I know that all Scripture is profitable. I do not wish to exalt one part of the Bible at the expense of another. But I think it would be good for some, who are very familiar with the Epistles, if they knew a little more about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Now, why do I say this? I say it because I want professing Christians to know more about Christ. It is well to be acquainted with all the doctrines and principles of Christianity. It is better to be acquainted with Christ Himself. It is well to be familiar with faith, and grace, and justification, and sanctification. They are all matters pertaining to the King. But it is far better to be familiar with Jesus Himself, to see the King's own face, and to behold His beauty.

Now the Gospels were written to make us acquainted with Christ. The Holy Ghost has told us the story of His life and death,-His sayings and His doings, four times over. Four different inspired hands have drawn the picture of the Saviour. His ways, His manners, His feelings, His wisdom, His grace, His patience, His love, His power, are graciously unfolded to us by four different witnesses. Ought not the sheep to be familiar with the Shepherd? Ought not the patient to be familiar with the Physician? Ought not the bride to be familiar with the Bridegroom? Ought not the sinner to be familiar with the Saviour? Beyond doubt it ought to be so. The Gospels were written to make men familiar with Christ, and therefore I wish men to study the Gospels.

On whom must you and I build our souls if we would be accepted with God? We must build on the rock, Christ. From whom must you and I draw that grace of the Spirit which we daily need in order to be fruitful? We must draw from the vine, Christ. To whom must we look for sympathy when earthly friends fail us or die? We must look to our elder brother, Christ. By whom must our prayers be presented if they are to be heard on high? They must be presented by our advocate, Christ. With whom do we hope to spend the thousand years of glory, and the after-eternity? With the King of kings, Christ. Surely we cannot know this Christ too well. Surely there is not a word, nor a deed, nor a day, nor a step, nor a thought in the record of His life, which ought not to be precious to us. We should labour to be familiar with every line that is written about Jesus.

Come now, and let us study together a page in our Master's history. Let us consider what we may learn from the verses of Scripture which stand at the head of this tract. You see Jesus there crossing the Lake of Galilee, in a boat, with His disciples. You see a sudden storm arise while He is asleep. The waves beat into the boat, and fill it. Death seems to be close at hand. The frightened disciples awake their Master and cry for help. He arises and rebukes the wind and waves, and at once there is a calm. He mildly reproves the faithless fears of His companions, and all is over. Such is the picture. It is one full of deep instruction. Come now, and let us examine what we are meant to learn.

I. Learn, first of all, that following Christ will not prevent your having earthly sorrows and troubles.

Here are the chosen disciples of the Lord Jesus in great anxiety. The faithful little flock which believed when Priests, and Scribes, and Pharisees were all alike unbelieving, is allowed by the Shepherd to be much disquieted. The fear of death breaks in upon them like an armed man. The deep water seems likely to go over their souls. Peter, James, and John, the pillars of the Church about to be planted in the world, are much distressed.

Perhaps they had not reckoned on all this. Perhaps they had expected that Christ's service would at any rate lift them above the reach of earthly trials. Perhaps they thought that He who could raise the dead, and heal the sick, and feed multitudes with a few loaves, and cast out devils with a word,-He would never allow His servants to be sufferers upon earth. Perhaps they had supposed He would always grant them smooth journeys, fine weather, an easy course, and freedom from trouble and care.

If the disciples thought so they were much mistaken. The Lord Jesus taught them that a man may be one of His chosen servants and yet have to go through many an anxiety and endure many a pain.

Reader, it is good to understand this clearly. It is good to understand that Christ's service never did secure a man from all the ills that flesh is heir to, and never will. If you are a believer, you must reckon on having your share of sickness and pain, of sorrow and tears, of losses and crosses, of deaths and bereavements, of partings and separations, of vexations and disappointments, so long as you are in the body. Christ never undertakes that you shall get to heaven without these. He has undertaken that all who come to Him shall have all things pertaining to life and godliness. But He has never undertaken that He will make them prosperous, rich, or healthy, and that death shall never come to their family.

I have the privilege of being one of Christ's ambassadors. In His name I can offer eternal life to any man, woman, or child, who is willing to have it. In His name I do offer pardon, peace, grace, glory, to any son or daughter of Adam who reads this. But I dare not offer that person worldly prosperity as a part and parcel of their Gospel. I dare not offer him long life, an increased income, and freedom from pain. I dare not promise the man who takes up the cross and follows Christ, that in the following he shall never meet with a storm.

I know well that many do not like these terms. They would prefer having Christ and good health,-Christ and plenty of money,-Christ and no deaths in their family,-Christ and no wearing cares,-Christ and a perpetual morning without clouds. But they do not like Christ and the cross,-Christ and tribulation,-Christ and the conflict,-Christ and the howling wind,-Christ and the storm.

Reader, is this the thought of your heart? Believe me, if it is you are very wrong. Listen to me, and I will try to show you you have yet much to learn.

How should we know who are true Christians if following Christ was the way to be free from trouble? How should we discern the wheat from the chaff if it were not for the winnowing of trial? How should we know whether men served Christ for His own sake or from selfish motives, if His service brought health and wealth with it as a matter of course? The winds of winter soon show us which of the trees are evergreen and which are not. The storms of affliction and care are useful in the same way. They discover whose faith is real, and whose is nothing but profession and form.

How would the great work of sanctification go on in a man if he had no trial? Trouble is often the only fire which will burn away the dross that clings to our hearts. Trouble is the pruning-knife which the great Husbandman employs in order to make us fruitful in good works. The harvest of the Lord's field is seldom ripened by sunshine only. It must go through its days of wind, and rain, and storm.

Reader, if you desire to serve Christ and be saved, I entreat you to take the Lord on His own terms. Make up your mind to meet with your share of crosses and sorrows, and then you will not be surprised. For want of understanding this, many seem to run well for a season, and then turn back in disgust, and are cast away.

Reader, if you profess to be a child of God, leave to the Lord Jesus to sanctify you in His own way. Rest satisfied that He never makes any mistakes. Be sure that He does all things well. The winds may howl around you, and the waters swell. But fear not: "He is leading you by the right way, that He may bring you to a city of habitation" (Psalms 107:7).

II. Learn, in the second place, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly and really man.

There are words used in this little history, which, like many other passages in the Gospels, bring out this truth in a very striking way. You are told that when the waves began to break on the ship, Jesus was in the hinder part, "asleep on a pillow." He was weary, and who can wonder at it, after reading the account given in the 4th of Mark? After labouring all day to do good to souls,-after preaching in the open air to vast multitudes, Jesus was fatigued. Surely if the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, much more sweet must have been the sleep of our blessed Lord!

Reader, I ask you to settle deeply in your mind this great truth,-that Jesus Christ was verily and indeed man. He was equal to the Father in all things, and the eternal God. But He was also man, and took part of flesh and blood, and was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. He had a body like our own. Like us, He was born of a woman. Like us, He grew and increased in stature. Like us, He was often hungry and thirsty, and faint and weary. Like us, He ate and drank, rested and slept. Like us, He sorrowed, and wept, and felt. It is all very wonderful, but so it is. He that made the heavens went to and fro as a poor weary man on earth! He that ruled over principalities and powers in heavenly places took on Him a frail body like our own. He that might have dwelt for ever in the glory which He had with the Father, amidst the praises of legions of angels, came down to earth and dwelt as a man among sinful men. Surely this fact alone is an amazing miracle of condescension, grace, pity, and love.

I find a deep mine of comfort in this thought, that Jesus is perfect man no less than perfect God. He in whom I am told by Scripture to trust is not only a great High Priest, but a feeling High Priest. He is not only a powerful Saviour, but a sympathizing Saviour. He is not only the Son of God mighty to save, but the Son of man able to feel.

Who does not know that sympathy is one of the sweetest things left to us in this sinful world? It is one of the bright seasons in our dark journey here below when we can find a person who enters into our troubles, and goes along with us in our anxieties,-who can weep when we weep, and rejoice when we rejoice.

Sympathy is far better than money, and far rarer too. Thousands can give who know not what it is to feel. Sympathy has the greatest power to draw us and to open our hearts. Proper and correct counsel often falls dead and useless on a heavy heart. Cold advice often makes us shut up, shrink, and withdraw into ourselves, when tendered in the day of trouble. But genuine sympathy in such a day will call out all our better feelings, if we have any, and obtain an influence over us when nothing else can. Give me the friend who, though poor in gold and silver, has always ready a sympathizing heart.

Reader, our God knows all this well. He knows the very secrets of man's heart. He knows the ways by which that heart is most easily approached, and the springs by which that heart is most readily moved. He has wisely provided that the Saviour of the Gospel should be feeling as well as mighty. He has given us one who has not only a strong hand to pluck us as brands from the burning, but a sympathizing heart on which the labouring and heavy-laden may find rest.

I see a marvellous proof of love and wisdom in the union of two natures in Christ's person. It was marvellous love in our Saviour to condescend to go through weakness and humiliation for our sakes, ungodly rebels as we are. It was marvellous wisdom to fit Himself in this way to be the very Friend of friends, who could not only save man but meet him on his own ground. I want one able to perform all things needful to redeem my soul. This Jesus can do, for He is the eternal Son of God. I want one able to understand my weakness and infirmities, and to deal gently with my soul while tied to a body of death. This again Jesus can do, for He was the Son of man, and had flesh and blood like my own. Had my Saviour been God only, I might perhaps have trusted Him, but I never could have come near to Him without fear. Had my Saviour been man only, I might have loved Him, but I never could have felt sure that He was able to take away my sins. But, blessed be the Lord, my Saviour is God as well as man, and man as well as God: God, and so able to deliver

me,-man, and so able to feel with me. Almighty power and deepest sympathy are met together in one glorious person, Jesus Christ, my Lord. Surely a believer in Christ has a strong consolation. He may well trust, and not be afraid.

Reader, if you know what it is to go to the throne of grace for mercy and pardon, do not forget that the Mediator by whom you draw near to God is the Man Christ Jesus.

Your soul's business is in the hand of a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. You have not to do with a being of so high and glorious a nature that your mind can in no wise comprehend Him. You have to do with Jesus, who had a body like your own, and was a man upon earth, like yourself. He well knows that world through which you are struggling, for He dwelt in the midst of it thirty-three years. He well knows the contradiction of sinners, which so often discourages you, for He endured it Himself. He well knows the art and cunning of your spiritual enemy, the devil, for He wrestled with him in the wilderness. Surely with such an advocate you may well feel bold.

Reader, if you know what it is to apply to the Lord Jesus for spiritual comfort in earthly troubles, you should well remember the days of His flesh, and His human nature.

You are applying to One who knows your feelings by experience, and has drunk deep of the bitter cup, for He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Jesus knows the heart of a man,-the bodily pains of a man,-the difficulties of a man,- for He was a man Himself, and had flesh and blood upon earth. He sat wearied by the well at Sychar. He wept over the grave of Lazarus, at Bethany. He sweat great drops of blood at Gethsemane. He groaned with anguish at Calvary. He is no stranger to your sensations. He is acquainted with everything that belongs to human nature, sin only excepted.

Are you poor and needy? So also was Jesus. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. He dwelt in a despised city. Men used to say, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). He was esteemed a carpenter's son, He preached in a borrowed boat, rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed ass, and was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Are you alone in the world, and neglected by those who ought to love you? So also was Jesus. He came unto His own, and they received Him not. He came to be a Messiah to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and they rejected Him. The princes of this world would not acknowledge Him. The few that followed Him were publicans and fishermen. And even these at the last forsook Him, and were scattered every man to his own place.

Are you misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered, and persecuted? So also was Jesus. He was called a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans, a Samaritan, a madman, and a devil. His character was belied. False charges were laid against Him. An unjust sentence was passed upon Him, and, though innocent, He was condemned as a malefactor, and as such died on the cross.

Does Satan tempt you, and offer horrid suggestions to your mind? So also did he tempt Jesus. He bade Him to distrust God's fatherly providence. "Command these stones to be made bread." He proposed to Him to tempt God by exposing Himself to unnecessary danger. "Cast Thyself down" from the pinnacle of the temple. He suggested to Him to obtain the kingdoms of the world for His

own, by one little act of submission to himself. "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Do you ever feel great agony and conflict of mind? Do you feel in darkness, as if God had left you? So did Jesus. Who can tell the extent of the sufferings of mind He went through in the garden? Who can measure the depth of His soul's pain when He cried, "My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Ah, reader, it is impossible to conceive a Saviour more suited to the wants of man's heart than our Lord Jesus Christ; suited not only by His power, but by His sympathy; suited not only by His divinity, but by His humanity. Labour, I beseech you, to get firmly impressed on your mind that Christ, the refuge of souls, is man as well as God. Honour Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords; but while you do this, never forget that He had a body, and was a man. Grasp this truth, and never let it go. The unhappy Socinian errs fear fully when he says that Christ was only man, and not God; but let not the rebound from that error make you forget that while Christ was very God, He was also very man.

Listen not for a moment to the wretched argument of the Roman Catholic, when he tells you that the Virgin Mary and the saints are more sympathizing than Christ. Answer him, that such an argument springs from ignorance of the Scriptures, and Christ's true nature. Answer him, that you have not so learned Christ, as to regard Him only as an austere Judge, and a Being to be feared. Answer him, that the four Gospels have taught you to regard Him as the most loving and sympathizing of Friends, as well as the mightiest and most powerful of Saviours. Answer him, that you want no comfort from saints and angels, from the Virgin Mary or from Gabriel, so long as you can repose your weary soul on the Man Christ Jesus.

III. Learn, in the third place, that there may be much weakness and infirmity even in a true Christian.

You have a striking proof of this in the conduct of the disciples here recorded, when the waves broke over the ship. They awoke Jesus in haste. They said to Him in fear and anxiety, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?"

There was impatience. They might have waited till their Lord thought fit to arise from His sleep.

There was unbelief. They forgot that they were in the keeping of One who had all power in His hand. "We perish."

There was distrust. They spoke as if they doubted their Lord's care and thoughtfulness for their safety and well-being. "Carest Thou not that we perish?"

Poor faithless men! What business had they to be afraid? They had seen proof upon proof that all must be well so long as the Bridegroom was with them. They had witnessed repeated examples of His love and kindness towards them, sufficient to convince them that He would never let them come to real harm. But all was forgotten in the present danger. Sense of immediate peril often makes men have a bad memory. Fear is often unable to reason from past experience. They heard the winds. They saw the waves. They felt the cold waters beating over them. They fancied death was close at hand. They could wait no longer in suspense. "Carest Thou not," said they, "that we perish?"

But, after all, let us understand this is only a picture of what is constantly going on among believers in every age. There are too many disciples, I suspect, at this very day, like those who are here described.

Many of God's children get on very well so long as they have no trials. They follow Christ very tolerably in the time of fair weather. They fancy they are trusting Him entirely. They flatter themselves they have cast every care on Him. They obtain the reputation of being very good Christians. But suddenly some unlooked-for affliction assails them. Their property makes itself wings and flies away; their own health fails; death comes up into their house; tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word; and where now is their faith? Where is the strong confidence they thought they had? Where is their peace, their hope, their resignation? Alas, they are sought for and not found! They are weighed in the balance and found wanting. Fear, and doubt, and distress, and anxiety break in upon them like a flood, and they seem at their wits' end. I know that this is a sad description: I only put it to the conscience of every real Christian, whether it is not correct and true?

Reader, the plain truth is that there is no literal and absolute perfection among true Christians so long as they are in the body. The best and brightest of God's saints is but a poor mixed being: converted, renewed, and sanctified though he be, he is still compassed with infirmity. There is not a just man upon earth that always doeth good, and sinneth not. In many things we offend all. A man may have true saving faith, and yet not have it always close at hand, and ready to be used.

Abraham was the father of the faithful. By faith he forsook his country and kindred, and went out according to the command of God, to a land he had never seen. By faith he was content to dwell in the land as a stranger, believing that God would give it to him for an inheritance. And yet this very Abraham was so far overcome by unbelief, that he allowed Sarah to be called his sister, and not his wife, through the fear of man. Here was great infirmity. Yet there have been few greater saints than Abraham.

David was a man after God's own heart. He had faith to go out to battle with the giant Goliath, when he was but a youth. He declared his belief that the Lord, who delivered him from the paw of the lion and bear, would deliver him from this Philistine. He had faith to believe God's promise that he should one day be king of Israel, though he was owned by a few followers,-though Saul pursued him like a partridge on the mountains, and there often seemed but a step between him and death. And yet this very David at one time was so far overtaken by fear and unbelief, that he said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." He forgot the many wonderful deliverances he had experienced at God's hand. He only thought of his present danger, and took refuge among the ungodly Philistines. Surely here was great infirmity. Yet there have been few stronger believers than David.

I know it is easy for a man to reply, "All this is very true, but it does not excuse the fears of the disciples. They had Jesus actually with them: they ought not to have been afraid. I should never have been so cowardly and faithless as they were!" I tell the man who argues in that way, that he knows little of his own heart. I tell him no one knows the length and breadth of his own infirmities, if he has not been tempted. No one "can say how much weakness might appear in himself if he was placed in circumstances to call it forth.

Reader, have you faith in Christ ? Do you feel such love and confidence in Him that you cannot understand being greatly moved by any event that could happen? It is all well: I am glad to hear it. But has this faith been tried? Has this confidence been put to the test? If not, take heed of condemning these disciples hastily. Be not high-minded, but fear. Think not because your heart is in a lively frame now, that such frame will always last. Say not, because your feelings are warm and fervent to-day, "To morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant." Say not because your heart is lifted up just now with a strong sense of Christ's mercy, "I shall never forget Him as long as I live." Oh, learn to abate something of this flattering estimate of yourself! You do not know yourself thoroughly: there are more things in your inward man than you are at present aware of. The Lord may leave you, as He did Hezekiah, to show you "all that is in your heart" (2 Chronicles 32:31). Blessed is he that is clothed with humility. Happy is he that feareth always. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

Why do I dwell on this? Do I want to apologize for the corruptions of professing Christians, and excuse their sins? God forbid! Do I want to lower the standard of sanctification, and countenance any one in being a lazy, idle soldier of Christ? God forbid! Do I want to wipe out the broad line of distinction between the converted and the unconverted, and to wink at inconsistencies? Once more I say, God forbid! I hold strongly that there is a mighty difference between the true Christian and the false!-between the believer and the unbeliever, between the children of God and the children of the world. I hold strongly that this difference is not merely one of faith, but of life,-not only one of profession, but of practice. I hold strongly that the ways of the believer should be as distinct from those of the unbeliever, as bitter from sweet, light from darkness, heat from cold.

But I do want young Christians to understand what they must expect to find in themselves. I want to prevent their being stumbled and puzzled by the discovery of their own weakness and infirmity. I want them to see that they may have true faith and grace, in spite of all the devil's whispers to the contrary, though they feel within many doubts and fears. I want them to observe that Peter, and James, and John, and their brethren, were true disciples, and yet not so spiritual but that they could be afraid. I do not tell them to make the unbelief of the disciples an excuse for themselves, but I do tell them that it shows plainly that so long as they are in the body they must not expect faith to be above the reach of fear.

Above all, I want all Christians to understand what they must expect in other believers. You must not hastily conclude that a man has no grace merely because you see in him some corruption. There are spots on the face of the sun, and yet the sun shines brightly, and enlightens the whole world; there is quartz and dross mixed up with many a lump of gold that comes from Australia, and yet who thinks the gold on that account worth nothing at all? There are flaws in some of the finest diamonds in the world; and yet they do not prevent their being rated at a priceless value. Away with this morbid squeamishness, which makes many ready to excommunicate a man if he only has a few faults! Let us be more quick to see grace, and more slow to see imperfections! Let us know if we cannot allow there is grace where there is corruption, we shall find no grace in the world. We are yet in the body: the devil is not dead. We are not yet like the angels. Heaven is not yet begun. The leprosy is not out of the walls of the house, however much we may scrape them, and never will be till the house is taken down. Our bodies are indeed the temple of the Holy Ghost, but not a perfect temple, until they are raised or changed. Grace is indeed a treasure, but a treasure in earthen vessels. It is possible for a man to forsake all for Christ's sake, and yet to be overtaken

occasionally with doubts and fears.

Reader, I beseech you to remember this. It is a lesson worth attention. The Apostles believed in Christ, loved Christ, and gave up all to follow Christ. And yet you see in this storm the Apostles were afraid. Learn to be charitable in your judgment of them. Learn to be moderate in your expectations from your own heart. Contend to the death for the truth, that no man is a true Christian who is not converted and is not a holy man. But allow that a man may be converted, have a new heart, and be a holy man, and yet be liable to infirmity, doubts, and fears.

IV. Learn, in the fourth place, the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You have a striking example of His power in the history upon which I am now dwelling. The waves were breaking into the ship where Jesus was. The terrified disciples awoke Him, and cried for help. "He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." This was a wonderful miracle. No one could do this but one who was almighty.

Make the winds cease with a word! Who does not know that it is a common saying in order to describe an impossibility, "You might as well speak to the wind?" Yet Jesus rebukes the wind, and at once it ceases. This was power. Calm the waves with a voice! What reader of history does not know that a mighty king of England tried in vain to stop the tide rising on the shore? Yet here is one who says to raging waves in a storm, "Peace, be still," and at once there was a calm. Here was power.

Reader, it is good for all men to have clear views of the Lord Jesus Christ's power. Let the sinner know that the merciful Saviour, to whom he is urged to flee, and in whom he is invited to trust, is nothing less than the Almighty, and has power over all flesh to give eternal life. (Revelation 1:8; John 17:2). Let the anxious inquirer understand that if he will only venture on Jesus, and take up the cross, he ventures on One who has all power in heaven and earth. (Matthew 28:18). Let the believer remember as he journeys through the wilderness, that his Mediator, and Advocate, and Physician, and Shepherd, and Redeemer, is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and that through Him all things may be done. (Revelation 17:14; Php_4:13) Let all study the subject, for it deserves to be studied.

Study it in His works of creation. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). The heavens, and all their glorious hosts of inhabitants,-the earth, and all it contains,-the sea and all that is in it,-all creation from the sun on high to the least worm below, was the work of Christ. He spake, and they came into being: He commanded, and they began to exist. That very Jesus, who was born of a poor woman at Bethlehem, and lived in a carpenter's house at Nazareth, had been the former of all things. Was not this power?

Study it in His works of providence, and the orderly continuance of all things in the world. "By Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:17). Sun, moon, and stars, roll round in a perfect system. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter, follow one another in regular order. They continue to this day and fail not, according to the ordinance of Him who died on Calvary. (Psalms 119:91). The kingdoms of this world rise and increase, and decline and pass away. The rulers of the earth plan, and scheme, and make laws, and change laws, and war, and pull down one, and raise up another. But they little think that they rule only by the will of Jesus, and that nothing happens without the permission of

the Lamb of God. They do not know that they and their subjects are all as a drop of water in the hand of the Crucified One, and that He increaseth the nations, and diminisheth the nations, just according to His mind. Is not this power?

Study the subject, not least, in the miracles worked by our Lord Jesus Christ during the three years of His ministry upon earth. Learn, from the mighty works which He did, that the things which are impossible with man are possible with Christ. Regard every one of His miracles as an emblem and figure of spiritual things. See in it a lovely picture of what He is able to do for your soul. He that could raise the dead with a word can just as easily raise man from the death of sin. He that could give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb, can also make sinners to see the kingdom of God, hear the joyful sound of the Gospel, and speak forth the praise of redeeming love. He that could heal leprosy with a touch can heal any disease of heart. He that could cast out devils can bid every besetting sin yield to His grace. Oh, reader, begin to read Christ's miracles in this light! Wicked, and bad, and corrupt as you may feel, take comfort in the thought that you are not beyond Christ's power to heal. Remember that in Christ there is not only a fulness of mercy, but a fulness of power.

Study the subject in particular as placed before you this day. I dare be sure your heart has sometimes been tossed to and fro like the waves in a storm. You have found it agitated like the waters of the troubled sea when it cannot rest. Come and hear this day that there is One who can give you rest. Jesus can say to your heart, whatever may be its ailment, "Peace, be still!

What though your conscience within be lashed by the recollection of countless transgressions, and torn by every gust of temptation? What though the remembrance of past hideous profligacy be grievous unto you, and the burden intolerable? What though your heart seems full of evil, and sin appears to drag you whither it will, like a slave? What though the devil rides to and fro over your soul like a conqueror, and tells you it is vain to struggle against him, there is no hope for you? I tell you there is One who can give even you pardon and peace. My Lord and Master Jesus Christ can rebuke the devil's raging, can calm even your soul's misery, and say even to you, "Peace, be still!" He can scatter that cloud of guilt which now weighs you down. He can bid despair depart. He can drive fear away. He can remove the spirit of bondage, and fill you with the spirit of adoption. Satan may hold your soul like a strong man armed, but Jesus is stronger than he, and when He commands, the prisoners must go free. Oh, if any troubled reader wants a calm within, let him go this day to Jesus Christ, and all shall yet be well!

But what if your heart be right with God, and yet you are pressed down with a load of earthly trouble? What if the fear of poverty is tossing you to and fro, and seems likely to overwhelm you? What if pain of body be racking you to distraction day after day? What if you are suddenly laid aside from active usefulness, and compelled by infirmity to sit still and do nothing? What if death has come into your home, and taken away your Rachel, or Joseph, or Benjamin, and left you alone, crushed to the ground with sorrow? What if all this has happened? Still there is comfort in Christ. He can speak peace to wounded hearts as easily as calm troubled seas. He can rebuke rebellious wills as powerfully as raging winds. He can make storms of sorrow abate, and silence tumultuous passions as surely as He stopped the Galilean storm. He can say to the heaviest anxiety, "Peace, be still!" The floods of care and tribulation may be mighty, but Jesus sits upon the water-floods, and is mightier than the waves of the sea. (Psalms 93:4). The winds of trouble may

howl fiercely round you, but Jesus holds them in His hand, and can stay them when He lists. Oh, if any reader this day is broken-hearted, and careworn, and sorrowful, let him go to Jesus Christ, and cry to Him, and he shall be refreshed. "Come unto He," He says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Reader, I invite you this day to take large views of Christ's power. Doubt anything else if you will, but never doubt Christ's power. Whether you do not secretly love sin may be doubtful. Whether you are not privately clinging to the world may be doubtful. Whether the pride of your nature is not rising against the idea of being saved as a poor sinner by grace may be doubtful. But one thing is not doubtful, and that is, that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and will save you, if, by grace, you seek Him with all your heart and mind..

V. Learn, in the last place, how tenderly and patiently the Lord Jesus deals with weak believers.

You see this truth brought out in His word to His disciples, when the wind ceased, and there was a calm. He might well have rebuked them sharply. He might well have reminded them of all the great things He had done for them, and reproved them for their cowardice and mistrust, but there is nothing of anger in the Lord's words. He simply asks two questions. "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

The whole of our Lord's conduct towards His disciples on earth deserves close consideration. It throws a beautiful light on the compassion and long-suffering that there is in Him. No master surely ever had scholars so slow to learn their lessons as Jesus had in the apostles. No scholars surely ever had so patient and forbearing a teacher as the apostles had in Christ. Gather up all the evidence on this subject that lies scattered through the Gospels, and see the truth of what I say.

At no time of our Lord's ministry did the disciples seem to comprehend fully the object of His coming into the world. The humiliation, the atonement, the crucifixion, were hidden things to them. The plainest words and clearest warnings from their Master of what was going to befall Him seemed to have no effect on their minds. They understood not. They perceived not. It was hid from their eyes. Once Peter even tried to dissuade our Lord from suffering. "Be it far from Thee, Lord," he said: "this shall not be unto Thee." (Matthew 16:22; Luke 18:34; Luke 9:45).

Frequently you will see things in their spirit and demeanour which are not at all to be commended. One day we are told they disputed among themselves who should be greatest. (Mark 9:34). Another day they considered not His miracles, and their hearts were hardened. (Mark 6:52). Once two of them wished to call down fire from heaven upon a village because it did not receive them. (Luke 9:54). In the garden of Gethsemane the three best of them slept when they should have watched and prayed. In the hour of His betrayal they all forsook Him and fled, and worst of all, Peter, the most forward of the twelve, denied His Master three times with an oath.

Even after the resurrection you see the same unbelief and hardness of heart cling to them. Though they saw their Lord with their eyes, and touched Him with their hands, even then some doubted. So weak were they in faith! So slow of heart were they to believe all that the prophets had written. So backward were they in understanding the meaning of our Lord's words, and actions, and life, and death.

But what do you see in our Lord's behaviour towards these disciples all through His ministry? You see nothing but unchanging pity, compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, longsuffering, and love. He does not cast them off for their stupidity. He does not reject them for their unbelief. He does not dismiss them for ever for cowardice. He teaches them as they are able to bear. He leads them on step by step, as a nurse does an infant when it first begins to walk. He sends them kind messages as soon as He is risen from the dead. "Go," He said to the women, "Go tell My brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me" (Matthew 28:10). He gathers them round Him once more. He restores Peter to his place, and bids him feed His sheep. He condescends to sojourn with them forty days before He finally ascends. He commissions them to go forth as His messengers, and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. He blesses them in parting, and encourages them with that gracious promise, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). Truly this was a love that passeth knowledge. This is not the manner of man.

Let the entire world know that the Lord Christ is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. As a father pitieth his own children, so He pitieth them that fear Him. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will He comfort His people. He calls for the lambs of His flock as well as for the old sheep. He cares for the sick and feeble ones of His fold as well as for the strong. It is written that He will carry them in His bosom, rather than let any of them be lost. (Isaiah 40:11). He cares for the least member of His body, as well as for the greatest. He cares for the babes of His family as well as the grown up men. He cares for the tenderest little plants in His garden as well as for the cedar of Lebanon. All are in His book of life, and all are under His charge. All are given to Him in an everlasting covenant, and He has undertaken, in spite of all weaknesses, to bring every one safe home. Only let a sinner lay hold on Christ by faith, and then, however feeble, Christ's word is pledged to him: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He may correct him occasionally in love. He may gently reprove him at times. But He will never, never give Him up. The devil shall never pluck him from Christ's hand.

Let all the world know that the Lord Jesus will not cast away His believing people because of shortcomings and infirmities. The husband does not put away his wife because he finds failings in her. The mother does not forsake her infant because it is weak, feeble, and ignorant. And the Lord Christ does not cast off poor sinners who have committed their souls into His hands because He sees in them blemishes and imperfections. Oh, no! it is His glory to pass over the faults of His people, and heal their backslidings,-to make much of their weak graces, and to pardon their many faults. Verily, the 11th of Hebrews is a wonderful chapter. It is marvellous to observe how the Holy Ghost speaks of the worthies whose names are recorded in that chapter. The faith of the Lord's people is there brought forward, and had in remembrance. But the faults of many a one, which might easily have been brought up also, are left alone, and not mentioned at all.

Who is there now among my readers that feels desires after salvation, but is afraid to become decided, lest by-and-by he should fall away? Consider, I beseech you, the tenderness and patience of the Lord Jesus, and be afraid no more. Fear not to take up the cross, and come out boldly from the world. That same Lord and Saviour who bore with the disciples is ready and willing to bear with you. If you stumble, He will raise you. If you err, He will gently bring you back. If you faint, He will revive you. He will not lead you out of Egypt, and then suffer you to perish in the wilderness. He will conduct you safe into the promised land. Only commit yourself to His guidance, and my soul for yours, He shall carry you safe home. Only hear Christ's voice and follow Him, and

you shall never perish.

Who is there among the readers of this tract that has been converted, and desires to do his Lord's will? Take example this day by your Master's gentleness and longsuffering, and learn to be tender-hearted and kind to others. Deal gently with young beginners. Do not expect them to know everything and understand everything all at once. Take them by the hand. Lead them on and encourage them. Believe all things, and hope all things, rather than make that heart sad which God would not have made sad. Deal gently with backsliders. Do not turn your back on them as if their case was hopeless. Use every lawful means to restore them to their former place. Consider yourself, and your often infirmities, and do as you would be done by. Alas, there is a painful absence of the Master's mind among many of his disciples! There are few Churches, I fear, in the present day, which would have received Peter into communion again for many a long year, after denying His Lord. There are few believers ready to do the work of Barnabas,-willing to take young converts by the hand, and encourage them at their first beginnings. Verily we want an outpouring of the Spirit upon believers almost as much as upon the world. And now, reader, I have only to ask you to make a practical use of the lessons I have brought before you. You have heard this day five things.

First. That Christ's service will not secure you against troubles.

Second. That Christ is very man as well as God.

Third. That believers may have much weakness and infirmity.

Fourth. That Christ has all power: and

Fifth. That Christ is full of patience and kindness towards His people. Remember these five lessons, and you will do well.

Bear with me a few moments, while I say a few words to impress the things you have been reading more deeply on your heart.

(1) This will very likely be read by some who know nothing of Christ's service by experience, or of Christ Himself.

There are only too many who take no interest whatever in the things about which I have been writing. Their treasure is all below. They are wholly taken up with the things of the world. They care nothing about the believer's conflict, and struggles, and infirmities, and doubts, and fears.

They care little whether Christ is man or God. They care little whether He did miracles or not. It is all a matter of words, and names, and forms, about which they do not trouble themselves. They are without God in the world.

Reader, if perchance you are such a man as this, I can only warn you solemnly, that your present course cannot last. You will not live for ever. There must be an end. Grey hairs, age, sickness, infirmities, death,-all, all are before you, and must be met one day. What will you do when that day comes?

Remember my words this day. You will find no comfort when sick and dying, unless Jesus Christ is your friend. You will discover, to your sorrow and confusion, that however much men may talk and

boast, they cannot do without Christ when they come to their death-bed. You may send for ministers, and get them to read prayers, and give you the sacrament. You may go through every form and ceremony of Christianity. But if you persist in living a careless and worldly life, and despising Christ in the morning of your days, you must not be surprised if Christ leaves you to yourself in your latter end. Alas! these are solemn words, and are often sadly fulfilled: "I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Proverbs 1:26).

Come then, this day, and be advised by one who loves your soul. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Forsake the foolish, and go in the path of understanding. Cast away that pride which hangs about your heart, and seek the Lord Jesus while He may be found. Cast away that spiritual sloth which is palsying your soul, and resolve to take trouble about your Bible, your prayers, and your Sundays. Break off from a world which can never really satisfy you, and seek that treasure which alone is truly incorruptible. Oh, that the Lord's own words might find a place in your conscience! "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at My reproof: behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you." (Proverbs 1:22-23). Reader, I believe the crowning sin of Judas Iscariot was that he would not seek pardon, and turn again to his Lord. Beware, lest that be your sin also.

(2) This will probably fall into the hands of some who love the Lord Jesus, and believe in Him, and yet desire to love Him better.

Reader, if you are such a man, suffer the word of exhortation, and apply it to your heart.

For one thing keep before your mind, as an ever-present truth, that the Lord Jesus is an actual living Person, and deal with Him, as such.

I fear the personality of our Lord is sadly lost sight of by many professors in the present day. Their talk is more about salvation than about the Saviour;-more about redemption, than about the Redeemer:-more about justification, than about Jesus;-more about Christ's work, than about Christ's person. This is a great fault, and one that fully accounts for the dry and sapless character of the religion of many professors.

Reader, as ever you would grow in grace, and have joy and peace in believing, beware of falling into this error. Cease to regard the Gospel as a mere collection of dry doctrines. Look at it rather as the revelation of a mighty living Being in whose sight you are daily to live. Cease to regard it as a mere set of abstract propositions and abstruse principles and rules. Look at it as the introduction to a glorious personal Friend: this is the kind of Gospel that the apostles preached. They did not go about the world telling men of love, and mercy, and pardon, in the abstract. The leading subject of all their sermons was the loving heart of an actual living Christ. This is the kind of Gospel which is most calculated to promote sanctification and meetness for glory. Nothing, surely, is so likely to prepare us for that heaven where Christ's personal presence will be all, and that glory where we shall meet Christ face to face, as to realize communion with Christ as an actual living Person here on earth. Oh, reader, there is all the difference in the world between an idea and a person.

For another thing, try to keep before your mind, as an ever-present truth, that the Lord Jesus is utterly unchanged.

That Saviour in whom you trust, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He knows no variableness, nor shadow of turning. Though high in heaven at God's right hand, He is just the same in heart that He was 1900 years ago on earth. Remember this, and you will do well.

Follow Him all through His journeys to and fro in Palestine. Mark how He received all that came to Him, and cast out none. Mark how He had an ear to listen to every tale of sorrow, a hand to help every case of distress, a heart to feel for all who needed sympathy. And then say to yourself, "This same Jesus is He who is my Lord and Saviour. Place and time have made no difference in Him. What He was, He is, and will be for evermore."

Surely this thought will give life and reality to your daily communion. Surely this thought will give substance and shape to your expectation of good things to come. Surely it is matter for joyful reflection, that He who was thirty-three years upon earth, and whose life we read in the Gospels, is the very Saviour in whose presence we shall spend eternity.

Reader, my last word shall be the same as the first. I want men to read the four Gospels more than they do. I want men to become better acquainted with Christ. I want unconverted men to know Jesus, that they may have eternal life through Him. I want believers to know Jesus better, that they may become happier, more holy, and more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Chapter 60

Power of the Holy Spirit

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short "Helmingham Series" tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you these three exactly word for word as they were first published about the middle of the last century, while J. C. Ryle was a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

READER,

There is hope in the Gospel for any man, so long as he lives. There is infinite willingness in Christ to pardon sin. There is infinite power in the Holy Spirit

to change hearts.

There are many diseases of the body which are incurable. The cleverest doctors cannot heal them. But, thank God! there are no incurable diseases of soul. All manner and quantity of sins can be washed away by Christ. The hardest and most wicked of hearts can be changed.

Reader, I say again, while there is life there is hope. The oldest, the vilest, the worst of sinners may be saved. Only let him come to Christ, confess his sin, and cry to Him for pardon,-only let him cast his soul on Christ, and he shall be cured. The Holy Spirit shall be sent down on his heart, according to Christ's promise, and he shall be changed by His Almighty power into a new creature.

I never despair of any one becoming a decided Christian, whatever he may have been in days gone by. I know how great the change is from death to life; I know the mountains of division that seem to stand between some men and heaven; I know the hardness, the prejudices, the desperate sinfulness of the natural heart; but I remember that God the Father made the glorious world out of nothing. I remember the voice of the Lord Jesus could reach Lazarus when four days dead, and recall him even from the grave; I remember the amazing victories the Spirit of God has won in every nation under heaven; I remember all this, and feel that I never need despair. Yes! those very persons who now seem most utterly dead in sins, may yet be raised to a new being, and walk before God in newness of life.

Why should it not be so? the Holy Spirit is a mighty, merciful, and loving Spirit. He turns away from no man because of his vileness. He passes by no one because his sins are black and scarlet.

There was nothing in the Corinthians that He should come down and quicken them. Paul reports of them that they were "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners." "Such," he says, "were some of you." Yet even them the Spirit made alive. "Ye are washed," he writes, "ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

There was nothing in the Colossians that He should visit their hearts. Paul tells us that they walked in "fornication, uncleanliness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is

idolatry." Yet them also the Spirit quickened. He made them "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:5-10).

There was nothing in Mary Magdalene that the Spirit should make her soul alive. Once she had been possessed with seven devils; time was, if report be true, she had been a woman proverbial for vileness and iniquity: yet even her the Spirit made a new creature,-separated her from her sins, -brought her to Christ,-made her last at the cross, and first at the tomb.

Never, never will the Spirit turn away from a soul because of its corruption. He never has done so;-He never will. It is His glory that He has purified the minds of the most impure, and made them temples for His own abode. He may yet take the worst of those who read this tract and make him a vessel of grace.

Why indeed should it not be so? The Spirit is an Almighty Spirit. He can change the stony heart into a heart of flesh; He can break the strongest bad habits like tow before the fire; He can make the most difficult things seem easy, and the mightiest objections melt away like snow in spring; He can cut the bars of brass, and throw the gates of prejudice wide open; He can fill up every valley, and make every rough place smooth. He has done it often, and He can do it again,

The Spirit can take a Jew,-the bitterest enemy of Christianity, the fiercest persecutor of true believers, the strongest stickler for Pharisaical notions, the most prejudiced opposer of Gospel doctrine,-and turn that man into an earnest preacher of the very faith he once destroyed. He has done it already.-He did it with the Apostle Paul.

The Spirit can take a Roman Catholic monk, brought up in the midst of Romish superstition,-trained from his infancy to believe false doctrine, and obey the Pope, -steeped to the eyes in error,-and make that man the clearest upholders of justification by faith the world ever saw; He has done so already.-He did it with Martin Luther.

The Spirit can take an English tinker, without learning, patronage, or money,-a man at one time notorious for nothing so much as blasphemy and swearing,-and make that man write a religious book, which shall stand unrivalled and unequalled in its way by any since the time of the Apostles. He has done so already-He did it with John Bunyan, the author of "Pilgrim's Progress."

The Spirit can take a sailor, drenched in worldliness and sin,-a profligate captain of a slave ship,-and make that man a most successful minister of the Gospel; a writer of letters which are a store-house of experimental religion; and of hymns which are known and sung wherever English is spoken. He has done it already. -He did it with John Newton.

All this the Spirit has done, and much more, of which I cannot speak particularly. And the arm of the Spirit is not shortened: His power is not decayed. He is like the Lord Jesus,-the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is still doing wonders, and will do to the very end.

I shall not be surprised to hear, even in this life, that the hardest man I know has become softened, and the proudest has taken his place at the feet of Jesus as a weaned child.

I shall not be surprised to meet many on the right hand in the day of judgment, whom I shall leave, when I die, travelling in the broad way.

I never despair, because I believe the power of the Holy Ghost. We ministers might well despair, when we look at our own performances. We are often sick of ourselves. We might well despair when we look at some who belong to our congregations; they seem as hard and insensible as the nether mill-stone: but we remember the Holy Ghost, and what He has done. We remember the Holy Ghost, and consider that He has not changed. He can come down like fire and melt the hardest hearts; He can convert the worst man or woman among our hearers, and mould their whole character into a new shape. And so we preach on. We hope because of the Holy Ghost. Oh, that our hearts would understand that the progress of true religion depends not on might or on power, but on the Lord's Spirit! Oh, that many of them would learn to lean less on ministers, and to pray more for the Holy Spirit! Oh, that all would learn to expect less from schools, and tracts, and ecclesiastical machinery; and, while using all means diligently, would seek more earnestly for the outpouring of the Spirit.

Reader, do you feel the slightest drawing towards God?-the smallest concern about your immortal soul? Does your conscience tell you this day that you have not yet felt the Spirit's power, and do you want to know what to do? Listen, and I will tell you.

For one thing, you must go at once to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and beseech Him to have mercy on you, and send you the Spirit. You must go direct to that open fountain of living waters, the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost (John 7:39). Begin at once to pray for the Holy Spirit. Think not you are shut up and cut off from hope: the Holy Ghost is promised to them that ask Him. His very name is the Spirit of Promise, and the Spirit of Life. Give Him no rest till He comes down and makes you a new heart. Cry mightily unto the Lord,-say unto Him, "Bless me, even me also: quicken me, and make me alive."

I dare not, for my part, send anxious souls to any one but Christ. I cannot hold with those who tell men to pray for the Holy Spirit in the first place, in order that they may go to Christ in the second place. I see no warrant of Scripture for saying so. I only see that if men feel they are needy, perishing sinners, they ought to apply, first and foremost, straight and direct to Jesus Christ. I see that He himself says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John 7:37). I know that it is written, "He hath received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them" (Psalms 68:18). I know it is His special office to baptize with the Holy Ghost, and that "in Him all fulness dwells." I dare not pretend to be more systematic than the Bible. I believe that Christ is the meeting-place between God and the soul: and my first advice to any one who wants the Spirit, must always be, "go to Jesus, and tell your wants to Him."

For another thing, if you have not yet felt the converting power of the Spirit, you must be diligent in attending those means of grace through which the Spirit works. You must regularly hear that Word which is His sword; you must habitually attend those assemblies where His presence is promised; you must, in short, be found in the way cf the Spirit, if you want the Spirit to do you good. Blind Bartimeus would never have received sight had he sat lazily at home, and not come forth to sit by the way- side. Zaccheus might never have seen Jesus, and become a son of Abraham, if he had not ran before and climbed up into the sycamore tree. The Spirit is a loving and good Spirit. But he who despises means of grace, resists the Holy Ghost.

Reader, remember these two things. I firmly believe that no man ever acted honestly and perseveringly on these two pieces of advice, who did not, sooner or later, have the Spirit, and find

by experience that He is "mighty to save."

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Prayer

PRACTICAL RELIGION. BEING PLAIN PAPERS

ON THE DAILY DUTIES, EXPERIENCE, DANGERS, AND

PRIVILEGES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. BY JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

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IV. PRAYER.

“Men ought always to pray.”- Luke 18:1.

“ I will that men pray everywhere.”- 1 Timothy 2:8.

PRAYER is the most important subject in practical religion. All other subjects are second to it. Reading the Bible, keeping the Sabbath, hearing sermons, attending public worship, going to the Lord's Table,-all these are very weighty matters. But none of them are so important as private prayer.

I propose in this paper to offer seven plain reasons why I use such strong language about prayer. I invite to these reasons the attention of every thinking man into whose hands this paper may fall. I venture to assert with confidence that they deserve serious consideration.

I. In the first place, Prayer is absolutely needful to a man's salvation.

I say absolutely needful, and I say so advisedly. I am not speaking now of infants and idiots. I am not settling the state of the heathen. I remember that where little is given, there little will be required. I speak especially of those who call themselves Christians, in a land like our own. And of such I say no man or woman can expect to be saved who does not pray.

I hold salvation by grace as strongly as any one. I would gladly offer a free and full pardon to the greatest sinner that ever lived. I would not hesitate to stand by his dying bed, and say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ even now, and you shall be saved.” But that a man can have salvation without asking for it, I cannot see in the Bible. That a man will receive pardon of his sins, who will not so much as lift up his heart inwardly, and say, “Lord Jesus, give it to me,” this I cannot find. I

can find that nobody will be saved by his prayers, but I cannot find that without prayer anybody will be saved.

It is not absolutely needful to salvation that a man should read the Bible. A man may have no learning, or be blind, and yet have Christ in his heart. It is not absolutely needful that a man should hear the public preaching of the Gospel. He may live where the Gospel is not preached, or he may be bedridden, or deaf. But the same thing cannot be said about prayer. It is absolutely needful to salvation that a man should pray.

There is no royal road either to health or learning. Princes and kings, poor men and peasants, all alike must attend to the wants of their own bodies and their own minds. No man can eat, drink, or sleep by proxy. No man can get the alphabet learned for him by another. All these are things which everybody must do for himself, or they will not be done at all.

Just as it is with the mind and body, so it is with the soul. There are certain things absolutely needful to the soul's health and well-being. Each one must attend to these things for himself. Each must repent for himself. Each must apply to Christ for himself. And for himself each one must speak to God and pray. You must do it for yourself, for by nobody else can it be done.

How can we expect to be saved by an “unknown” God? And how can we know God without prayer? We know nothing of men and women in this world, unless we speak with them. We cannot know God in Christ, unless we speak to Him in prayer. If we wish to be with Him in heaven, we must be His friends on earth. If we wish to be His friends on earth, we must pray.

There will be many at Christ's right hand in the last day. The saints gathered from North and South, and East and West, will be “a multitude that no man can number.” (Revelation 7:9) The song of victory that will burst from their mouths, when their redemption is at length complete, will be a glorious song indeed. It will be far above the noise of many waters, and of mighty thunders. But there will he no discord in that song. They that sing will sing with one heart as well as one voice. Their experience will be one and the same. All will have believed. All will have been washed in the blood of Christ. All will have been born again. All will have prayed. Yes, we must pray on earth, or we shall never praise in heaven. We must go through the school of prayer, or we shall never be fit for the holiday of praise. In short, to be prayerless is to be without God,-without Christ,-without grace,-without hope,-and without heaven. It is to be in the road to hell.

II. In the second place, a habit of prayer is one of the surest marks of a true Christian.

All the children of God on earth are alike in this respect. From the moment there is any life and reality about their religion, they pray. Just as the first sign of life in an infant when born into the world, is the act of breathing, so the first act of men and women when they are born again, is praying.

This is one of the common marks of all the elect of God: “They cry unto Him day and night.” (Luke 18:1) The Holy Spirit, who makes them new creatures, works in them the feeling of adoption, and makes them cry, “Abba, Father.” (Romans 8:15) The Lord Jesus, when He quickens them, gives them a voice and a tongue, and says to them, “Be dumb no more.” God has no dumb children. It is as much a part of their new nature to pray, as it is of a child to cry. They see their need of mercy and grace. They feel their emptiness and weakness. They cannot do otherwise than they do. They

must pray.

I have looked carefully over the lives of God's saints in the Bible. I cannot find one of whose history much is told us, from Genesis to Revelation, who was not a man of prayer. I find it mentioned as a characteristic of the godly, that “they call on the Father,” that “they call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” I find it recorded as a characteristic of the wicked, that “they call not upon the Lord.” (1 Peter 1:17; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Psalms 14:4)

I have read the lives of many eminent Christians who have been on earth since the Bible days. Some of them, I see, were rich, and some poor. Some were learned, and some unlearned. Some of them were Episcopalians, some Presbyterians, some Baptists, some Independents. Some were Calvinists, and some Arminians. Some have loved to use a liturgy, and some to use none. But one thing, I see, they all had in common. They have all been men of prayer.

I study the reports of Missionary Societies in our own times. I see with joy that heathen men and women are receiving the Gospel in various parts of the globe. There are conversions in Africa, in New Zealand, in Hindustan, in America. The people converted are naturally unlike one another in every respect. But one striking thing I observe at all the Missionary stations. The converted people always pray.

I do not deny that a man may pray without heart, and without sincerity. I do not for a moment pretend to say that the mere fact of a person praying proves everything about his soul. As in every other part of religion, so also in this, there is plenty of deception and hypocrisy.

But this I do say,-that not praying is a clear proof that a man is not yet a true Christian. He cannot really feel his sins. He cannot love God. He cannot feel himself a debtor to Christ. He cannot long after holiness. He cannot desire heaven. He has yet to be born again. He has yet to be made a new creature. He may boast confidently of election, grace, faith, hope, and knowledge, and deceive ignorant people. But you may rest assured it is all vain talk if he does not pray.

And I say furthermore, that of all the evidences of real work of the Spirit, a habit of hearty private prayer is one of the most satisfactory that can be named. A man may preach from false motives. A man may write books, and make fine speeches, and seem diligent in good works, and yet be a Judas Iscariot. But a man seldom goes into his closet, and pours out his soul before God in secret, unless he is in earnest. The Lord Himself has set His stamp on prayer as the best proof of a true conversion. When He sent Ananias to Saul in Damascus, He gave him no other evidence of his change of heart than this;-“Behold, he prayeth.” (Acts 9:11)

I know that much may go on in a man's mind before he is brought to pray. He may have many convictions, desires, wishes, feelings, intentions, resolutions, hopes, and fears. But all these things are very uncertain evidences. They are to be found in ungodly people, and often come to nothing. In many a case they are not more lasting than “the morning cloud, and the dew that goeth away.” (Hosea 6:4) A real hearty prayer, flowing from a broken and contrite spirit, is worth all these things put together.

I know that the elect of God are chosen to salvation from all eternity. I do not forget that the Holy Spirit, who calls them in due time, in many instances leads them by very slow degrees to acquaintance with Christ. But the eye of man can only judge by what it sees. I cannot call any one

justified until he believes. I dare not say that any one believes until he prays. I cannot understand a dumb faith. The first act of faith will be to speak to God. Faith is to the soul what life is to the body. Prayer is to faith what breath is to life. How a man can live and not breathe is past my comprehension, and how a man can believe and not pray is past my comprehension too.

Let no one be surprised if he hears ministers of the Gospel dwelling much on the importance of prayer. This is the point we want to bring you to,-we want to know that you pray. Your views of doctrine may be correct. Your love of Protestantism may be warm and unmistakeable. But still this may be nothing more than head knowledge and party spirit. The great point is this,-whether you can speak to God as well as speak about God.

III. In the third place, there is no duty in religion so neglected as private prayer.

We live in days of abounding religious profession. There are more places of public worship now than there ever were before. There are more persons attending them than there ever have been since England was a nation. And yet in spite of all this public religion, I believe there is a vast neglect of private prayer.

I should not have said so a few years ago. I once thought, in my ignorance, that most people said their prayers, and many people prayed. I have lived to think differently. I have come to the conclusion that the great majority of professing Christians do not pray at all.

I know this sounds very shocking, and will startle many. But I am satisfied that prayer is just one of those things which is thought a “matter of course,” and, like many matters of course, is shamefully neglected. It is “everybody's business;” and, as it often happens in such cases, it is a business carried on by very few. It is one of those private transactions between God and our souls which no eye sees, and therefore one which there is every temptation to pass over and leave undone.

I believe that thousands never say a word of prayer at all. They eat; they drink; they sleep; they rise; they go forth to their labour; they return to their homes; they breathe God's air: they see God's sun; they walk on God's earth; they enjoy God's mercies; they have dying bodies; they have judgment and eternity before them. But they never speak to God! They live like the beasts that perish; they behave like creatures without souls; they have not a word to say to Him in whose hand are their life, and breath, and all things, and from whose mouth they must one day receive their everlasting sentence. How dreadful this seems! But if the secrets of men were only known, how common!

I believe there are tens of thousands whose prayers are nothing but a mere form,-a set of words repeated by rote, without a thought about their meaning. Some say over a few hasty sentences picked up in the nursery when they were children. Some content themselves with repeating the Belief, forgetting that there is not a request in it. Some add the Lord's Prayer, but without the slightest desire that its solemn petitions may be granted. Some among the poor, even at this day, repeat the old popish lines:- “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,

Bless the bed that I lie on.”

Many, even of those who use good forms, mutter their prayers over after they have got into bed, or scramble over them while they wash or dress in the morning. Men may think what they please, but they may depend that in the sight of God this is not praying. Words said without heart are as utterly

useless to our souls as the drum-beating of the poor heathen before their idols. Where there is no heart, there may be lip-work and tongue-work, but there is nothing that God listens to, there is no prayer. Saul, I have no doubt, said many a long prayer before the Lord met him on the way to Damascus. But it was not till his heart was broken that the Lord said, “He prayeth.”

Does this surprise any reader? Listen to me and I will show you that I am not speaking as I do without reason. Do you think that my assertions are extravagant and unwarrantable? Give me your attention, and I will soon show you that I am only telling you the truth.

Have you forgotten that it is not natural to any one to pray? The carnal mind is enmity against God. The desire of man's heart is to get far away from God, and to have nothing to do with Him. His feeling toward Him is not love but fear. Why then should a man pray when he has no real sense of sin, no real feeling of spiritual wants,-no thorough belief in unseen things,-no desire after holiness and heaven? Of all these things the vast majority of men know and feel nothing. The multitude walk in the broad way. I cannot forget this. Therefore I say boldly, I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten that it is not fashionable to pray? It is just one of the things that many would be rather ashamed to own. There are hundreds who would sooner storm a breach, or lead a forlorn hope, than confess publicly that they make a habit of prayer. There are thousands who, if obliged by chance to sleep in the same room with a stranger, would lie down in bed without a prayer. To ride well, to shoot well, to dress well, to go to balls, and concerts, and theatres, to be thought clever and agreeable, all this is fashionable, but not to pray. I cannot forget this. I cannot think a habit is common which so many seem ashamed to own. I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten the lives that many live? Can we really suppose that people are praying against sin night and day, when we see them plunging right into it? Can we suppose they pray against the world, when they are entirely absorbed and taken up with its pursuits? Can we think they really ask God for grace to serve Him, when they do not show the slightest desire to serve Him at all? Oh, no! It is plain as daylight that the great majority of men either ask nothing of God, or do not mean what they say when they do ask,-which is just the same thing. Praying and sinning will never live together in the same heart. Prayer will consume sin, or sin choke prayer. I cannot forget this. I look at men's lives. I believe that few pray.

Have you forgotten the deaths that many die? How many, when they draw near death, seem entirely strangers to God. Not only are they sadly ignorant of His Gospel, but sadly wanting in the power of speaking to Him. There is a terrible awkwardness, and shyness, and newness, and rawness, in their endeavours to approach Him. They seem to be taking up a fresh thing. They appear as if they wanted an introduction to God, and as if they had never talked with Him before. I remember having heard of a lady who was anxious to have a minister to visit her in her last illness. She desired that he would pray with her. He asked her what he should pray for. She did not know and could not tell. She was utterly unable to name any one thing which she wished him to ask God for her soul. All she seemed to want was the form of a minister's prayers. I can quite understand this. Death-beds are great revealers of secrets. I cannot forget what I have seen of sick and dying people. This also leads me to believe that few pray.

IV. In the fourth place, prayer is that act in religion to which there is the greatest encouragement.

There is everything on God's part to make prayer easy, if men will only attempt it. “All things are ready” on His side. (Luke 14:17) Every objection is anticipated. Every difficulty is provided for. The crooked places are made straight, and the rough places are made smooth. There is no excuse left for the prayerless man.

There is a way by which any man, however sinful and unworthy, may draw near to God the Father. Jesus Christ has opened that way by the sacrifice He made for us upon the cross. The holiness and justice of God need not frighten sinners and keep them back. Only let them cry to God in the name of Jesus,-only let them plead the atoning blood of Jesus,-and they shall find God upon a throne of grace, willing and ready to hear. The name of Jesus is a never-failing passport to our prayers. In that name a man may draw near to God with boldness, and ask with confidence. God has engaged to hear him. Think of this. Is not this encouragement?

There is an advocate and intercessor always waiting to present the prayers of those who will employ Him. That advocate is Jesus Christ. He mingles our prayers with the incense of His own almighty intercession. So mingled they go up as a sweet savour before the throne of God. Poor as they are in themselves, they are mighty and powerful in the hand of our High Priest and elder brother. The bank-note without a signature at the bottom is nothing but a worthless piece of paper. A few strokes of a pen confer on it all its value. The prayer of a poor child of Adam is a feeble thing in itself, but once endorsed by the hand of the Lord Jesus it availeth much. There was an officer in the city of Rome who was appointed to have his doors always open, in order to receive any Roman citizen who applied to him for help. Just so the ear of the Lord Jesus is ever open to the cry of all who want mercy and grace. It is His office to help them. Their prayer is His delight. Think of this. Is not this encouragement?

There is the Holy Spirit ever ready to help our infirmities in prayer. It is one part of His special office to assist us in our endeavours to speak to God. We need not be cast down and distressed by the fear of not knowing what to say. The Spirit will give us words if we will only seek His aid. He will supply us with “thoughts that breathe and words that burn.” The prayers of the Lord's people are the inspiration of the Lord's Spirit,-the work of the Holy Ghost who dwells within them as the Spirit of grace and supplications. Surely the Lord's people may well hope to be heard. It is not they that merely pray, but the Holy Ghost pleading in them. (Romans 8:26) Think of this. Is not this encouragement?

There are exceeding great and precious promises to those who pray. What did the Lord Jesus mean when He spoke such words as these, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” (Matthew 7:7-8) “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.” (Matthew 21:22) “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.” (John 14:13-14) What did the Lord mean when He spoke the parables of the friend at midnight and the importunate widow? (Luke 11:5, and Luke 18:1) Think over these passages. If this is not encouragement to pray, words have no meaning at all.

There are wonderful examples in Scripture of the power of prayer. Nothing seems to be too great, too hard, or too difficult for prayer to do. It has obtained things that seemed impossible and out of reach. It has won victories over fire, air, earth, and water. Prayer opened the Red Sea. Prayer

brought water from the rock and bread from heaven. Prayer made the sun stand still. Prayer brought fire from the sky on Elijah's sacrifice. Prayer turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. Prayer overthrew the army of Sennacherib. Well might Mary, Queen of Scots, say, “I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men.” Prayer has healed the sick. Prayer has raised the dead. Prayer has procured the conversion of souls. “The child of many prayers,” said an old Christian to Augustine's mother, “shall never perish.” Prayer, pains, and faith can do anything. Nothing seems impossible when a man has the Spirit of adoption. “Let me alone,” is the remarkable saying of God to Moses, when Moses was about to intercede for the children of Israel. (Exodus 32:10) The Chaldee version has it “Leave off praying.” So long as Abraham asked mercy for Sodom, the Lord went on giving. He never ceased to give till Abraham ceased to pray. Think of this. Is not this encouragement?

What more can a man want to lead him to take any step in religion than the things I have just told him about prayer? What more could be done to make the path to the mercy-seat easy, and to remove all occasions of stumbling from the sinner's way? Surely if the devils in hell had such a door set open before them they would leap for gladness, and make the very pit ring with joy.

But where will the man hide his head at last who neglects such glorious encouragements? What can be possibly said for the man who after all dies without prayer? God forbid that any reader of this paper should be that man.

V. In the fifth place, diligence in prayer is the secret of eminent holiness.

Without controversy there is a vast difference among true Christians. There is an immense interval between the foremost and the hindermost in the army of God.

They are all fighting the same good fight;-but how much more valiantly some fight than others! They are all doing the Lord's work;-but how much more some do than others! They are all light in the Lord;-but how much more brightly some shine than others! They are all running the same race;-but how much faster some get on than others! They all love the same Lord and Saviour;-but how much more some love Him than others! I ask any true Christian whether this is not the case. Are not these things so?

There are some of the Lord's people who seem never able to get on from the time of their conversion. They are born again, but they remain babies all their lives. They are learners in Christ's school, but they never seem to get beyond A B C, and the lowest form. They have got inside the fold, but there they lie down and get no further. Year after year you see in them the same old besetting sins. You hear from them the same old experience. You remark in them the same want of spiritual appetite,-the same squeamishness about anything but the milk of the Word, and the same dislike to strong meat,-the same childishness,-the same feebleness, the same littleness of mind,-the same narrowness of heart,-the same want of interest in anything beyond their own little circle, which you remarked ten years ago. They are pilgrims indeed, but pilgrims like the Gibeonites of old;-their bread is always dry and mouldy,-their shoes always old and clouted, and their garments always rent and torn. (Joshua 9:4-5) I say this with sorrow and grief. But I ask any real Christian, Is it not true?

There are others of the Lord's people who seem to be always getting on. They grow like the grass after rain. They increase like Israel in Egypt. They press on like Gideon, though sometimes “faint,

yet always pursuing." (Judges 8:4) They are ever adding grace to grace, and faith to faith, and strength to strength. Every time you meet them their hearts seem larger, and their spiritual stature bigger, taller, and stronger. Every year they appear to see more, and know more, and believe more, and feel more in their religion. They not only have good works to prove the reality of their faith, but they are zealous of them. They not only do well, but they are unwearied in well-doing. (Titus 2:14; Galatians 6:9) They attempt great things, and they do great things. When they fail they try again, and when they fall they are soon up again. And all this time they think themselves poor unprofitable servants, and fancy they do nothing at all!-These are those who make religion lovely and beautiful in the eyes of all. They wrest praise even from the unconverted, and win golden opinions even from the selfish men of the world. These are those whom it does one good to see, to be with, and to hear. When you meet them, you could believe that, like Moses, they had just come out from the presence of God. When you part with them you feel warmed by their company, as if your soul had been near a fire, I know such people are rare. I only ask, Is it not so?

Now, how can we account for the difference which I have just described? What is the reason that some believers are so much brighter and holier than others? I believe the difference, in nineteen cases out of twenty, arises from different habits about private prayer. I believe that those who are not eminently holy pray little, and those who are eminently holy pray much.

I daresay this opinion will startle some readers. I have little doubt that many look on eminent holiness as a kind of special gift, which none but a few must pretend to aim at. They admire it at a distance, in books: they think it beautiful when they see an example near themselves. But as to its being a thing within the reach of any but a very few, such a notion never seems to enter their minds. In short, they consider it a kind of monopoly granted to a few favoured believers, but certainly not to all.

Now I believe that this is a most dangerous mistake. I believe that spiritual, as well as natural, greatness, depends far more on the use of means within everybody's reach, than on anything else. Of course I do not say we have a right to expect a miraculous grant of intellectual gifts. But this I do say, that when a man is once converted to God, whether he shall be eminently holy or not depends chiefly on his own diligence in the use of God's appointed means. And I assert confidently, that the principal means by which most believers have become great in the Church of Christ is the habit of diligent private prayer.

Look through the lives of the brightest and best of God's servants, whether in the Bible or not. See what is written of Moses, and David, and Daniel, and Paul. Mark what is recorded of Luther and Bradford, the Reformers. Observe what is related of the private devotions of Whitefield, and Cecil, and Venn, and Bickersteth, and M'Cheyne. Tell me of one of all the goodly fellowship of saints and martyrs, who has not had this mark most prominently, he was a man of prayer. Oh, depend upon it, prayer is power!

Prayer obtains fresh and continued outpourings of the Spirit. He alone begins the work of grace in a man's heart: He alone can carry it forward and make it prosper. But the good Spirit loves to be entreated. And those who ask most, will always have most of His influence.

Prayer is the surest remedy against the devil and besetting sins. That sin will never stand firm which is heartily prayed against: that devil will never long keep dominion over us which we

beseech the Lord to cast forth. But, then, we must spread out all our case before our Heavenly Physician, if He is to give us daily relief: we must drag our indwelling devils to the feet of Christ, and cry to Him to send them back to the pit.

Do we wish to grow in grace and be very holy Christians? Then let us never forget the value of prayer.

VI. In the sixth place, neglect of prayer is one great cause of backsliding.

There is such a thing as going back in religion, after making a good profession. Men may run well for a season, like the Galatians, and then turn aside after false teachers. Men may profess loudly, while their feelings are warm, as Peter did; and then, in the hour of trial, deny their Lord. Men may lose their first love, as the Ephesians did. Men may cool down in their zeal to do good, like Mark, the companion of Paul. Men may follow an apostle for a season, and then, like Demas, go back to the world.-All these things men may do.

It is a miserable thing to be a backslider. Of all unhappy things that can befall a man, I suppose it is the worst. A stranded ship, a broken-winged eagle, a garden overrun with weeds, a harp without strings, a church in ruins,-all these are sad sights; but a backslider is a sadder sight still. That true grace shall never be extinguished, and true union with Christ never be broken off, I feel no doubt. But I do believe that a man may fall away so far that he shall lose sight of his own grace, and despair of his own salvation. And if this is not hell, it is certainly the next thing to it! A wounded conscience, a mind sick of itself, a memory full of self-reproach, a heart pierced through with the Lord's arrows, a spirit broken with a load of inward accusation,-all this is a taste of hell. It is a hell on earth. Truly that saying of the wise man is solemn and weighty,-“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.” (Proverbs 14:14)

Now, what is the cause of most backsliding? I believe, as a general rule, one of the chief causes is neglect of private prayer. Of course the secret history of falls will not be known till the last day. I can only give my opinion as a minister of Christ and a student of the heart. That opinion is, I repeat distinctly, that backsliding generally first begins with neglect of private prayer.

Bibles read without prayer, sermons heard without prayer, marriages contracted without prayer, journeys undertaken without prayer, residences chosen without prayer, friendships formed without prayer, the daily act of private prayer itself hurried over or gone through without heart,-these are the kind of downward steps by which many a Christian descends to a condition of spiritual palsy, or reaches the point where God allows him to have a tremendous fall.

This is the process which forms the lingering Lots, the unstable Samsons, the wife-idolizing Solomons, the inconsistent Asas, the pliable Jehoshaphats, the over-careful Marthas, of whom so many are to be found in the Church of Christ. Often the simple history of such cases is this, -they became careless about private prayer.

We may be very sure that men fall in private long before they fall in public. They are backsliders on their knees long before they backslide openly in the eyes of the world. Like Peter, they first disregard the Lord's warning to watch and pray; and then, like Peter, their strength is gone, and in the hour of temptation they deny their Lord.

The world takes notice of their fall, and scoffs loudly. But the world knows nothing of the real reason. The heathen succeeded in making Origen, the old Christian Father, offer incense to an idol, by threatening him with a punishment worse than death. They then triumphed greatly at the sight of his cowardice and apostasy. But the heathen did not know the fact, which Origen himself tells us, that on that very morning he had left his bedchamber hastily, and without finishing his usual prayers.

If any reader of this paper is a Christian indeed I trust he will never be a backslider. But if you do not wish to be a backsliding Christian, remember the hint I give you,-Mind your prayers.

VII. In the seventh place, prayer is one of the best receipts for happiness and contentment.

We live in a world where sorrow abounds. This has always been its state since sin came in. There cannot be sin without sorrow. And till sin is driven out from the world it is vain for any one to suppose he can escape sorrow.

Some, without doubt, have a larger cup of sorrow to drink than others. But few are to be found who live long without sorrows or cares of one sort or another. Our bodies, our property, our families, our children, our relations, our servants, our friends, our neighbours, our worldly callings,-each and all of these are fountains of care. Sicknesses, deaths, losses, disappointments, partings, separations, ingratitude, slander,-all these are common things. We cannot get through life without them. Some day or other they find us out. The greater are our affections, the deeper are our afflictions; and the more we love, the more we have to weep.

And what is the best receipt for cheerfulness in such a world as this? How shall we get through this valley of tears with least pain? I know no better receipt than the habit of taking everything to God in prayer.

This is the plain advice that the Bible gives, both in the Old Testament and the New. What says the Psalmist? “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.” (Psalms 50:15) “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (Psalms 55:22) What says the Apostle Paul? “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Php_4:6-7) What says the Apostle James? “Is any afflicted among you? let him pray.” (James 5:13)

This was the practice of all the saints whose history we have recorded in the Scriptures. This is what Jacob did, when he feared his brother Esau. This is what Moses did, when the people were ready to stone him in the wilderness. This is what Joshua did, when Israel was defeated before Ai. This is what David did, when he was in danger at Keliah. This is what Hezekiah did, when he received the letter from Sennacherib. This is what the Church did, when Peter was put in prison. This is what Paul did, when he was cast into the dungeon at Philippi.

The only way to be really happy, in such a world as this is to be ever casting all our cares on God. It is the trying to carry their own burdens which so often makes believers sad. If they will only tell their troubles to God He will enable them to bear them as easily as Samson did the gates of Gaza. If they are resolved to keep them to themselves they will find one day that the very grass-hopper is

a burden. (Ecclesiastes 12:5)

There is a friend ever waiting to help us, if we will only unbosom to Him our sorrow,-a friend who pitied the poor, and sick, and sorrowful, when He was upon earth,-a friend who knows the heart of a man, for He lived thirty-three years as a man amongst us,-a friend who can weep with the weepers, for He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,-a friend who is able to help us, for there never was earthly pain He could not cure. That friend is Jesus Christ. The way to be happy is to be always opening our hearts to Him. Oh, that we were all like that poor Christian negro, who only answered, when threatened and punished, “I must tell the Lord.”

Jesus can make those happy who trust Him and call on Him, whatever be their outward condition. He can give them peace of heart in a prison,-contentment in the midst of poverty,-comfort in the midst of bereavements,-joy on the brink of the grave. There is a mighty fulness in Him for all His believing members,-a fulness that is ready to be poured out on every one who will ask in prayer. Oh, that men would understand that happiness does not depend on outward circumstances, but on the state of the heart!

Prayer can lighten crosses for us however heavy. It can bring down to our side One who will help us to bear them.-Prayer can open a door for us when our way seems hedged up. It can bring down One who will say, “This is the way, walk in it”-Prayer can let in a ray of hope, when all our earthly prospects seem darkened. It can bring down One who will say, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”-Prayer can obtain relief for us when those we love most are taken away, and the world feels empty. It can bring down One who can fill the gap in our hearts with Himself, and say to the waves within, “Peace: be still!” Oh, that men were not so like Hagar in the wilderness, blind to the well of living waters close beside them! (Genesis 21:19)

I want the readers of this paper to be really happy Christians. I am certain I cannot urge on them a more important duty than prayer. And now it is high time for me to bring this paper to an end. I trust I have brought before my readers things that will be seriously considered. I heartily pray God that this consideration may be blessed to their souls.

(1) Let me speak a parting word to those who do not pray. I dare not suppose that all who read these pages will be praying people. If you are a prayerless person, suffer me to speak to you this day on God's behalf.

Prayerless friend, I can only warn you; but I do warn you most solemnly. I warn you that you are in a position of fearful danger. If you die in your present state you are a lost soul. You will only rise again to be eternally miserable. I warn you that of all professing Christians you are most utterly without excuse. There is not a single good reason that you can show for living without prayer.

It is useless to say you know not how to pray. Prayer is the simplest act in all religion. It is simply speaking to God. It needs neither learning, nor wisdom, nor book-knowledge to begin it. It needs nothing but heart and will. The weakest infant can cry when he is hungry. The poorest beggar can hold out his hand for an alms, and does not wait to find fine words. The most ignorant man will find something to say to God, if he has only a mind.

It is useless to say you have no convenient place to pray in. Any man can find a place private enough, if he is disposed. Our Lord prayed on a mountain; Peter on the house-top; Isaac in the

field; Nathanael under the fig-tree; Jonah in the whale's belly. Any place may become a closet, an oratory, and a Bethel, and be to us the presence of God.

It is useless to say you have no time. There is plenty of time, if men will only employ it. Time may be short, but time is always long enough for prayer. Daniel had all the affairs of a kingdom on his hands, and yet he prayed three times a day. David was ruler over a mighty nation, and yet he says, “Evening and morning and at noon will I pray.” (Psalms 55:17) When time is really wanted, time can always be found.

It is useless to say you cannot pray till you have faith and a new heart, and that you must sit still and wait for them. This is to add sin to sin. It is bad enough to be unconverted and going to hell. It is even worse to say, “I know it, but I will not cry for mercy.” This is a kind of argument for which there is no warrant in Scripture. “Call ye upon the Lord,” saith Isaiah, “while He is near.” (Isaiah 55:6) “Take with you words, and come unto the Lord,” says Hosea. (Hosea xiv. 1.) “Repent and pray,” says Peter to Simon Magus. (Acts 8:22) If you want faith and a new heart, go and cry to the Lord for them. The very attempt to pray has often been the quickening of a dead soul. Alas, there is no devil so dangerous as a dumb devil.

Oh, prayerless man, who and what are you that you will not ask anything of God? Have you made a covenant with death and hell? Are you at peace with the worm and the fire? Have you no sins to be pardoned? Have you no fear of eternal torment? Have you no desire after heaven? Oh, that you would awake from your present folly! Oh, that you would consider your latter end! Oh, that you would arise and call upon God! Alas, there is a day coming when men shall pray loudly, “Lord, Lord, open to us,” but all too late;-when many shall cry to the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, who would never cry to God. In all affection I warn you. Beware lest this be the end of your soul. Salvation is very near you. Do not lose heaven for want of asking.

(2) Let me speak in the next place to those who have real desires for salvation, but know not what steps to take or where to begin. I cannot but hope that some readers may be in this state of mind, and if there be but one such I must offer him encouragement and advice.

In every journey there must be a first step. There must be a change from sitting still to moving forward. The journeyings of Israel from Egypt to Canaan were long and wearisome. Forty years passed away before they crossed Jordan. Yet there was someone who moved first when they marched from Rameses to Succoth. When does a man really take his first step in coming out from sin and the world? He does it in the day when he first prays with his heart.

In every building the first stone must be laid, and the first blow must be struck. The ark was 120 years in building. Yet there was a day when Noah laid his axe to the first tree he cut down to form it. The temple of Solomon was a glorious building. But there was a day when the first huge stone was laid at the foot of Mount Moriah. When does the building of the Spirit really begin to appear in a man's heart? It begins, so far as we can judge, when he first pours out his heart to God in prayer.

If any reader of this paper desires salvation, and wants to know what to do, I advise him to go this very day to the Lord Jesus Christ, in the first private place he can find, and entreat Him in prayer to save his soul.

Tell Him that you have heard that He receives sinners and has said, “Him that cometh unto Me I will in nowise cast out.” (John 6:37) Tell Him that you are a poor vile sinner, and that you come to Him on the faith of His own invitation. Tell Him you put yourself wholly and entirely in His hands,-that you feel vile and helpless, and hopeless in yourself,-and that except He saves you, you have no hope to be saved at all. Beseech Him to deliver you from the guilt, the power, and the consequences of sin. Beseech Him to pardon you and wash you in His own blood. Beseech Him to give you a new heart, and plant the Holy Spirit in your soul. Beseech Him to give you grace, and faith, and will, and power to be His disciple and servant from this day for ever. Yes: go this very day, and tell these things to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you really are in earnest about your soul.

Tell Him in your own way and your own words. If a doctor came to see you when sick you could tell him where you felt pain. If your soul really feels its disease you can surely find something to tell Christ.

Doubt not His willingness to save you, because you are a sinner. It is Christ's office to save sinners. He says Himself, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:32)

Wait not, because you feel unworthy. Wait for nothing: wait for nobody. Waiting comes from the devil. Just as you are, go to Christ. The worse you are, the more need you have to apply to Him. You will never mend yourself by staying away.

Fear not because your prayer is stammering, your words feeble, and your language poor. Jesus can understand you. Just as a mother understands the first babblings of her infant, so does the blessed Saviour understand sinners. He can read a sigh, and see a meaning in a groan.

Despair not, because you do not get an answer immediately. While you are speaking, Jesus is listening. If He delays an answer, it is only for wise reasons, and to try if you are in earnest. Pray on, and the answer will surely come. Though it tarry, wait for it: it will surely come at last.

If you have any desire to be saved, remember the advice I have given you this day. Act upon it honestly and heartily, and you shall be saved.

(3) Let me speak, lastly, to those who do pray. I trust that some who read this paper know well what prayer is, and have the Spirit of adoption. To all such I offer a few words of brotherly counsel and exhortation. The incense offered in the tabernacle was ordered to be made in a particular way. Not every kind of incense would do. Let us remember this, and be careful about the matter and manner of our prayers.

If I know anything of a Christian's heart, you to whom I now speak are often sick of your own prayers. You never enter into the Apostle's words, “When I would do good, evil is present with me” (Romans 7:21), so thoroughly as you sometimes do upon your knees. You can understand David's words, “I hate vain thoughts.” You can sympathize with that poor converted Hottentot, who was overheard praying, “Lord, deliver me from all my enemies; and, above all, from that bad man myself!”-There are few children of God who do not often find the season of prayer a season of conflict. The devil has special wrath against us when he sees us on our knees. Yet I believe that prayers which cost us no trouble should be regarded with great suspicion. I believe we are very poor judges of the goodness of our prayers, and that the prayer which pleases us least often pleases God most. Suffer me then, as a companion in the Christian warfare, to offer you a few

words of exhortation. One thing, at least, we all feel,-we must pray. We cannot give it up: we must go on.

(a) I commend, then, to your attention the importance of reverence and humility in prayer. Let us never forget what we are, and what a solemn thing it is to speak with God. Let us beware of rushing into His presence with carelessness and levity. Let us say to ourselves, “I am on holy ground. This is no other than the gate of heaven. If I do not mean what I say, I am trifling with God. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Let us keep in mind the words of Solomon: “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven. and thou on earth.” (Ecclesiastes 5:2) When Abraham spoke to God, he said, “I am dust and ashes.” When Job spoke, he said, “I am vile.” (Genesis 18:27; Job 40:4) Let us .do likewise.

(b) I commend to you, in the next place, the importance. of praying spiritually. I mean by this that we should labour always to have the direct help of the Spirit in our prayers, and beware above all things of formality. There is nothing so spiritual but that it may become a form, and this is specially true of private prayer. We may insensibly get into the habit of using the fittest possible words, and offering the most Scriptural petitions; and yet we may do it all by rote, without feeling it, and walk daily round an old beaten path, like a horse in a mill. I desire to touch this point with caution and delicacy. I know that there are certain great things we daily want, and that there is nothing necessarily formal in asking for these things in the same words. The world, the devil, and our hearts, are daily the same. Of necessity we must daily go over old ground. But this I say,-we must be very careful on this point. If the skeleton and outline of our prayers be by habit almost a form, let us strive that the clothing and filling up of our prayers be as far as possible of the Spirit. As to praying out of a book, it is a habit I cannot praise. If we can tell our doctors the state of our bodies without a book, we ought to be able to tell the state of our souls to God. I have no objection to a man using crutches, when he is first recovering from a broken limb. It is better to use crutches than not to walk at all. But if I saw him all his life on crutches, I should not think it matter for congratulation. I should like to see him strong enough to throw his crutches away.

(c) I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of making prayer a regular business of life. I might say something of the value of regular times in the day for prayer. God is a God of order. The hours for morning and evening sacrifice in the Jewish temple were not fixed as they were without a meaning. Disorder is eminently one of the fruits of sin. But I would not bring any under bondage. This only I say, that it is essential to your soul's health to make praying a part of the business of every twenty-four hours in your life. Just as you allot time to eating, sleeping, and business, so also allot time to prayer. Choose your own hours and seasons. At the very least, speak with God in the morning, before you speak with the world; and speak with God at night, after you have done with the world. But settle it down in your minds that prayer is one of the great things of every day. Do not drive it into a corner. Do not give it the scraps, and leavings, and parings of your day. Whatever else you make a business of, make a business of prayer.

(d) I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of perseverance in prayer. Once having begun the habit, never give it up. Your heart will sometimes say, “We have had family prayers; what mighty harm if we leave private prayer undone?”-Your body will sometimes say, “You are unwell, or sleepy, or weary; you need not pray.”-Your mind will sometimes say, “You have

important business to attend to today; cut short your prayers." Look on all such suggestions as coming direct from the devil. They are all as good as saying, "Neglect your soul." I do not maintain that prayers should always be of the same length;-but I do say, let no excuse make you give up prayer. It is not for nothing that Paul said, "Continue in prayer," and "Pray without ceasing." (Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:7) He did not mean that men should be always on their knees, as an old sect, called the Euchitae, supposed. But he did mean that our prayers should be like the continual burnt offering,-a thing steadily persevered in every day;-that it should be like seed-time and harvest, and summer and winter,-a thing that should unceasingly come round at regular seasons;-that it should be like the fire on the altar, not always consuming sacrifices, but never completely going out. Never forget that you may tie together morning and evening devotions by an endless chain of short ejaculatory prayers throughout the day. Even in company, or business, or in the very streets, you may be silently sending up little winged messengers to God, as Nehemiah did in the very presence of Artaxerxes. (Nehemiah 2:4) And never think that time is wasted which is given to God. A nation does not become poorer because it loses one year of working days in seven by keeping the Sabbath. A Christian never finds he is a loser in the long run by persevering in prayer.

I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of earnestness in prayer. It is not necessary that a man should shout, or scream, or be very loud, in order to prove that he is in earnest. But it is desirable that we should be hearty, and fervent, and warm, and ask as if we were really interested in what we were doing. It is the "effectual fervent" prayer that "availeth much," and not the cold, sleepy, lazy, listless one. This is the lesson that is taught us by the expressions used in Scripture about prayer. It is called, "crying, knocking, wrestling, labouring, striving." This is the lesson taught us by Scripture examples. Jacob is one. He said to the angel at Penuel, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." (Genesis 32:26) Daniel is another. Hear how he pleaded with God: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God." (Daniel 9:19) Our Lord Jesus Christ is another. It is written of Him, "In the days of His flesh He offered up prayer and supplication, with strong crying and tears." (Hebrews 5:7) Alas, how unlike is this to many of our supplications! How tame and lukewarm they seem by comparison! How truly might God say to many of us, "You do not really want what you pray for!" Let us try to amend this fault. Let us knock loudly at the door of grace, like Mercy in "Pilgrim's Progress," as if we must perish unless heard. Let us settle it down in our minds, that cold prayers are a sacrifice without fire. Let us remember the story of Demosthenes, the great orator, when one came to him, and wanted him to plead his cause. He heard him without attention, while he told his story without earnestness. The man saw this, and cried out with anxiety that it was all true. "Ah!" said Demosthenes, "I believe you now."

(f) I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of praying with faith. We should endeavour to believe that our prayers are always heard, and that if we ask things according to God's will, we shall always be answered. This is the plain command of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark 11:24). Faith is to prayer what the feather is to the arrow: without it prayer will not hit the mark. We should cultivate the habit of pleading promises in our prayers. We should take with us some promise, and say, "Lord, here is Thine own word pledged. Do for us as Thou hast said." (2 Samuel 7:25) This was the habit of Jacob, and Moses, and David. The 119th Psalm is full of things asked, "according

to Thy word." Above all, we should cultivate the habit of expecting answers to our prayers. We should do like the merchant who sends his ships to sea. We should not be satisfied unless we see some return. Alas, there are few points on which Christians come short so much as this. The Church at Jerusalem made prayer without ceasing for Peter in prison; but when the prayer was answered, they would hardly believe it. (Acts 12:15) It is a solemn saying of old Traill's, "There is no surer mark of trifling in prayer, than when men are careless what they get by prayer."

(g) I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of boldness in prayer. There is an unseemly familiarity in some men's prayers, which I cannot praise. But there is such a thing as a holy boldness, which is exceedingly to be desired. I mean such boldness as that of Moses, when he pleads with God not to destroy Israel: "Wherefore," says he, "should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains? Turn from Thy fierce anger." (Exodus 32:12) I mean such boldness as that of Joshua, when the children of Israel were defeated before Ai: "What," says he, "wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" (Joshua 7:9) This is the boldness for which Luther was remarkable. One who heard him praying said, "What a spirit,-what a confidence was in his very expressions! With such a reverence he sued, as one begging of God, and yet with such hope and assurance, as if he spake with a loving father or friend." This is the boldness which distinguished Bruce, a great Scotch divine of the 17th century. His prayers were said to be "like bolts shot up into heaven." Here also I fear we sadly come short. We do not sufficiently realize the believer's privileges. We do not plead as often as we might, "Lord, are we not Thine own people? Is it not for Thy glory that we should be sanctified? Is it not for Thine honour that thy Gospel should increase? "

(h) I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of fulness in prayer. I do not forget that our Lord warns us against the example of the Pharisees, who for pretence made long prayers, and commands us, when we pray, not to use vain repetitions. But I cannot forget, on the other hand, that He has given His own sanction to large and long devotions, by continuing all night in prayer to God. At all events we are not likely in this day to err on the side of praying too much. Might it not rather be feared that many believers in this generation pray too little? Is not the actual amount of time that many Christians give to prayer in the aggregate very small? I am afraid these questions cannot be answered satisfactorily. I am afraid the private devotions of many are most painfully scanty and limited, just enough to prove they are alive, and no more. They really seem to want little from God. They seem to have little to confess, little to ask for, and little to thank Him for. Alas, this is altogether wrong! Nothing is more common than to hear believers complaining that they do not get on. They tell us that they do not grow in grace, as they could desire. Is it not rather to be suspected that many have quite as much grace as they ask for? Is it not the true account of many, that they have little, because they ask little? The cause of their weakness is to be found in their own stunted, dwarfish, clipped, contracted, hurried, little, narrow, diminutive prayers. They have not because they ask not. Oh, reader, we are not straitened in Christ, but in ourselves. The Lord says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." But we are like the king of Israel who smote on the ground thrice and stayed, when he ought to have smitten five or six times. (Psalms 81:10; 2 Kings 13:18-19)

(i) I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of particularity in prayer. We ought not to be content with great general petitions. We ought to specify our wants before the throne of grace. It should not be enough to confess we are sinners. We should name the sins of which our

conscience tells us we are most guilty. It should not be enough to ask for holiness. We should name the graces in which we feel most deficient. It should not be enough to tell the Lord we are in trouble. We should describe our trouble and all its peculiarities. This is what Jacob did, when he feared his brother Esau. He tells God exactly what it is that he fears. (Genesis 32:11) This is what Eliezer did, when he sought a wife for his master's son. He spreads before God precisely what he wants. (Genesis 24:12) This is what Paul did, when he had a thorn in the flesh. He besought the Lord. (2 Corinthians 12:8) This is true faith and confidence. We should believe that nothing is too small to be named before God. What should we think of the patient who told his doctor he was ill, but never went into particulars? What should we think of the wife who told her husband she was unhappy, but did not specify the cause? What should we think of the child who told his father he was in trouble, but nothing more? Let us never forget that Christ is the true bride-groom of the soul,-the true physician of the heart,-the real father of all His people. Let us show that we feel this, by being unreserved in our communications with Him. Let us hide no secrets from Him. Let us tell Him all our hearts.

(j) I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of intercession in our prayers. We are all selfish by nature; and our selfishness is very apt to stick to us, even when we are converted. There is a tendency in us to think only of our own souls,-our own spiritual conflict,-our own progress in religion, and to forget others. Against this tendency we have all need to watch and strive, and not least in our prayers. We should study to be of a public spirit. We should stir ourselves up to name other names beside our own before the throne of grace. We should try to bear in our hearts the whole world,-the heathen,-the Jews,-the Roman Catholics,-the body of true believers,-the professing Protestant Churches,-the country in which we live,-the congregation to which we belong,-the household in which we sojourn,-the friends and relations we are connected with. For each and all of these we should plead. This is the highest charity. He loves me best who loves me in his prayers. This is for our soul's health. It enlarges our sympathies and expands our hearts. This is for the benefit of the Church. The wheels of all machinery for extending the Gospel are oiled by prayer. They do as much for the Lord's cause who intercede like Moses on the mount, as they do who fight like Joshua in the thick of the battle. This is to be like Christ. He bears the names of His people on His breast and shoulders as their High Priest before the Father. Oh, the privilege of being like Jesus! This is to be a true helper to ministers. If I must needs choose a congregation, give me a people that prays.

(k) I commend to you, in the next place, the importance of thankfulness in prayer. I know well that asking God is one thing, and praising God is another. But I see so close a connection between prayer and praise in the Bible, that I dare not call that true prayer in which thankfulness has no part. It is not for nothing that Paul says, “By prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God.” (Php_4:6) “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.”(Colossians 4:2) It is of mercy that we are not in hell. It is of mercy that we have the hope of heaven. It is of mercy that we live in a land of spiritual light. It is of mercy that we have been called by the Spirit, and not left to reap the fruit of our own ways. It is of mercy that we still live, and have opportunities of glorifying God actively or passively. Surely, these thoughts should crowd on our minds whenever we speak with God. Surely, we should never open our lips in prayer without blessing God for that free grace by which we live, and for that loving-kindness which endureth for ever. Never was there an eminent saint who was not full of thankfulness. St. Paul

hardly ever writes an Epistle without beginning with thankfulness. Men like Whitefield in the last century, and Bickersteth, and Marsh, and Haldane Stewart, in our own time, were ever running over with thankfulness. Oh, if we would be bright and shining lights in our day, we must cherish a spirit of praise! And above all, let our prayers be thankful prayers.

(1) I commend to you, in the last place, the importance of watchfulness over your prayers. Prayer is that point of all others in religion at which you must be on your guard. Here it is that true religion begins: here it flourishes, and here it decays. Tell me what a man's prayers are, and I will soon tell you the state of his soul. Prayer is the spiritual pulse: by this the spiritual health may always be tested. Prayer is the spiritual weather-glass: by this we may always know whether it is fair or foul with our hearts. Oh, let us keep an eye continually upon our private devotions! Here is the pith, and marrow, and backbone of our practical Christianity. Sermons, and books, and tracts, and committee meetings, and the company of good men, are all good in their way; but they will never make up for the neglect of private prayer. Mark well the places, and society, and companions, that unhinge your hearts for communion with God, and make your prayers drive heavily. There be on your guard. Observe narrowly what friends and what employments leave your soul in the most spiritual frame, and most ready to speak with God. To these cleave and stick fast. If you will only take care of your prayers, I will engage that nothing shall go very wrong with your soul.

I offer these points for private consideration. I do it in all humility. I know no one who needs to be reminded of them more than I do myself. But I believe them to be God's own truth, and I should like myself and all I love to feel them more.

I want the times we live in to be praying times. I want the Christians of our day to be praying Christians. I want the Church of our age to be a praying Church. My heart's desire and prayer in sending forth this paper is to promote a spirit of prayerfulness. I want those who never prayed yet, to arise and call upon God; and I want those who do pray, to improve their prayers every year, and to see that they are not getting slack, and praying amiss.

Chapter 62

Preference to Gospel of John

Introduction

J. C. Ryle was an evangelical Calvinist at a time last century when the dead hand of liberalism first entered the Church. Through his many tracts and commentaries and religious biographies he was like a "light on a hill", as the fog of liberalism gradually spread its deadly poison over the land with disastrous consequences. He combined the very best devotional preaching with a sound Reformed theology in a way that was only possible from a heart full of grace, and a mind that had drunk deeply from the Word of God. But though there have been many faithful expositors of John's Gospel who have been just as sound in faith, and just as learned in their theology, none are so readable. His expositions and notes always go to the heart of the matter, and he always opens up the sacred texts in the most clear and satisfying way. But it is not only that his Commentary is a good read, but to the question every Christian must ask in studying the Word of God-"does this Commentary bear witness to the truth of God's Word; and, if it does, is the author self-evidently inspired by the grace of God to open out that truth for our lasting spiritual good?"-on both counts J. C. Ryle is pre-eminent. His works live on as popular as ever today for they are derived from the Word of God. But who remembers the liberals of that age? Who reprints their books? That is the one comforting thought-no liberal theology can last longer than the times for which it was written. The liberal's ideology of measuring everything according to what they deem is relevant for the modern age soon becomes dated. Their "gospel according to me" soon falls out of fashion.

Of the many commentaries of the Gospel of John I have studied, I have no hesitation in saying that J. C. Ryle's "Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John" is in a class of its own. It took him 12 years, as a hard-pressed vicar of the Church of England, to complete the work in 3 volumes. But what a faithful witness and interpreter of the Gospel he was!

The following 3 Prefaces to this 3 volume Exposition can only give you a glimpse of the man and his labours and the work itself, but I sincerely hope they might persuade you to go out and buy them. You can get them from the Banner of Truth {see web links} where a 3 volume paperback edition of the original can be bought at an exceptionally low price.

J. C. Ryle

His Prefaces to his 3 volume Expositions & Notes

on the Gospel of John.

PREFACE TO VOLUME ONE

I SEND forth the volume now in the reader's hands, with much diffidence, and a very deep sense of responsibility. It is no light matter to publish an exposition of any book in the Bible. It is a peculiarly serious undertaking to attempt a Commentary on the Gospel of St. John.

I do not forget that we are all apt to exaggerate the difficulties of our own particular department of literary labour. But I think every intelligent student of Scripture will bear me out when I say, that St. John's Gospel is pre-eminently full of things "hard to be understood." (2 Peter 3:16) It contains a large portion of our Lord Jesus Christ's doctrinal teaching. It abounds in "deep things of God," and "sayings of the King," which we feel instinctively we have no line to fully fathom, no mind to fully comprehend, no words to fully explain. It must needs be that such a book of Scripture should be difficult. I can truly say that I have commented on many a verse in this Gospel with fear and trembling. I have often said to myself, "Who is sufficient for these things?"--"The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (2 Corinthians 2:16; Exodus 3:5)

The nature of the work now published, requires a few words of explanation. It is a continuation of the "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels," of which four volumes, comprising the first three Gospels, have been already sent forth. Like the volumes on St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, the basis of the work is a continuous series of short expositions, intended for family or private reading, or for the use of those who visit the sick and the poor. But, unlike the previous volumes, the work now in the reader's hands contains full explanatory notes on every verse of the portions expounded, forming, in fact, a complete Commentary.

This "Commentary" is so extensive that it occupies far more space than the "Expository Thoughts," and is, I must honestly confess, the principal part of the work. To some it may appear far too long and full. But the circumstances of the times are my justification.[1] We live in a day of abounding vagueness and indistinctness on doctrinal subjects in religion. Now, if ever, it is the duty of all advocates of clear, well-defined, sharply-cut theology, to supply proof that their views are thoroughly borne out by Scripture. I have endeavoured to do so in this Commentary. I hold that the Gospel of St. John, rightly interpreted, is the best and simplest answer to those who profess to admire a vague and indistinct Christianity.

The theological standpoint which the writer of this Commentary occupies will be obvious to any intelligent reader. Such an one will see at a glance that I belong to that school in the Church of England which, rightly or wrongly, is called , 'Evangelical." He will see that I have no sympathy whatever with either Romish or Neologian tendencies. He will see that I hold firmly the distinctive theological views of the Reformers and doctrinal Puritans, and that I totally disapprove the loose and broad theology of some modern schools of divines.--But while I say all this, I must be allowed to add, that in interpreting Scripture, I "call no man master or father." I abhor the idea of wresting and warping God's Word in order to make it support party views. Throughout this Commentary I have endeavoured honestly and conscientiously to find out the real meaning of every sentence on which I have commented. I have evaded no difficulty, and shrunk from no inference. I have simply followed Scripture wherever its words seemed to point, and accepted whatever they seemed to mean. I have never hesitated to express my disagreement from the views of other commentators if occasion required; but when I have done so I have tried to do it with courtesy and respect.

On one point of vast importance in the present day, the reader will see that I hold very decided opinions. That point is inspiration. I feel no hesitation in avowing, that I believe in the "plenary inspiration" of every word of the original text of Holy Scripture. I hold not only that the Bible contains the Word of God, but that every jot of it was written, or brought together, by Divine inspiration, and is the Word of God. I entirely disagree with those who maintain that the writers of

the Bible were partially inspired, or inspired to such a limited extent that discrepancies, inaccuracies, and contradictions to the facts of science and history, must be expected and do exist in their writings. I utterly repudiate such a theory. I consider that it practically destroys the whole value of God's Word, puts a sword in the hand of infidels and sceptics, and raises far more serious difficulties than it pretends to solve.

I grant freely that the theory of "plenary verbal inspiration" involves some difficulties. I do not pretend to answer all the objections brought against it, or to defend all that has been written by its supporters.[2] I am content to remember that all inspiration is a miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost, and, like every operation of the Holy Ghost, must needs be mysterious. It is an operation of which not forty men in the world have been made the subjects, and the manner of which not one of the forty has described. It stands to reason that the whole question of inspiration, like everything else supernatural, must necessarily contain much that is mysterious, and much that we cannot explain.--But the difficulties of the "plenary verbal" theory appear to me mere trifles, compared with those which surround the counter theory of "partial inspiration." Once admit the principle that the writers of the Bible could make mistakes, and were not in all things guided by the Spirit, and I know not where I am. I see nothing certain, nothing solid, nothing trustworthy in the foundations of my faith, A fog has descended on the Book of God, and enveloped every chapter in uncertainty! Who shall decide when the writers of Scripture made mistakes, and when they did not? How am I to know where inspiration ends, and where it begins? What I think inspired, another may think uninspired! The texts that I rest upon, may possibly have been put in by a slip of the pen! The words and phrases that I love to feed upon, may possibly be weak earthly expressions, in writing which the author was left to his own private uninspired mind!--The glory is departed from my Bible at this rate. A cold feeling of suspicion and doubt creeps over me as I read it. I am almost tempted to lay it down in flat despair. A partially inspired Bible is little better than no Bible at all. Give me the "plenary verbal" theory, with all its difficulties, rather than this. I accept the difficulties of that theory, and humbly wait for their solution. But while I wait, I feel that I am standing on a rock.

I grant the existence of occasional difficulties, and apparent discrepancies, in Scripture. They are traceable, in some cases, I believe, to the errors of early transcribers; and in others to our ignorance of explanatory circumstances and minute links and details. To tell us that things cannot be explained, merely because we are not at present able to explain them, is childish and absurd! "He that believeth shall not make haste." (Isaiah 28:16) A true philosopher will never give up a sound theory on account of a few difficulties. He will rather say,--"I can afford to wait. It will all be plain one day." For my own part, I believe that the whole Bible, as it came originally from the hands of the inspired writers, was verbally perfect and without flaw. I believe that the inspired writers were infallibly guided by the Holy Ghost, both in their selection of matter and their choice of words. I believe that even now, when we cannot explain alleged difficulties in Holy Scripture, the wisest course is to blame the interpreter and not the text, to suspect our own ignorance to be in fault, and not any defect in God's Word. The theological system of modern days, which delights in magnifying the so-called mistakes of the Bible, in explaining away its miraculous narratives, and in making as little as possible of its Divine character and supernatural element, is a system that I cannot away with. It seems to me to take a rock from beneath our feet, and plant us on a quicksand. It robs us of bread, and does not give us in its place so much as a stone.

Nothing to my mind is so unutterably painful as the patronizing tone of compassion which the modern advocates of "partial inspiration" adopt in speaking of the writers of the Bible. They write and talk as if St. Paul and St. John, and their companions, were nothing better than well-meaning pious men, who on some points were greatly mistaken, and far below our enlightened age! They speak with pity and contempt of that system of divinity which satisfied the master-builders and giants of the Church in by-gone days. They tell us complacently that a new theology is needed for our age, and that a "freer handling" of the Bible, with pens untrammelled by the fetters which cumbered former interpreters, will produce, and is producing, wonderful results! I thoroughly distrust these new theologians, however learned and plausible they may be, and I expect the Church will receive no new light from them. I see nothing solid in their arguments, and am utterly unmoved by them. I believe that the want of our age is not more "free" handling of the Bible, but more "reverent" handling, more humility, more patient study, and more prayer. I repeat my own firm conviction, that no theory of inspiration involves so few difficulties as that of "plenary verbal inspiration." To that theory I entirely adhere, and on that theory my readers will find this Commentary is written.

In preparing this Commentary I have made it a point of duty to look through every work on St. John's Gospel which I could meet with. I append a list of books, partly because it may be interesting and useful to some readers, and partly because I wish to show that when I differ from the authors, I have not written in ignorance of their opinions.

The commentaries and expository works on St. John which I have looked through are the following :--

I. Of Fathers. Origen, Cyril of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Augustine, Theophylact, Euthymius, and the Catena Aurea.

II. Of Foreign Reformers and their successors to the close of the seventeenth century. Melancthon, Zwingle, Calvin, Ecolampadius, Brentius, Bucer, Bullinger, Gualter, Pellican, Flacius Illyricus, Musculus, Beza, Aretius, Chemnitius[3] Diodati, Calovius, De Dieu, Cocceius, Gomarus, Nifanius, Heinsius, Glassius,[4] Critici Sacri.

III. Of Roman Catholic Writers. Rupertus, Fetus, Arias, Montanus, Toletus, Barradius, Maldonatus, Cornelius a Lapide, Jansenius, Quesnel.

IV. Of Scotch and English Writers. Rollock, Hutcheson, Poole's Synopsis and Annotations, Cartwright, Trapp, Mayer, Leigh, Lightfoot, Baxter, Hammond, Hall, Henry, Burkitt, Whitby, Pearce, Gill, Scott, Blomfield, Doddridge, A. Clarke, Barnes, Burgon, Alford, Webster, Wordsworth, J. Brown, D. Brown, Ford. To this list I may also add Arrowsmith, on John i.; Dyke, on John ii. iii.; Hildersham, on John iv.; Trench, on Miracles; and Schottgen's Horæ Hebraicæ.

V. Of German Writers, from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the present day. Lampe, Bengel, Tittman, Tholuck, Olshausen, Stier, Besser.

Of course no man can spend years, as I have now done, in looking through this formidable mass of books, without forming some decided opinions about the comparative merits of their respective authors. Some of these opinions I have no hesitation in putting down, as they may be of use to some of my younger brethren in the ministry.

(A) The Fathers appear to me greatly overrated as commentators and expositors. Cyril and Chrysostom are far the most valuable of them, in my judgment, on St. John.

(B) The Continental Reformers and their successors appear to me greatly underrated and neglected. Brentius and Musculus, for instance, abound in excellent thoughts and suggestions, but seem quite ignored by most modern commentators.

(C) The Roman Catholic writers often contain much that is useful and little that is objectionable. Happy would it be for the Church of England if all her Clergy knew their Bibles as well as such men as Ferus and Toletus!

(D) The few German writers that I have consulted, appear to me to be far too highly esteemed, with the exception of Bengel and Lampe. Stier is always reverential, but tremendously diffuse. As to Olshausen, Tholuck, and Tittman, I have generally laid down their works with unmixed disappointment. What people can mean by telling us that we have much to learn from modern German writers on Scripture passes my comprehension!--I can only suppose, from my own acquaintance with them, that many say it without having read them, or without having read other expositors.

(E) The Scotch and English commentators I shall pass over in silence, as most of them are well known. I must confess that I think we have little to show in this department of Theological literature. Of our old writers, Rollock, the Scotch divine, is incomparably the best. In fact, I do not know such a "buried treasure" as his Latin Commentary on St. John.[5]--Of modern writers Burgon and Wordsworth strike me as two of the most valuable, though I differ widely from them on such points as the Church and the Sacraments. But I admire their reverential spirit.--Alford is almost always able and clear, but not always in my opinion a safe theological guide.--A thoroughly satisfactory critical commentary on the Greek Testament, in the English language, is a great desideratum.

I have only to add that on all points of philology, grammar, etc., I have consulted Flacius, Ravanel, Parkhurst, Leigh, Schleusner, Raphelius, Suicer, Glassius, and Winer.

The vexed question of "various readings," I have deliberately left alone. It is not because I have no opinion on the subject. But the real extent to which all the various readings would affect the meaning of Scripture, if they were admitted, is so much exaggerated, that it does not seem to me worth while to mix up the question with such a work as that which I have undertaken. The Greek text which I have been content to use throughout is that of the third Edition of Stephens (1550), edited by Scholefield. I do not say for a moment that it is the best text. I only say I have used it.

The occasional shortcomings of our authorised English translation I have not hesitated to notice. I have frequently pointed out expressions which in my judgment are not rendered so literally or accurately as they might have been There is nothing perfect on earth. Our excellent translators undoubtedly fail occasionally to give the full sense of Greek words, and are not always sufficiently careful about tenses and the article. But it is useless to expect perfection in any translation. Translators are not inspired, and are all liable to err. The "plenary verbal inspiration" which I firmly maintain, is that of the original text of Scripture, and not of any translation.--I have no sympathy however with those who wish to have a new authorised English version of the Bible. I concede the shortcomings of the old version, but judging by the specimens of "new and improved" versions

which I have seen, I doubt much whether we should gain anything by attempting to mend it. Taking it for all in all, the authorised English version is an admirable translation. I am quite content to "let well alone."

I now conclude this preface with an earnest prayer, that it may please God to pardon the many deficiencies of this volume, and to use it for His own glory and the good of souls. It has cost me a large amount of time and thought and labour. But if the Holy Ghost shall make it useful to the Church of Christ, I shall feel abundantly repaid.

Ignorance of Scripture is the root of every error in religion, and the source of every heresy. To be allowed to remove a few grains of ignorance, and to throw a few rays of light on God's precious Word is, in my opinion, the greatest honour that can be put on a Christian.

J. C. RYLE, B. A.,

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

Stradbroke Vicarage, Suffolk,

February, 1865.

P.S. I feel it due to many of my readers to offer some explanation of the long delay which has taken place since the publication of this work on St. John began. An interval of almost five years has elapsed between the publication of the first four chapters and of the fifth and sixth. This delay, I am afraid, has caused inconvenience and annoyance in many quarters. For this I am unfeignedly sorry.

But the delay has been unavoidable, and has arisen from circumstances entirely beyond my own control. Deaths, domestic anxieties, illness, and change from one residence to another, have had much to do with it. The principal cause has been my removal to my present parish. The work was begun in a little quiet parish of 300 people. It has been resumed in a widely-scattered parish of 1400 people, requiring almost the whole of my attention.

Even now, in sending forth the first volume of the "Expository Thoughts on St. John," I dare not promise anything certain as to the time when the work will be completed. I have the will to finish it, but I find it almost impossible to secure the necessary leisure. What absolute need there is of entire freedom from distraction and interruption in writing a Commentary, none know but those who have attempted it. What endless petty interruptions a clergyman must submit to in a poor rural parish of 1400 people, where there is no resident landlord, and no layman who has leisure, and where many things must necessarily hinge on the clergyman, no one can know unless he has filled the position.

If the great Head of the Church intends me to finish this work, I believe that He will make my way plain, and remove all obstacles. But my readers must kindly make allowances for my altered position. There are but twelve hours in the day. I cannot create time. It is not one of the primary duties of a parochial clergyman's office to write Commentaries. If therefore the work does not go on so fast as they could wish, they must have the goodness to consider my position, and to believe that there is a cause.

PREFACE TO SECOND VOLUME. IN sending forth the second volume of my "Expository Thoughts on St. John," I have little or nothing to add to the introduction with which I prefaced the first volume.

In the general plan of the work,--in the style of expositions, notes, and critical remarks,--in the list of Commentators employed and consulted in preparing the whole, the reader will find little difference between this volume and the one which preceded it. I have rigidly adhered to the line which I marked out to myself at first. In the notes I have gone steadily forward through every verse, endeavouring to throw light on the meaning of every word, evading no difficulty, examining every disputable point, trying to untie every knot, and carefully availing myself of help from every quarter.

The doctrinal views of religion to which I gave expression in the first volume, will be found unchanged in the second. The fourteen years which have "passed over" me since I first began writing on the Gospels, I humbly hope have not been thrown away. They have been to me years of many trials, and I may add of much work, much reading, much reflection, and not a little prayer. At the end of these fourteen years, I feel more than ever convinced that what are called "Evangelical" views of Christian truth are thoroughly Scriptural views, and will bear the test of any fair investigation. The longer I live the more firmly am I persuaded that no system of divinity is so entirely in harmony with the Bible, as the system which rightly or wrongly is called "Evangelical."

In short, I am not ashamed of saying once more that in matters of doctrine I am an "Evangelical Churchman," and that I am so because I can find no other doctrinal system in the New Testament, when fairly and reasonably interpreted. Let me add, once for all, that nothing so much confirms me in my opinions, as the broad fact that "Evangelical" views are those to which I see men of all schools of opinion turn for comfort when they leave the world. I observe continually that learned and zealous High Churchmen, after denouncing "Evangelicalism" as a defective system for many years, are only too happy to take refuge in simple Evangelical doctrines when they lie on their deathbeds. That fact alone speaks volumes. Give me the doctrines that men cling to, and find so comforting in the hour of death!

I now send forth this volume with an earnest prayer that God may bless it and make it useful. Ignorance of Scripture, I feel more than ever, is the curse of these latter days. Men read many books, and yet neglect "the one Book." If I can help to make the Bible more plain and interesting to any man's soul, I shall be abundantly content.

J. C. RYLE

Stradbroke Vicarage,

22nd, October, 1869 PREFACE TO VOLUME 3 THE volume now in the reader's hands completes a work which I began sixteen years ago, entitled "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels." By the good hand of God that work is now finished. For this I desire to be deeply thankful. "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning of it." (Ecclesiastes 7:8)

In concluding that portion of the work which is devoted to St. John's Gospel, I think it right to make a few prefatory remarks about the "Notes." They occupy so large a part of my three volumes on St. John, that my readers may not unreasonably expect me to give some account of them. Filling up, as they do, at least two-thirds of the work, and necessarily increasing its cost, they require some

defence and explanation. Questions such as these will naturally arise in some minds,--" What are these notes? What is their object? What is their doctrinal tone? What helps have been used in preparing them?"--These questions I propose to answer.

(1) My object in writing these notes on St. John's Gospel is soon stated. I have tried to explain, in simple language, everything in the text which needs explanation, and to bring all available light to bear on every verse in the book. In trying to attain this object, I have given not only my own thoughts and opinions, but also the results of a patient study of about seventy Commentators, both ancient and modern, of almost every Church and theological school in Christendom. I have endeavoured to handle every subject raised by the text, however high and deep, and to meet the requirements of every class of readers, whether educated or uneducated. I have evaded no hard passage, and turned away from no difficulty. I am very sensible that I have often failed to hit the mark, and I have not been ashamed in many places to confess my ignorance. Competent critics will probably detect in the work not a few errors and mistakes. I lay no claim to infallibility. But I can honestly say that I have never handled the Word partially or deceitfully, and have done my best to show "the thing as it is." (Job 26:3) Some controverted points I have ventured to discuss in annotations of more than ordinary length, and of these a list will be found appended to this concluding volume. On the whole I cannot help hoping, that, in spite of many deficiencies, the notes will be found a help to thoughtful readers of St. John's Gospel.

(2) The doctrinal tone of the notes, I must frankly avow, is thoroughly and unmistakably evangelical. After patiently studying St. John's Gospel for twelve years, with much thought, much labour, much examination of the writings of others, and, I hope I may add, with some earnest prayers, my theological opinions are what they were when I began to write. In these twelve years I trust I have learned many things: but I can truly say that I have seen no reason to alter my views of doctrine. My conviction is firm and decided, that the theology of that religious school in the Church of England, which, rightly or wrongly, is called Evangelical, is thoroughly Scriptural, and a theology of which no Christian man need be ashamed.

I freely confess that, with increasing years and experience, I have learned to think more kindly and charitably than I once did, of theologians who belong to other schools than my own. I am more and more convinced every year I live, that there are many Christians whose hearts are right in the sight of God, while their heads are very wrong. I am more and more convinced, that the differences between schools of religious thought are frequently more nominal than real, more verbal than actual, and that many of them would melt away and disappear, if men would only define the terms and words they use with logical accuracy. But, for all this, I cannot shrink from saying, as in the sight of God, that at present I know no theology which appears to me so thoroughly in accordance with Scripture as Evangelical theology. In the belief of this I have written my notes on St. John, and in the faith of this I hope to die. With the Bible only in my hands, I find difficulties in the systems of non-Evangelical schools which to my mind appear insuperable.

(3) Concerning the Commentators I have consulted, in preparing my notes on St. John's Gospel, I wish to make a few remarks for the benefit of my younger readers, and of those who have not access to large libraries. I see no reason to alter the opinions which I expressed seven years ago, in the Preface to my first volume.--After patiently studying Cyril, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Theophylact, for twelve years, it is my deliberate conviction that Patristic Commentaries on the

Gospels are often overrated and overpraised, and that those who teach young students of theology to expect to find "all wisdom" in the Fathers, are neither wise nor kind.--After an equally patient examination of the modern German Commentators, Tittman, Tholuck, Olshausen, Stier, and Hengstenberg, I am obliged to say that I leave them with a feeling of disappointment. About them also I raise a warning cry for the benefit of young students. I advise them not to expect too much. Writers like Hengstenberg and Stier are well worth reading; but I cannot say that any modern German Commentators seem to me to deserve the extravagant commendation which is often bestowed on them. In fact I have a strong suspicion that many praise German exegetical works without having read them!

For throwing light on the meaning of the text of St. John, and for raising just and beautiful thoughts out of it, my opinion is distinct and decided, that there are no Commentaries equal to those of the Continental divines who lived immediately after the Protestant Reformation. Unfortunately they wrote in Latin, which few persons care to read; and their books are, generally, huge, lumbering folios, which few care to handle. Moreover they are sometimes defective in verbal criticism, and were, most of them, more familiar with Latin than Greek. But taking them for all in all, as Expositors and Elucidators of God's Word, in my judgment, there is nothing like them. The man who has carefully read the expositions of Brentius, Bullinger, Gualter, Musculus, and Gerhard, will find that later Commentaries rarely contain any good thoughts which are not to be found in these five writers, and that they say many excellent things which have not occurred to later writers at all. Why these great Expositors are so totally ignored and neglected in the nineteenth century, I do not pretend to explain. Some modern theologians seem not even to be aware that such Commentators as Brentius, Musculus, and Gerhard, ever existed! But the fact is one which reflects little credit on our times.

I shall say little or nothing about the works of British Commentators. This is a department of theological literature in which, I must plainly say, I do not think my fellow-countrymen shine. With rare exceptions, they appear to me to fall below the level of their reputation. I shall therefore content myself with naming a few Commentaries, which appear to me more than ordinarily useful and suggestive, and which I have seldom consulted in vain.--Rollock on John is excellent; and it is a great pity that the whole work is not translated, instead of lying buried in Latin.--Hutcheson is always good; but his value is sadly marred by his interminable divisions, uses, applications, and inferences.--Matthew Henry is generally rich in pious thoughts and pleasing illustrations, and sometimes exhibits more learning and acquaintance with books, than he is commonly credited with.--Poole's "Annotations" are sound, clear, and sensible; and, taking him for all in all, I place him at the head of English Commentators on the whole Bible.--Alford and Wordsworth have done good service to the Church by their works on the Greek Testament, and I know none at present that I can sooner recommend to a student of the original. But they both say, occasionally, things with which I cannot agree, and they often seem to me to leave important texts very scantily expounded, or entirely unnoticed.[6] A fuller and more satisfactory commentary on the Greek Testament appears to me to be still wanted.--Burgon's "Plain Commentary on the Gospels" is an excellent, suggestive, and devout work. But I cannot agree with him, when he touches such subjects as the Church, the Sacraments, and the Ministry.--In fact, the conclusion I arrive at, after a diligent examination of many Commentators, is always one and the same. I trust none of them unreservedly, and I expect nowhere to find perfection. All must be read with caution. They are

good helps, but they are not infallible. They are useful assistants, but they are not the pillar of cloud and fire. I advise my younger readers to remember that. Use your own judgment prayerfully and diligently. Use commentaries; but be a slave to none. Call no man master.[7]

It only remains for me now to express my regret, that the completion of my "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels" has been so long delayed. The delay has, arisen from causes entirely beyond my control. The work was first begun in a little quiet parish of three hundred people, and then brought to a standstill by heavy domestic affliction. It has been resumed, and carried on, amidst many interruptions, in an isolated rural parish of 1,300 souls, in which, after coming into residence, I found a parsonage had to be repaired, large schools had to be built, and a huge old dilapidated church had to be restored. In the face of these difficulties and distractions, I can only wonder that I have been enabled to finish my work on St. John at all.

The book is now sent forth, with a deep conviction in the author's mind, that it contains many defects, inaccuracies, and blemishes, but with an earnest desire and prayer that it may help some readers to a better understanding of one of the most interesting portions of Holy Scripture. I never felt more persuaded than I do in the present day of the truth of the old saying, "Ignorance of Scripture is the root of all error." If I can lessen that ignorance a little I shall be very thankful.

The concluding paragraph of Dean Alford's "Prolegomena" to his "Commentary on the Book of Revelation," so thoroughly expresses my own feelings, on completing my work on St. John's Gospel, that I make no excuse for inserting it here, with the omission of a few words:--

"I have now only to commend to my gracious God and Father this feeble attempt to explain a most glorious portion of His revealed Scripture. I do it with humble thankfulness, but with a sense of utter weakness before the power of His word, and of inability to sound the depth even of its simplest sentence. May he spare the hand which has been put forward to touch the ark. May He, for Christ's sake, forgive all rashness, all perverseness, all uncharitableness, which may be found in this book! And may He sanctify it to the use of His Church: its truth, if any, for teaching; its manifold defects for warning."

J. C. RYLE.

Stradbroke Vicarage, Suffolk, February, 1873.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The expectations of Bengel, the German commentator, appear likely to be fulfilled with curious accuracy in the present day. He said, in the year A.D. 1740, "Though Socinianism and Popery at present appear mutually aloof, they will in process of time form a mighty confluence, that will burst all bounds and bring everything to a crisis. We may expect it in the following way.--The residue of heavenly influence on the professing Church, as a body, will have utterly evaporated, its holy things having been already more and more prostituted to the spirit of this world. The Holy Spirit being thus withdrawn from the camp at large, the world will deem its own victory and triumph secured. now, therefore, a spirit of liberal Latitudinarianism will prevail everywhere,--a notion that every one may be right in his own way of thinking, and consequently that all is well with the Jew, the Turk, and the Pagan. Ideas of this kind will wonderfully prepare men for embracing the false prophet." (Life of Bengel, Walker's edition, page 322.) How painfully correct these

prognostications, made 125 years ago, have proved, anyone who observes the state of religious feeling in England must know only too well!

[2] When I speak of "plenary verbal inspiration," I do not for a moment admit the absurd theory that all parts of the Bible are equally important. I should never dream of saying that the catalogues in Chronicles are of as much value to the Church as the Gospel of St. John. But I do maintain that all parts of the Bible are equally "given by inspiration of God," and that all are to be regarded as "God's Word." If we do not see the Divine character of any particular part, it is because we have at present no eyes to see it. The humblest moss is as much the handiwork of God's creative power as the cedar of Lebanon. Yet it would be foolish to say it was an equally important part of creation. The least verse in the Bible is just as truly "given by inspiration" as the greatest. But it does not follow that it is equally valuable.

[3] The work I here refer to is the Commentary on the "Harmony of the Gospels," begun by Chemnitius, and continued by Lyserus and Gerhard.

[4] The work of Glassius to which I here refer is his "Expositions of the Gospels and Epistles appointed for Sundays." It is a collection of Homilies.

[5] Rollock was born A.D. 1555, and died A.D. 1598. He was Principal of the University of Edinburgh.

[6] As examples of what I mean, I refer the reader to Wordsworth and John 17:4-20, very scantily expounded, in my judgment; and to Alford on John 10:27-28 not expounded at all!

[7] A full list of Commentators, whom I have consulted, more or less, in preparing my notes on St. John, will be found in the preface to my first volume. From that list the following authors were omitted,-Hengstenberg on "John," Manton, Newton, Burgess, and Traill, on the " 17th chapter of John," and Bishop Andrews' Sermons.

Chapter 63

Prove all things

“Prove All Things.”

BY

J. C. Ryle D.D.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”- 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

READER,

You live in days when the text before your eyes is one of the first importance. The truths it contains are especially truths for the times. Give me your attention for a few minutes, and I will try to show you what I mean.

There were three great doctrines or principles which won the battle of the Protestant Reformation. These three were: (1) the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture, (2) the right of private judgment, and (3) justification by faith only, without the deeds of the law.

These three principles were the keys of the whole controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome. If we keep firm hold of them when we argue with a Roman Catholic, our position is unassailable: no weapon that the Church of Rome can forge against us will prosper. If we give up any one of them, our cause is lost. Like Samson, with his hair shorn, our strength is gone. Like the Spartans, betrayed at Thermopylae, we are out-flanked and surrounded. We cannot maintain our ground. Resistance is useless. Sooner or later we shall have to lay down our arms, and surrender at discretion.

Let us carefully remember this. The Roman Catholic controversy is upon us once more. We must put on the old armour, if we would not have our faith overthrown. The sufficiency of Holy Scripture,-the right of private judgment, justification by faith only,-these are the three great principles to which we must always cling. Let us grasp them firmly, and never let them go.

One of the three great principles to which I have referred appears to me to stand forth in the verse of Scripture which heads this paper. I mean the right of private judgment. I wish to say something about that principle.

The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of St. Paul, says to us, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” In these words we have two great truths.

I. The right, duty, and necessity of private judgment: “Prove all things.”

II. The duty and necessity of keeping firm hold upon truth: “Hold fast that which is good.” In this paper I propose to dwell a little on both these points.

I. Let me speak first, of the right, duty, and necessity of private judgment.

When I say the right of private judgment, I mean that every individual Christian has a right to judge for himself by the Word of God, whether that which is put before him as religious truth is God's truth, or is not.

When I say the duty of private judgment, I mean that God requires every Christian man to use the right of which I have just spoken;-to compare man's words and man's writings with God's revelation, and to make sure that he is not deluded and taken in by false teaching.

And when I say the necessity of private judgment, I mean this,-that it is absolutely needful for every Christian who loves his soul and would not be deceived, to exercise the right, and discharge the duty to which I have referred; seeing that experience shows that the neglect of private judgment has always been the cause of immense evils in the Church of Christ.

Now the Apostle Paul urges all these three points upon our notice when he uses those remarkable words, “Prove all things.” I ask particular attention to that expression. In every point of view it is most weighty and instructive.

Here, we must remember, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Thessalonians,-to a Church which he himself had founded. Here is an inspired Apostle writing to young inexperienced Christians,-writing to the whole professing Church in a certain city, containing laity as well as clergy,-writing, too, with especial reference to matters of doctrine and preaching, as we know by the verse preceding the text: “Despise not prophesyings.” And yet mark what he says,-“Prove all things.”

He does not say, “Whatsoever Apostles,-whatsoever evangelists, pastors, and teachers, whatsoever your Bishops,-whatsoever your ministers tell you is truth, that you are to believe.” No! he says, “Prove all things.” He does not say, “Whatsoever the universal Church pronounces true, that you are to hold.” No! he says, “Prove all things.”

The principle laid down is this: “Prove all things by the Word of God; all ministers, all teaching, all preaching, all doctrines, all sermons, all writings, all opinions, all practices,-prove all by the Word of God. Measure all by the measure of the Bible.-Compare all with the standard of the Bible.-Weigh all in the balances of the Bible.-Examine all by the light of the Bible.-Test all in the crucible of the Bible. That which can abide the fire of the Bible, receive, hold, believe, and obey. That which cannot abide the fire of the Bible, reject, refuse, repudiate, and cast away.”

This is private judgment. This is the right we are to exercise if we love our souls. We are not to believe things in religion merely because they are said by Popes or Cardinals,-by Bishops or Priests,-by Presbyters or Deacons,-by Churches, Councils, or Synods,-by Fathers, Puritans, or Reformers. We are not to argue, “Such and such things must be true, because these men say so.” We are not to do so. We are to prove all things by the Word of God.

Now I know such doctrine sounds startling in some men's ears. But I write it down advisedly, and believe it cannot be disproved. I should be sorry to encourage any man in ignorant presumption or ignorant contempt. I praise not the man who seldom reads his Bible, and yet sets himself up to pick holes in his minister's sermons. I praise not the man who knows nothing but a few texts in the New Testament, and yet undertakes to settle questions in divinity which have puzzled God's wisest children. But still I hold with Bishop Bilson (A.D. 1575), that “all hearers have both liberty to discern and a charge to beware of seducers; and woe to them that do it not.” And I say with Bishop

Davenant (A.D. 1627) “We are not to believe all who undertake to teach in the Church, but, must take care and weigh with serious examination, whether their doctrine be sound or not.”1

Some men I know, refuse to believe this doctrine of private judgment; but I assert confidently that it is continually taught in the Word of God.

This is the principle laid down by the prophet Isaiah. (Isaiah 8:19) His words were written, we should remember, at a time when God was more immediately King over His Church, and had more direct communication with it than He has now. They were written at a time when there were men upon earth who had express revelations from God. Yet what does Isaiah say?-“When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” If this be not private judgment, what is?

This, again, is the principle laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. The Head of the Church says there:-“Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruit.” (Matthew 7:15) How is it possible that men shall know these false prophets, except they exercise their private judgment as to what their fruits are?

This is the practice we find commended in the Bereans, in the Acts of the Apostles. They did not take the Apostle Paul's word for granted, when he came to preach to them. We are told, that they “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so,” and “therefore,” it is said, “many of them believed.” (Acts 17:11-12) What was this again but private judgment?

This is the spirit of the advice given in 1 Corinthians 10:15,-“I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say:” and in Colossians 2:18,-“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit;” and in 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God;” and in 2 John 1:10,-“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house.” If these passages do not recommend the use of private judgment, I do not know what words mean. To my mind they seem to say to every individual Christian, “Prove all things.”

Whatever men may say against private judgment, we may be sure it cannot be neglected without immense danger to the soul. We may not like it; but we never know what we may come to if we refuse to use it. No man can say into what depths of false doctrine we may be drawn if we will not do what God requires of us, and “prove all things.”

Suppose that, in fear of private judgment, we resolve to believe whatever the Church believes. Where is our security against error? The Church is not infallible. There was a time when almost the whole of Christendom embraced the Arian heresy, and did not acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be equal with the Father in all things. There was a time, before the Reformation, when the darkness over the face of Europe was a darkness that might be felt.-The General Councils of the Church are not infallible. When the whole Church is gathered together in a General Council, what says our Twenty-first Article? “They may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture.”-The particular branches of the Church are not infallible. Any one of them may err. Many of them have fallen

foully, or have been swept away. Where is the Church of Ephesus at this day? Where is the Church of Sardis at the present time? Where is Augustine's Church of Hippo in Africa? Where is Cyprian's Church of Carthage? They are all gone! Not a vestige of any of them is left! Shall we then be content to err merely because the Church errs? Will our company be any excuse for our error? Will our erring in company with the Church remove our responsibility for our own souls? Surely it is a thousand times better for a man to stand alone and be saved, than to err in company with the Church, and be lost? It is better to “prove all things” and go to heaven, than to say, “I dare not think for myself,” and go to hell.

But suppose that, to cut matters short, we resolve to believe whatever our minister believes. Once more I ask,-Where is our security against error? Ministers are not infallible, any more than Churches. All of them have not the Spirit of God. The very best of them are only men. Call them Bishops, Priests, Deacons, or whatever names you please, they are all earthen vessels. I speak not merely of Popes, who have promulgated awful superstitions, and led abominable lives. I would rather point to the very best of Protestants, and say, “Beware of looking upon them as infallible,-beware of thinking of any man (whoever that man may be) that he cannot err.” Luther held consubstantiation; that was a mighty error. Calvin, the Geneva Reformer, advised the burning of Servetus;2-that was a mighty error. Cranmer and Ridley urged the putting of Hooper into prison because of some trifling dispute about vestments; that was a mighty error. Whitgift persecuted the Puritans;-that was a mighty error. Wesley and Toplady in the last century quarrelled fiercely about Calvinism;-that was a mighty error. All these things are warnings, if we will only take them. All say, “Cease ye from man.” All show us that if a man's religion hangs on ministers, whoever they may be, and not on the Word of God, it hangs on a broken reed. Let us never make ministers Popes. Let us follow them so far as they follow Christ, but not a hair's breadth further. Let us believe whatever they can show us out of the Bible, but not a single word more. If we neglect the duty of private judgment, we may find, to our cost, the truth of what Whitby says: “The best of overseers do sometimes make oversights.” We may live to experience the truth of what the Lord said about the Pharisees: “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” (Matt. xv. 14.) We may be very sure no man is safe against error, unless he acts on St. Paul's injunction,-unless he “proves all things” by the Word of God.

I have said that it is impossible to overrate the evils that may arise from neglecting to exercise private judgment. I will go further, and say that it is impossible to overrate the blessings which private judgment has conferred both on the world and on the Church.

I ask my readers, then, to remember that the greatest discoveries in science and in philosophy, beyond all controversy, have arisen from the use of private judgment. To this we owe the discovery of Galileo, that the earth went round the sun, and not the sun round the earth.-To this we owe Columbus' discovery of the continent of America.-To this we owe Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood.-To this we owe Jenner's discovery of vaccination.-To this we owe the printing press, the steam engine, the powerloom, the electric telegraph, railways, and gas. For all these discoveries we are indebted to men who dared to “think for themselves.” They were not content with the beaten path of those who had gone before. They were not satisfied with taking for granted that what their fathers believed must be true. They made experiments for themselves. They brought old-established theories to the proof, and found that they were worthless. They proclaimed new systems, and invited men to examine them, and test their truth. They bore storms

of obloquy and ridicule unmoved. They heard the clamour of prejudiced lovers of old traditions without flinching. And they prospered and succeeded in what they did. We see it now. And we who live in the nineteenth century are reaping the fruit of their use of private judgment.

And as it has been in science, so also it has been in the history of the Christian religion. The martyrs who stood alone in their day, and shed that blood which has been the seed of Christ's Gospel throughout the world,-the Reformers, who, one after another, rose up in their might to enter the lists with the Church of Rome,-all did what they did, suffered what they suffered, proclaimed what they proclaimed, simply because they exercised their private judgment about what was Christ's truth.-Private judgment made the Waldensians, the Albigensians, and the Lollards, count not their lives dear to them, rather than believe the doctrines of the Church of Rome.-Private judgment made Wickliffe search the Bible in our own land, denounce the Romish friars, and all their impostures, translate the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and become “the morning star” of the Reformation.-Private judgment made Luther examine Tetzel's abominable system of indulgences by the light of the Word.-Private judgment led him on, step by step, from one thing to another, guided by the same light, till at length the gulf between him and Rome was a gulf that could not be passed, and the Pope's power in Germany was completely broken.-Private judgment made our own English Reformers examine for themselves, and inquire for themselves, as to the true nature of that corrupt system under which they had been born and brought up.-Private judgment made them cast off the abominations of Popery, and circulate the Bible among the laity.-Private judgment made them draw from the Bible our Articles, compile our Prayerbook, and constitute the Church of England as it is. They broke the fetters of tradition, and dared to think for themselves. They refused to take for granted Rome's pretensions and assertions. They examined them all by the Bible, and because they would not abide the examination, they broke with Rome altogether. All the blessings of Protestantism in England, all that we are enjoying at this very day, we owe to the right exercise of private judgment. Surely if we do not honour private judgment, we are thankless and ungrateful indeed!

Let us not be moved by the common argument, that the right of private judgment is liable to be abused,-that private judgment has done great harm, and should be avoided as a dangerous thing. Never was there a more miserable argument! Never was there one which, when thrashed, proves so full of chaff!

Private judgment has been abused! I would like the objector to tell me what good gift of God has not been abused? What high principle can be named that has not been employed for the very worst of purposes? Strength may become tyranny, when it is employed by the stronger to coerce the weaker; yet strength is a blessing when properly employed.

Liberty may become licentiousness, when every man does that which is right in his own eyes, without regarding the rights and feelings of others; yet liberty, rightly used, is a mighty blessing. Because many things may be used improperly, are we therefore to give them up altogether? Because opium is used improperly by some, is it not to be used as a medicine on any occasion at all? Because money may be used improperly, is all money to be cast into the sea? You cannot have good in this world without evil. You cannot have private judgment without some abusing it, and turning it to bad account.

But private judgment, people say, has done more harm than good! What harm has private judgment done, I would like to know, in matters of religion, compared to the harm that has been done by the neglect of it? Some are fond of telling us that among Protestants who allow private judgment, there are divisions, and that in the Church of Rome, where private judgment is forbidden, there are no divisions. I might easily show such objectors that Romish unity is far more seeming than real. Bishop Hall, in his book called The Peace of Rome, numbers up no less than three hundred differences of opinion existing in the Romish Church. I might easily show that the divisions of Protestants are exceedingly exaggerated, and that most of them are upon points of minor importance. I might show that, with all the “varieties of Protestantism,” as men call them, there is still a vast amount of fundamental unity and substantial agreement among Protestants. No man can read the Harmony of Protestant Confessions without seeing that.

But grant for a moment that private judgment has led to divisions, and brought about varieties. I say that these divisions and varieties are but a drop of water when compared with the torrent of abominations that have arisen from the Church of Rome's practice of disallowing private judgment altogether. Place the evils in two scales,-the evils that have arisen from private judgment, and those that have arisen from no man being allowed to think for himself. Weigh the evils one against another, and I have no doubt as to which will be the greatest. Give me Protestant divisions, certainly, rather than Popish unity, with the fruit that it brings forth. Give me Protestant variations, whatever a man like Bossuet may say about them, rather than Romish ignorance, Romish superstition, Romish darkness, and Romish idolatry. Give me the Protestant diversities of England and Scotland, with all their disadvantages, rather than the dead level, both intellectual and spiritual, of the Italian peninsula. Let the two systems be tried by their fruits,-the system that says, “Prove all things,” and the system that says, “Dare to have no opinion of your own;”-let them be tried by their fruits in the hearts, in the intellects, in the lives, in all the ways of men, and I have no doubt as to the result.

In any case let us not be moved by the specious argument, that it is humility to disallow private judgment, and to have no opinion of our own, that it is the part of a true Christian not to think for himself!

I tell men boldly that such humility is a false humility, a humility that does not deserve that blessed name. Call it rather laziness, idleness, and sloth. It makes a man strip himself of all his responsibility, and throw the whole burden of his soul into the hands of the minister and the Church. It gives a man a mere vicarious religion, a religion by which he places his conscience and all his spiritual concerns under the care of others. He need not trouble himself! He need no longer think for himself! He has embarked in a safe ship, and placed his soul under a safe pilot, and will get to heaven! Oh, let us beware of supposing that this deserves the name of humility! It is refusing to exercise the gift that God has given us. It is refusing to employ the sword of the Spirit which God has forged for the use of our hand. Blessed be God, our forefathers did not act upon such principles! Had they done so, we should never have had the Reformation. Had they done so, we might have been bowing down to the image of the Virgin Mary at this moment, or praying to the spirits of departed saints, or having a service performed in Latin. From such humility may the good Lord ever deliver us!

As long as we live, let us resolve that we will read for ourselves, think for ourselves, judge of the Bible for ourselves, in the great matters of our souls. Let us dare to have an opinion of our own. Let us never be ashamed of saying, “I think that this is right, because I find it in the Bible;” and “I think that this is wrong, because I do not find it in the Bible.” “Let us prove all things,” and prove them by the Word of God.

As long as we live, let us beware of the blindfold system, which many commend in the present day,-the system of following a leader, and having no opinion of our own,-the system which practically says, “Only keep your Church, only receive the Sacraments, only believe what the ordained ministers who are set over you tell you, and then all shall be well.” I warn men that this will not do. If we are content with this kind of religion, we are perilling our immortal souls. Let the Bible, and not any Church upon earth, or any minister upon earth, be our rule of faith. “Prove all things” by the Word of God.

Above all, as long as we live, let us habitually look forward to the great day of judgment. Let us think of the solemn account which every one of us will have to give in that day before the judgment-seat of Christ. We shall not be judged by Churches. We shall not be judged by whole congregations. We shall be judged individually, each by himself. What shall it profit us in that day to say, “Lord, Lord, I believed everything the Church told me. I received and believed everything ordained ministers set before me. I thought that whatever the Church and the ministers said must be right”? What shall it profit us to say this, if we have held some deadly error? Surely, the voice of Him that sits upon the throne will reply, “You had the Scriptures. You had a book, plain and easy to him that will read it and search it in a child-like spirit. Why did you not use the Word of God when it was given to you? You had a reasonable soul given you to understand that Bible. Why did you not 'Prove all things,' and thus keep clear of error?” If we refuse to exercise our private judgment, let us think of that awful day, and beware.

II. And now let me speak of the duty and necessity of keeping firm hold upon God's truth.

The words of the Apostle on this subject are pithy and forcible. “Hold fast,” he says, “that which is good.” It is as if he said to us, “When you have found the truth for yourself, and when you are satisfied that it is Christ's truth,-that truth which the Scriptures set forth,-then get a firm hold upon it, grasp it, keep it in your heart, never let it go.”

St. Paul speaks as one who knew what the hearts of all Christians are. He knew that our grasp of the Gospel, at our best, is very cold, that our love soon waxes feeble, that our faith soon wavers,-that our zeal soon flags,-that familiarity with Christ's truth often brings with it a species of contempt,-that, like Israel, we are apt to be discouraged by the length of our journey,-and, like Peter, ready to sleep one moment and fight the next,-but, like Peter, not ready to “watch and pray.” All this St. Paul remembered, and, like a faithful watchman, he cries, by the Holy Ghost, “Hold fast that which is good.”

He speaks as if he foresaw by the Spirit that the good tidings of the Gospel would soon be corrupted, spoiled, and plucked away from the Church at Thessalonica. He speaks as one who foresaw that Satan and all his agents would labour hard to cast down Christ's truth. He writes as though he would forewarn men of this danger, and he cries, “Hold fast that which is good.”

The advice is always needed,-needed as long as the world stands. There is a tendency to decay in the very best of human institutions. The best visible Church of Christ is not free from a liability to degenerate. It is made up of fallible men. There is always in it a tendency to leave its first love. We see the leaven of evil creeping into many a Church, even in the Apostle's time. There were evils in the Corinthian Church, evils in the Ephesian Church, evils in the Galatian Church. All these things are meant to be beacons in these latter times. All show the great necessity laid upon the Church to remember the Apostle's words: “Hold fast that which is good.”

Many Churches of Christ since then have fallen away for the want of remembering this principle. Their ministers and members forgot that Satan is always labouring to bring in false doctrine. They forgot that he can transform himself into an angel of light,-that he can make darkness appear light, and light darkness, truth appear falsehood, and falsehood truth. If he cannot destroy Christianity, he ever tries to spoil it. If he cannot prevent the form of godliness, he endeavours to rob Churches of the power. No Church is ever safe that forgets these things, and does not bear in mind the Apostle's injunction: “Hold fast that which is good.”

If ever there was a time in the world when Churches were put upon their trial, whether they would hold fast the truth or not, that time is the present time, and those Churches are the Protestant Churches of our own land. Popery, that old enemy of our nation, is coming in upon us in this day like a flood. We are assaulted by open enemies without, and betrayed continually by false friends within. The number of Roman Catholic churches, and chapels, and schools, and conventual and monastic establishments, is continually increasing around us. Already the clergy of the Church of Rome are using great swelling words about things to come, and boasting that, sooner or later, England shall once more be brought back to the orbit from whence she fell, and take her place in the Catholic system. Surely now or never, we ought all of us to awake, and “Hold fast that which is good.”

Perhaps we supposed, some of us, in our blindness, that the power of the Church of Rome was ended. We dreamed, in our folly, that the Reformation had ended the Popish controversy, and that if Romanism did survive, Romanism was altogether changed. If we did think so, we have lived to learn that we made a most grievous mistake. Rome never changes. It is her boast that she is always the same. The snake is not killed. He was scotched at the time of the Reformation, but was not destroyed. The Romish Antichrist is not dead. He was cast down for a little season, like the fabled giant buried under Aetna, but his deadly wound is healed, the grave is opening once more, and Antichrist is coming forth. The unclean spirit of Popery is not laid in his own place. Rather he seems to say, “My house in England is now swept and garnished for me; let me return to the place from whence I came forth.”

And the question is now, whether we are going to abide quietly, sit still, and fold our hands, and do nothing to resist the assault. Are we really men of understanding of the times? Do we know the day of our visitation? Surely this is a crisis in the history of our Churches and of our land. It is a time which will soon prove whether we know the value of our privileges, or whether, like Amalek, “the first of the nations,” our “latter end shall be that we perish for ever.” It is a time which will soon prove whether we intend to allow our candlestick to be removed, or to repent, and do our first works, lest any man should take our crown. If we love the open Bible,-if we love the preaching of the Gospel,-if we love the privilege of reading that Bible, no man letting or hindering us, and the

opportunity of hearing that Gospel, no man forbidding us, if we love civil liberty,-if we love religious liberty,-if these things are precious to our souls, we must make up our minds to “hold fast,” lest by and by we lose all.

If we mean to “hold fast,” every parish, every congregation, every Christian man, and every Christian woman, must do their part in contending for the truth. Each one of us should work, and pray, and labour as if the preservation of the pure Gospel depended upon himself or herself, and upon no one else at all. The Bishops must not leave the matter to the priests, nor the priests leave the matter to the Bishops. The clergy must not leave the matter to the laity, nor the laity to the clergy. The Parliament must not leave the matter to the country, nor the country to the Parliament. The rich must not leave the matter to the poor, nor the poor to the rich. We must all work. Every living soul has a sphere of influence. Let him see to it that he fills it. Every living soul can throw some weight into the scale of the Gospel. Let him see to it that he casts it in. Let every one know his own individual responsibility in this matter; and all, by God's help, will be well.

If we would “hold fast” that which is good, we must never tolerate or countenance any doctrine which is not the pure doctrine of Christ's Gospel. There is a hatred which is downright charity,-that is, the hatred of erroneous doctrine. There is an intolerance which is downright praiseworthy,-that is, the intolerance of false teaching in the pulpit. Who would ever think of tolerating a little poison given to him day by day? If men come among us who do not preach “all the counsel of God,” who do not preach of Christ, and sin, and holiness, of ruin, and redemption, and regeneration, and do not preach of these things in a Scriptural way, we ought to cease to hear them. We ought to act upon the injunction given by the Holy Ghost in the Old Testament: “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction which causes to err from the words of knowledge.” (Proverbs 19:27) We ought to carry out the spirit shown by the Apostle Paul, in Galatians 1:8 : “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.” If we can bear to hear Christ's truth mangled or adulterated,-and can see no harm in listening to that which is another Gospel,-and can sit at ease while sham Christianity is poured into our ears,-and can go home comfortably afterwards, and not burn with holy indignation,-if this be the case, there is little chance of our ever doing much to resist Rome. If we are content to hear Jesus Christ not put in His rightful place, we are not men and women who are likely to do Christ much service, or fight a good fight on His side. He that is not zealous against error, is not likely to be zealous for truth.

If we would hold fast the truth, we must be ready to unite with all who hold the truth, and love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We must be ready to lay aside all minor questions as things of subordinate importance. Establishment or no Establishment, Liturgy or no Liturgy, surplice or no surplice, Bishops or Presbyters,-all these points of difference, however important they may be in their place and in their proportion,-all ought to be regarded as subordinate questions. I ask no man to give up his private opinions about them. I wish no man to do violence to his conscience. All I say is, that these questions are wood, hay, and stubble, when the very foundations of the faith are in danger. The Philistines are upon us. Can we make common cause against them, or can we not? This is the one point for our consideration. Surely it is not right to say that we expect to spend eternity with men in heaven, and yet cannot work for a few years with them in this world. It is nonsense to talk of alliance and union, if there is to be no co-operation. The presence of a common foe ought to sink minor differences. We must hold together, if we mean to “hold fast that

which is good.”

Some men may say, “This is very troublesome.” Some may say, “Why not sit still and be quiet?” Some may say, “Oh, that horrid controversy! What need is there for all this trouble? Why should we care so much about these points of difference?” I ask, what good thing was ever got, or ever kept, without trouble? Gold does not lie in English corn-fields, but at the bottom of Californian rivers, and Australian quartz reefs. Pearls do not grow on English hedges, but deep down in Indian seas. Difficulties are never overcome without struggles. Mountains are seldom climbed without fatigue. Oceans are not crossed without tossings on the waves. Peace is seldom obtained without war. And Christ's truth is seldom made a nation's property, and kept a nation's property, without pains, without struggles, and without trouble.

Let the man who talks of “trouble” tell us where we should be at this day, if our forefathers had not taken some trouble? Where would be the Gospel in England, if martyrs had not given their bodies to be burned? Who shall estimate our debt to Cranmer, Latimer, Hooper, Ridley, and Taylor, and their brethren? They “held fast that which is good.” They would not give up one jot of Christ's truth. They counted not their lives dear for the Gospel's sake. They laboured and travailed, and we have entered into their labours. Shame upon us, if we will not take a little trouble to keep with us what they so nobly won! Trouble or no trouble, pains or no pains,-controversy or no controversy,-one thing is very sure, that nothing but Christ's Gospel will ever do good to our own souls. Nothing else will maintain our Churches. Nothing else will ever bring down God's blessing upon our land. If, therefore, we love our own souls, or if we love our country's prosperity, or if we love to keep our Churches standing, we must remember the Apostle's words, and “hold fast” firmly the Gospel, and refuse to let it go.

I have set forth in plain language two things. One is the right, the duty, and necessity of private judgment. The other is the duty and necessity of keeping firm hold upon truth.-It only remains to apply these things to the individual consciences of my readers, by a few concluding words. (1) For one thing, if it be our duty to “prove all things,” let me beseech and exhort all English Churchmen to arm themselves with a thorough knowledge of the written Word of God. Let us read our Bibles regularly, and become familiar with their contents. Let us prove all religious teaching, when it is brought before us, by the Bible. A little knowledge of the Bible will not suffice. A man must know his Bible well, if he is to prove religion by it; and he must read it regularly, if he would know it well. There is no royal road to a knowledge of the Bible. There must be patient, daily, systematic reading of the Book, or the Book will not be known. As one said quaintly, but most truly, “Justification may be by faith, but a knowledge of the Bible comes only by works.” The devil can quote Scripture. He could go to our Lord and quote a text when he wished to tempt Him. A man must be able to say, when he hears Scripture falsely quoted, perverted, and misapplied, “It is written again,” lest he be deceived. Let a man neglect his Bible, and I see nothing to prevent his becoming a Roman Catholic, an Arian, a Socinian, a Jew, or a Turk, if a plausible advocate of any of these false systems shall happen to meet him.

(2) For another thing, if it be right to “prove all things,” let us take special care to try every Roman Catholic doctrine, by whomsoever put forward, by the written Word of God. Let us believe nothing, however speciously advanced,-believe nothing, with whatever weight of authority brought forward,-believe nothing, though supported by all the Fathers,-believe nothing, except it can be

proved to us out of the Scripture. The Bible alone is infallible. That alone is light. That alone is God's measure of truth and falsehood. “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” The New Zealander's answer to the Romish priests when they first went among them, was an answer never to be forgotten. They heard these priests urge upon them the worship of the Virgin Mary. They heard them recommend prayer to the dead saints, the use of images, the mass and the confessional. They heard them speak of the authority of the Church of Rome, the supremacy of the Pope, the antiquity of the Romish Communion. They knew the Bible, and heard all this calmly, and gave one simple but memorable answer: “It cannot be true, because it is not in the Book.” All the learning in the world could never have supplied a better answer than that. Latimer, or Knox, or Owen, could never have made a more crushing reply. Let this be our rule when we are attacked by Romanists, or semi-Romanists; let us hold fast the sword of the Spirit; and say, in reply to all their arguments, “It cannot be true, because it is not in the Book.”

(3) Last of all, if it be right to “hold fast that which is good,” let us make sure that we have each laid hold personally upon Christ's truth for ourselves. It will not save us to know all controversies, and to be able to detect everything which is false. Head knowledge will never bring us to heaven. It will not save us to be able to argue and reason with Roman Catholics, or to detect the errors of Popes' Bulls, or Pastoral Letters. Let us see that we each lay hold upon Jesus Christ for ourselves, by our own personal faith. Let us see to it that we each flee for refuge, and lay hold upon the hope set before us in His glorious Gospel. Let us do this, and all shall be well with us, whatever else may go ill. Let us do this, and then all things are ours. The Church may fail. The State may go to ruin. The foundations of all establishments may be shaken. The enemies of truth may for a season prevail. But as for us, all shall be well. We shall have in this world peace, and in the world which is to come, life everlasting; for we shall have Christ, and having Him, we have all. This is real “good,” lasting good, good in sickness, good in health, good in life, good in death, good in time, and good in eternity. All other things are but uncertain. They all wear out. They fade. They droop. They wither. They decay. The longer we have them the more worthless we find them, and the more satisfied we become, that everything here below is “vanity and vexation of spirit.” But as for hope in Christ, that is always good. The longer we use it the better it seems. The more we wear it in our hearts the brighter it will look. It is good when we first have it. It is better far when we grow older. It is better still in the day of trial, and the hour of death. And it will prove best of all in the day of judgment.

FOOTNOTE

1 The people of God are called to try the truth, to judge between good and ill, between light and darkness. God hath made them the promise of His Spirit, and hath left unto them His Word. They of Berea, when they heard the preaching of Paul, searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so as he taught them, and many of them believed. So do you: give heed to instruction, and yet receive not all things without proof and trial that they are not contrary to the wholesome doctrine of the Word of God.”-Bishop Jewell, author of the “Apology of the Church of England.” 1583.

2 When the Genevan Council found Servetus guilty and sentenced him to be burnt alive at the stake, just as the Roman Catholic Church had already done in his absence through his escape from them, it was Calvin alone who pleaded to mitigate the severity of that sentence to one of the

sword. [Editor, 2003AD]

Regeneration

(chapter taken from)

KNOTS UNTIED.

BEING

PLAIN STATEMENTS ON DISPUTED POINTS IN RELIGION,

FROM THE

STANDPOINT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCHMAN.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.

Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels," etc.,

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CHAPTER VI

REGENERATION. THE subject of Regeneration is a most important one at any time. Those words of our Lord Jesus Christ to Nicodemus are very solemn: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) The world has gone through many changes since those words were spoken. Eighteen hundred years have passed away. Empires and kingdoms have risen and fallen. Great men and wise men have lived, laboured, written, and died. But there stands the rule of the Lord Jesus unaltered and unchanged. And there it will stand, till heaven and earth will pass away: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

But the subject is one which is peculiarly important to members of the Church of England in the present day. Things have happened of late years which have drawn special attention to it. Men's minds are full of it, and men's eyes are fixed on it. Regeneration has been discussed in newspapers. Regeneration has been talked of in private society. Regeneration has been argued about in courts of law. Surely it is a time when every true Churchman should examine himself

upon the subject, and make sure that his views are sound. It is a time when we should not halt between two opinions. We should try to know what we hold. We should be ready to give a reason for our belief. When truth is assailed, those who love truth should grasp it more firmly than ever.

I propose in this paper to attempt three things:

I. First, to explain what Regeneration, or being born again, means.

II. Secondly, to show the necessity of Regeneration.

III. Thirdly, to point out the marks and evidences of Regeneration.

If I can make these three points clear, I believe I may have done my readers a great service.

I. Let me then, first of all, explain what Regeneration or being born again means.

Regeneration means, that change of heart and nature which a man goes through when he becomes a true Christian.

I think there can be no question that there is an immense difference among those who profess and call themselves Christians. Beyond all dispute there are always two classes in the outward Church: the class of those who are Christian in name and form only, and the class of those who are Christians in deed and in truth. All were not Israel who were called Israel, and all are not Christians who are called Christians. “In the visible Church,” says an Article of the Church of England, “the evil be ever mingled with the good.”

Some, as the Thirty-nine Articles say, are “wicked and void of a lively faith;” others, as another Article says, are made like the image of God's only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, and walk religiously in good works. Some worship God as a mere form, and some in spirit and in truth. Some give their hearts to God, and some give them to the world. Some believe the Bible, and live as if they believed it: others do not. Some feel their sins and mourn over them: others do not. Some love Christ, trust in Him, and serve Him: others do not. In short, as Scripture says, some walk in the narrow way, some in the broad; some are the good fish of the Gospel net, some are the bad; some are the wheat in Christ's field, and some are the tares.1

I think no man with his eyes open can fail to see all this, both in the Bible, and in the world around him. Whatever he may think about the subject I am writing of, he cannot possibly deny that this difference exists.

Now what is the explanation of the difference? I answer unhesitatingly, Regeneration, or being born again. I answer that true Christians are what they are, because they are regenerate, and formal Christians are what they are, because they are not regenerate. The heart of the Christian in deed has been changed. The heart of the Christian in name only, has not been changed. The change of heart makes the whole difference.2

This change of heart is spoken of continually in the Bible, under various emblems and figures.

Ezekiel calls it “a taking away the stony heart, and giving an heart of flesh;”-“a giving a new heart, and putting within us a new spirit.” (Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26)

The Apostle John sometimes calls it being “born of God,”-sometimes being “born again,”-sometimes being “born of the Spirit” (John 1:13; John 3:3, John 3:6)

The Apostle Peter, in the Acts, calls it “repenting and being converted.” (Acts 3:19)

The Epistle to the Romans speaks of it as a “being alive from the dead.” (Romans 6:13)

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians calls it “being a new creature: old things have passed away, and all things become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of it as a resurrection together with Christ: “You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1); as “a putting off the old man, which is corrupt,-being renewed in the spirit of our mind,-and putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephesians 4:22, Ephesians 4:24)

The Epistle to the Colossians calls it “a putting off the old man with his deeds; and putting on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” (Colossians 3:9-10)

The Epistle to Titus calls it “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus 3:5)

The first Epistle of Peter speaks of it as “a being called out of darkness into God's marvellous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

And the second Epistle, as “being made partakers of the Divine nature.” (2 Peter 1:4)

The First Epistle of John calls it “a passing from death to life.” (1 John 3:14)

All these expressions come to the same thing in the end. They are all the same truth, only viewed from different sides. And all have one and the same meaning. They describe a great radical change of heart and nature,-a thorough alteration and transformation of the whole inner man,-a participation in the resurrection life of Christ; or, to borrow the words of the Church of England Catechism, “A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.”3

This change of heart in a true Christian is thorough and complete, so complete, that no word could be chosen more fitting to express it than the word “Regeneration,” or “new birth.” Doubtless it is no outward, bodily alteration, but undoubtedly it is an entire alteration of the inner man. It adds no new faculties to a man's mind, but it certainly gives an entirely new bent and bias to all his old ones. His will is so new, his tastes so new, his opinions so new, his views of sin, the world, the Bible, and Christ so new, that he is to all intents and purposes a new man. The change seems to bring a new being into existence. It may well be called being “born again.”

This change is not always given to believers at the same time in their lives. Some are born again when they are infants, and seem, like Jeremiah and John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Ghost even from their mother's womb. Some few are born again in old age. The great majority of true Christians probably are born again after they grow up. A vast multitude of persons, it is to be feared, go down to the grave without having been born again at all.

This change of heart does not always begin in the same way in those who go through it after they have grown up. With some, like the Apostle Paul and the jailer at Philippi, it is a sudden and a violent change, attended with much distress of mind. With others, like Lydia of Thyatira, it is more gentle and gradual: their winter becomes spring almost without their knowing how. With some the change is brought about by the Spirit working through afflictions, or providential visitations. With others, and probably the greater number of true Christians, the Word of God preached or written, is the means of effecting it.4

This change is one which can only be known and discerned by its effects. Its beginnings are a hidden and secret thing. We cannot see them. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us this most plainly: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8) Would we know if we are regenerate? We must try the question, by examining what we know of the effects of Regeneration. Those effects are always the same. The ways by which true Christians are led, in passing through their great change, are certainly various. But the state of heart and soul into which they are brought at last, is always the same. Ask them what they think of sin, Christ, holiness, the world, the Bible, and prayer, and you will find them all of one mind.

This change is one which no man can give to himself, nor yet to another. It would be as reasonable to expect the dead to raise themselves, or to require an artist to give a marble statue life. The sons of God are born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:13) Sometimes the change is ascribed to God the Father: “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.” (1 Peter 1:3) Sometimes it is ascribed to God the Son: “The Son quickeneth whom He will.” (John 3:21) “If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him.” (1 John 2:29) Sometimes it is ascribed to the Spirit,-and He in fact is the great agent by whom it is always effected: “That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.” (John 3:6) But man has no power to work the change. It is something far, far beyond his reach. “The condition of man after the fall of Adam,” says the Tenth Article of' the Church of England, “is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God.” No minister on earth can convey grace to any one of his congregation at his discretion. He may preach as truly and faithfully as Paul or Apollos; but God must “give the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6) He may baptize with water in the name of the Trinity; but unless the Holy Ghost accompanies and blesses the ordinance, there is no death unto sin, and no new birth unto righteousness. Jesus alone, the great Head of the Church, can baptize with the Holy Ghost. Blessed and happy are they, who have the inward baptism, as well as the outward.5

I believe the foregoing account of Regeneration to be Scriptural and correct. It is that change of heart which is the distinguishing mark of a true Christian man, the invariable companion of a justifying faith in Christ, the inseparable consequence of vital union with Him, and the root and beginning of inward sanctification. I ask my readers to ponder it well before they go any further. It is of the utmost importance that our views should be clear upon this point,-What Regeneration really is.

I know well that many will not allow that Regeneration is what I have described it to be. They will think the statement I have made, by way of definition, much too strong. Some hold that

Regeneration only means admission into a state of ecclesiastical privileges, by being made a member of the Church, but does not mean a change of heart. Some tell us that a regenerate man has a certain power within him which enables him to repent and believe if he thinks fit, but that he still needs a further change in order to make him a true Christian. Some say there is a difference between Regeneration and being born again. Others say there is a difference between being born again and conversion.

To all this I have one simple reply, and that is, I can find no such Regeneration spoken of anywhere in the Bible. A Regeneration which only means admission into a state of ecclesiastical privilege may be ancient and primitive for anything I know. But something more than this is wanted. A few plain texts of Scripture are needed; and these texts have yet to be found.

Such a notion of Regeneration is utterly inconsistent with that which St. John gives us in his first Epistle. It renders it necessary to invent the awkward theory that there are two Regenerations, and is thus eminently calculated to confuse the minds of unlearned people, and introduce false doctrine. It is a notion which seems not to answer to the solemnity with which our Lord introduces the subject to Nicodemus. When He said, “Verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” did He only mean except a man be admitted to a state of ecclesiastical privilege? Surely He meant more than this. Such a Regeneration a man might have, like Simon Magus, and yet never be saved. Such a Regeneration he might never have, like the penitent thief, and yet see the kingdom of God. Surely He must have meant a change of heart. As to the notion that there is any distinction between being regenerate and being born again, it is one which will not bear examination. It is the general opinion of all who know Greek, that the two expressions mean one and the same thing.

To me, indeed, there seems to be much confusion of ideas, and indistinctness of apprehension in men's minds on this simple point,-what Regeneration really is,-and all arising from not simply adhering to the Word of God. That a man is admitted into a state of great privilege when he is made a member of a pure Church of Christ, I do not for an instant deny. That he is in a far better and more advantageous position for his soul, than if he did not belong to the Church, I make no question. That a wide door is set open before his soul, which is not set before the poor heathen, I can most clearly see. But I do not see that the Bible ever calls this Regeneration. And I cannot find a single text in Scripture which warrants the assumption that it is so. It is very important in theology to distinguish things that differ. Church privileges are one thing; Regeneration is another. I, for one, dare not confound them.6

I am quite aware that great and good men have clung to that low view of Regeneration, to which I have adverted.7 But when a doctrine of the everlasting Gospel is at stake, I can call no man master. The words of the old philosopher are never to be forgotten: “I love Plato, I love Socrates, but I love truth better than either.” I say unhesitatingly, that those who hold the view that there are two Regenerations, can bring forward no plain text in proof of it. I firmly believe that no plain reader of the Bible only would ever find this view there for himself; and that goes very far to make me suspect it is an idea of man's invention. The only Regeneration that I can see in Scripture is, not a change of state, but a change of heart. That is the view, I once more assert, which the Church Catechism takes when it speaks of the “death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness,” and on that view I take my stand.

The doctrine before us is one of vital importance. This is no matter of names, and words, and forms, about which I am writing. It is a thing that we must feel and know by experience, each for himself, if we are to be saved. Let us try to become acquainted with it. Let not the din and smoke of controversy draw off our attention from our own hearts. Are our hearts changed? Alas, it is poor work to wrangle, and argue, and dispute about Regeneration, if after all we know nothing about it within.

II. Let me show, in the second place, the necessity there is for our being regenerate, or born again.

That there is such a necessity is most plain from our Lord Jesus Christ's words in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel. Nothing can be more clear and positive than His language to Nicodemus: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again.” (John 3:3, John 3:7)

The reason of this necessity is the exceeding sinfulness and corruption of our natural hearts. The words of St. Paul to the Corinthians are literally accurate: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.” (1 Corinthians 2:14) Just as rivers flow downward, and sparks fly upward, and stones fall to the ground, so does a man's heart naturally incline to what is evil. We love our soul's enemies,-we dislike our soul's friends. We call good evil, and we call evil good. We take pleasure in ungodliness, we take no pleasure in Christ. We not only commit sin, but we also love sin. We not only need to be cleansed from the guilt of sin, but we also need to be delivered from its power. The natural tone, bias, and current of our minds must be completely altered. The image of God, which sin has blotted out, must be restored. The disorder and confusion which reigns within us must be put down. The first things must no longer be last, and the last first. The Spirit must let in the light on our hearts, put everything in its right place, and create all things new.

It ought always to be remembered that there are two distinct things which the Lord Jesus Christ does for every sinner whom He undertakes to save. He washes him from his sins in His own blood, and gives him a free pardon:-this is his justification. He puts the Holy Spirit into his heart, and makes him an entirely new man:-this is his Regeneration.

The two things are both absolutely necessary to salvation. The change of heart is as necessary as the pardon; and the pardon is as necessary as the change. Without the pardon we have no right or title to heaven. Without the change we should not be meet and ready to enjoy heaven, even if we got there.

The two things are never separate. They are never found apart. Every justified man is also a regenerate man, and every regenerate man is also a justified man. When the Lord Jesus Christ gives a man remission of sins, He also gives him repentance. When He grants peace with God, He also grants “power to become a son of God.” There are two great standing maxims of the glorious Gospel, which ought never to be forgotten. One is: “He that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16) The other is: “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” (Romans 8:9)

The man who denies the universal necessity of Regeneration can know very little of the heart's corruption. He is blind indeed who fancies that pardon is all we want in order to get to heaven, and does not see that pardon without a change of heart would be a useless gift. Blessed be God that

both are freely offered to us in Christ's Gospel, and that Jesus is able and willing to give the one as well as the other!

Surely we must be aware that the vast majority of people in the world see nothing, feel nothing, and know nothing in religion as they ought. How and why is this, is not the present question. I only put it to the conscience of every reader of this volume,-Is it not the fact?

Tell them of the sinfulness of many things which they are doing continually; and what is generally the reply?-“They see no harm.”

Tell them of the awful peril in which their souls are,-of the shortness of time,-the nearness of eternity,-the uncertainty of life,-the reality of judgment. They feel no danger.

Tell them of their need of a Saviour,-mighty, loving, and Divine, and of the impossibility of being saved from hell, except by faith in Him. It all falls flat and dead on their ears. They see no such great barrier between themselves and heaven.

Tell them of holiness, and the high standard of living which the Bible requires. They cannot comprehend the need of such strictness. They see no use in being so very good.

There are thousands and tens of thousands of such people on every side of us. They will hear these things all their lives. They will even attend the ministry of the most striking preachers, and listen to the most powerful appeals to their consciences. And yet when you come to visit them on their death-beds, they are like men and women who never heard these things at all. They know nothing of the leading doctrines of the Gospel by experience. They can render no reason whatever of their own hope.

And why and wherefore is all this? What is the explanation?-What is the cause of such a state of things? It all comes from this,-that man naturally has no sense of spiritual things. In vain the sun of righteousness shines before him: the eyes of his soul are blind, and cannot see. In vain the music of Christ's invitations sound around him: the ears of his soul are deaf, and cannot hear it. In vain the wrath of God against sin is set forth: the perceptions of his soul are stopped up;-like the sleeping traveller, he does not perceive the coming storm. In vain the bread and water of life are offered to him: his soul is neither hungry for the one, nor thirsty for the other. In vain he is advised to flee to the Great Physician: his soul is unconscious of its disease;-why should he go? In vain you put a price into his hand to buy wisdom: the mind of his soul wanders,-he is like the lunatic, who calls straws a crown, and dust diamonds; he says, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” Alas, there is nothing so sad as the utter corruption of our nature! There is nothing so painful as the anatomy of a dead soul.

Now what does such a man need? He needs to be born again, and made a new creature. He needs a complete putting off the old man, and a complete putting on the new. We do not live our natural life till we are born into the world, and we do not live our spiritual life till we are born of the Spirit.

But we must furthermore be aware that the vast majority of people are utterly unfit to enjoy heaven in their present state. I state it as a great fact. Is it not so?

Look at the masses of men and women gathered together in our cities and towns, and observe them well. They are all dying creatures,-all immortal beings,-all going to the judgment-seat of Christ,-all certain to live for ever in heaven or in hell. But where is the slightest evidence that most of them are in the least degree meet and ready for heaven?

Look at the greater part of those who are called Christians, in every part throughout the land. Take any parish you please in town or country. Take that which you know best. What are the tastes and pleasures of the majority of the people who live there? What do they like best, when they have a choice? What do they enjoy most, when they can have their own way? Observe the manner in which they spend their Sundays. Mark how little delight they seem to feel in the Bible and prayer. Take notice of the low and earthly notions of pleasure and happiness which everywhere prevail, among young and old,-among rich and poor. Mark well these things,-and then think quietly over this question: “What would these people do in heaven?”

You and I, it may be said, know little about heaven. Our notions of heaven may be very dim and indistinct. But at all events, I suppose we are agreed in thinking that heaven is a very holy place,-that God is there,-and Christ is there,-and saints and angels are there,-that sin is not there in any shape,-and that nothing is said, thought, or done, which God does not like. Only let this be granted, and then I think there can be no doubt the great majority of people around us are as little fit for heaven as a bird for swimming beneath the sea, or a fish for living upon dry land.8

And what is it that they need in order to make them fit to enjoy heaven? They need to be regenerated and born again. It is not a little changing and outward amendment that they require. It is not merely the putting a restraint on raging passions and the quieting of unruly affections. All this is not enough. Old age,-the want of opportunity for indulgence, the fear of man, may produce all this. The tiger is still a tiger, even when he is chained, and the serpent is still a serpent, even when he lies motionless and coiled up. The alteration needed is far greater and deeper. Every one must have a new nature put within him; every one must be made a new creature; the fountain-head must be purified; the root must be set right; each one wants a new heart and a new will. The change required is not that of the snake when he casts his skin and yet remains a reptile still: it is the change of the caterpillar when he dies, and his crawling life ceases; but from his body rises the butterfly,-a new animal, with a new nature.

All this, and nothing less, is required. Well says the Homily of Good Works: “They be as much dead to God that lack faith as those are to the world that lack souls.”

The plain truth is, the vast proportion of professing Christians in the world have nothing whatever of Christianity except the name. The reality of Christianity, the graces, the experience, the faith, the hopes, the life, the conflict, the tastes, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness,-all these are things of which they know nothing at all. They need to be converted as truly as any among the Gentiles to whom Paul preached, and to be turned from idols, and renewed in the spirit of their minds as really, if not as literally. And one main part of the message which should be continually delivered to the greater portion of every congregation on earth is this: “Ye must be born again.” I write this down deliberately. I know it will sound dreadful and uncharitable in many ears. But I ask any one to take the New Testament in his hand, and see what it says is Christianity, and compare that with the ways of professing Christians, and then deny the truth of what I have written, if he can.

And now let every one who reads these pages remember this grand principle of Scriptural religion: “No salvation without Regeneration,-no spiritual life without a new birth,-no heaven without a new heart.”

Let us not think for a moment that the subject of this paper is a mere matter of controversy,-an empty question for learned men to argue about, but not one that concerns us. It concerns us deeply; it touches our own eternal interests, it is a thing that we must know for ourselves, feel for ourselves, and experience for ourselves, if we would ever be saved. No soul of man, woman, or child, will ever enter heaven without having been born again.9

And let us not think for a moment that this Regeneration is a change which people may go through after they are dead, though they never went through it while they were alive. Such a notion is absurd. Now or never is the only time to be saved. Now, in this world of toil and labour, and money-getting, and business,-now we must be prepared for heaven, if we are ever to be prepared at all. Now is the only time to be justified, now the only time to be sanctified, and now the only time to he “born again.” So sure as the Bible is true, the man who dies without these three things will only rise again at the last day to be lost for ever.

We may be saved and reach heaven without many things which men reckon of great importance,-without riches, without learning, without books, without worldly comforts, without health, without house, without lands, without friends;-but without Regeneration we shall never be saved at all. Without our natural birth we should never have lived and moved and read these pages on earth: without a new birth we shall never live and move in heaven. I bless God that the saints in glory will be a multitude that no man can number. I comfort myself with the thought that after all there will be “much people” in heaven. But this I know, and am persuaded of from God's Word, that of all who reach heaven there will not be one single individual who has not been born again.10

III. Let me, in the third place, point out the marks of being regenerate, or born again.

It is a most important thing to have clear and distinct views on this part of the subject we are considering. We have seen what Regeneration is, and why it is necessary to salvation. The next step is to find out the signs and evidences by which a man may know whether he is born again or not,-whether his heart has been changed by the Holy Spirit, or whether his change is yet to come.

Now these signs and evidences are laid down plainly for us in Scripture. God has not left us in ignorance on this point. He foresaw how some would torture themselves with doubts and questionings, and would never believe it was well with their souls. He foresaw how others would take it for granted they were “regenerate,” who had no right to do so at all. He has therefore mercifully provided us with a test and gauge of our spiritual condition, in the First Epistle general of St. John. There he has written for our learning what the regenerate man is, and what the regenerate man does,-his ways, his habits, his manner of life, his faith, his experience. Every one who wishes to possess the key to a right understanding of this subject should thoroughly study the First Epistle of St. John.

I invite the reader's particular attention to these marks and evidences of Regeneration, while I try to set them forth in order. I might easily mention other evidences besides those I am about to mention. But I will not do so. I would rather confine myself to the First Epistle of St. John, because

of the peculiar explicitness of its statements about the man that is born of God. He that hath an ear let him hear what the beloved Apostle says about the marks of Regeneration.

(1) First of all, St. John says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;” and again, “Whosoever is born of God sinneth not.” (1 John 3:9; 1 John 5:18)

A regenerate man does not commit sin as a habit. He no longer sins with his heart and will, and whole inclination, as an unregenerate man does. There was probably a time when he did not think whether his actions were sinful or not, and never felt grieved after doing evil. There was no quarrel between him and sin;-they were friends. Now he hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, counts it his greatest plague, groans under the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be delivered from it altogether. In one word, sin no longer pleases him, nor is even a matter of indifference: it has become the abominable thing which he hates. He cannot prevent it dwelling within him. “If he said he had no sin, there would be no truth in him” (1 John 1:8); but he can say that he cordially abhors it, and the great desire of his soul is not to commit sin at all. He cannot prevent bad thoughts arising within him, and shortcomings, omissions, and defects appearing both in his words and actions. He knows, as St. James says, that “in many things we offend all.” (James 3:2) But he can say truly, and as in the sight of God, that these things are a daily grief and sorrow to him, and that his whole nature does not consent unto them, as that of the unregenerate man does.

(2) Secondly, St. John says, “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” (1 John 5:1)

A regenerate man believes that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour by whom his soul can be pardoned and justified, that He is the Divine Person appointed and anointed by God the Father for this very purpose, and that beside Him there is no Saviour at all. In himself he sees nothing but unworthiness, but in Christ he sees ground for the fullest confidence, and trusting in Him he believes that his sins are all forgiven, and his iniquities all put away. He believes that for the sake of Christ's finished work and death upon the cross he is reckoned righteous in God's sight, and may look forward to death and judgment without alarm. He may have his fears and doubts. He may sometimes tell you he feels as if he had no faith at all. But ask him whether he is willing to trust in anything instead of Christ, and see what he will say. Ask him whether he will rest his hopes of eternal life on his own goodness, his own amendments, his prayers, his minister, his doings in church and out of church, either in whole or in part, and see what he will reply. Ask him whether he will give up Christ, and place his confidence in any other way of salvation. Depend upon it, he would say, that though he does feel weak and bad, he would not give up Christ for all the world. Depend upon it, he would say he found a preciousness in Christ, a suitableness to his own soul in Christ, that he found nowhere else, and that he must cling to Him.

(3) Thirdly, St. John says, “Every one that doeth righteousness is born of God.” (1 John 2:29)

The regenerate man is a holy man. He endeavours to live according to God's will, to do the things that please God, to avoid the things that God hates. His aim and desire is to love God with heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to love his neighbour as himself. His wish is to be continually looking to Christ as his example as well as his Saviour, and to show himself Christ's friend by doing whatsoever Christ commands. No doubt he is not perfect. None will tell you that

sooner than himself. He groans under the burden of indwelling corruption cleaving to him. He finds an evil principle within him constantly warring against grace, and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence. In spite of all shortcomings, the average bent and bias of his way is holy,-his doings holy, his tastes holy,-and his habits holy,-in spite of all his swerving and turning aside, like a ship beating up against a contrary wind, the general course of his life is in one direction, toward God and for God. And though he may sometimes feel so low that he questions whether he is a Christian at all, in his calmer moments he will generally be able to say with old John Newton “I am not what I ought to be; I am not what I want to be; I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.”11

(4) Fourthly, St. John says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” (1 John 3:14)

A regenerate man has a special love for all true disciples of Christ. Like his Father in heaven, he loves all men with a great general love, but he has a special love for them who are of one mind with himself. Like his Lord and Saviour, he loves the worst of sinners, and could weep over them; but he has a peculiar love for those who are believers. He is never so much at home as when he is in their company: he is never so happy as when he is among the saints and the excellent of the earth. Others may value learning, or cleverness, or agreeableness, or riches, or rank, in the society they choose. The regenerate man values grace. Those who have most grace, and are most like Christ, are those he most loves. He feels that they are members of the same family with himself, -his brethren, his sisters, children of the same Father. He feels that they are fellow-soldiers, fighting under the same captain, warring against the same enemy. He feels that they are his fellow-travellers, journeying along the same road, tried by the same difficulties, and soon about to rest with him in the same eternal home. He understands them, and they understand him. There is a kind of spiritual freemasonry between them. He and they may be very different in many ways,-in rank, in station, in wealth. What matter? They are Jesus Christ's people: they are His Father's sons and daughters. Then he cannot help loving them.

(5) Fifthly, St. John says, “Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world.” (1 John 5:4)

A regenerate man does not make the world's opinion his rule of right and wrong. He does not mind going against the stream of the world's ways, notions, and customs. “What will men say?” is no longer a turning point with him. He overcomes the love of the world. He finds no pleasure in things which most around him call happiness. He cannot enjoy their enjoyments,-they weary him,-they appear to him vain, unprofitable, and unworthy of an immortal being.-He overcomes the fear of the world. He is content to do many things which all around him think unnecessary, to say the least. They blame him: it does not move him. They ridicule him: he does not give way. He loves the praise of God more than the praise of man. He fears offending Him more than giving offence to man. He has counted the cost. He has taken his stand. It is a small thing with him now, whether he is blamed or praised. His eye is upon Him that is invisible. Him he is resolved to follow whithersoever He goeth. It may be necessary in this following to come out from the world and be separate. The regenerate man will not shrink from doing so. Tell him that he is unlike other people, that his views are not the views of society generally, and that he is making himself singular and peculiar. You will not shake him. He is no longer the servant of fashion and custom. To please the

world is quite a secondary consideration with him. His first aim is to please God.

(6) Sixthly, St. John says, “He that is begotten of God keepeth himself.” (1 John 5:18)

A regenerate man is very careful of his own soul. He endeavours not only to keep clear of sin, but also to keep clear of everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps. He feels that evil communications corrupt the heart, and that evil is far more catching than good, just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the employment of his time: his chief desire about it is to spend it profitably. He is careful about the books he reads: he fears getting his mind poisoned by mischievous writings. He is careful about the friendships he forms: it is not enough for him that people are kind and amiable and good-natured,-all this is very well; but will they do good to his soul? He is careful over his own daily habits and behaviour: he tries to recollect that his own heart is deceitful, that the world is full of wickedness, that the devil is always labouring to do him harm, and therefore he would fain be always on his guard. He desires to live like a soldier in an enemy's country, to wear his armour continually, and to be prepared for temptation. He finds by experience that his soul is ever among enemies, and he studies to be a watchful, humble, prayerful man.

Such are the six great marks of Regeneration, which God has given for our learning. Let every one who has gone so far with me, read them over with attention, and lay them to heart. I believe they were written with a view to settle the great question of the present day, and intended to prevent disputes. Once more, then, I ask the reader to mark and consider them.

I know there is a vast difference in the depth and distinctness of these marks among those who are “regenerate.” In some people they are faint, dim, feeble, and hardly to be discerned. You almost need a microscope to make them out. In others they are bold, sharp, clear, plain, and unmistakable, so that he who runs may read them. Some of these marks are more visible in some people, and others are more visible in others. It seldom happens that all are equally manifest in one and the same soul. All this I am quite ready to allow.

But still, after every allowance, here we find boldly painted the six marks of being born of God. Here are certain positive things laid down by St. John as parts of the regenerate man's character, as plainly and distinctly as the features of a man's face. Here is an inspired Apostle writing one of the last general Epistles to the Church of Christ, telling us that a man born of God does not commit sin,-believes that Jesus is the Christ,-doeth righteousness,-loves the brethren,-overcomes the world, and keepeth himself. And more than once in the very same Epistle, when these marks are mentioned, the Apostle tells us that he who has not this or that mark is “not of God.” I ask the reader to observe all this.

Now what shall we say to these things? What they can say who hold that Regeneration is only an admission to outward Church privileges, I am sure I do not know. For myself, I say boldly, I can only come to one conclusion. That conclusion is, that those persons only are “regenerate” who have these six marks about them, and that all men and women who have not these marks are not “regenerate,” are not born again. And I firmly believe that this is the conclusion to which the Apostle wished us to come.

I commend what I have been saying to the serious consideration of all my readers. I believe that I have said nothing but what is God's truth. We live in a day of gross darkness on the subject of

Regeneration. Thousands are darkening God's counsel by confounding baptism and Regeneration. Let us beware of this. Let us keep the two subjects separate in our mind. Let us get clear views about Regeneration first of all, and then we are not likely to fall into mistakes about baptism. And when we have got clear views let us hold them fast, and never let them go.

FOOTNOTE

1 “There be two manner of men. Some there be that be not justified, nor regenerated, nor yet in the state of salvation; that is to say, not God's servants. They lack the renovation or regeneration; they be not come yet to Christ.”-Bishop Latimer's Sermons. 1552.

2 The reader must not suppose there is anything new or modern in this statement. It would be en endless work to quote passages from standard divines of the Church of England, in which the words “regenerate” and “unregenerate” are used to describe the difference which I have been speaking of. The pious and godly members of the Church are called “the regenerate,”-the worldly and ungodly are called “the unregenerate.” I think no one, well read in English divinity, can question this for a moment.

3 “All these expressions set forth the same work of grace upon the heart, though they may be understood under different notions.”-Bishop Hopkins. 1670.

4 “The preaching of the Word is the great means which God hath appointed for Regeneration: 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' (Romans 10:17) When God first created man, it is said that 'He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' but when God new creates man, He breathes into his ears. This is the Word that raiseth the dead, calling them out of the grave; this is that Word that opens the eyes of the blind, that turns the hearts of the disobedient and rebellious. And though wicked and profane men scoff at preaching, and count all ministers' words, and God's words too, but so much wind, yet they are such wind, believe it, as is able to tear rocks and rend mountains; such wind as, if ever they are saved, must shake and overturn the foundations of all their carnal confidence and presumption. Be exhorted therefore more to prize and more to frequent the preaching of the Word.”-Bishop Hopkins. 1670.

5 “The Scripture carries it, that no more than a child can beget itself, or a dead man quicken himself, or a nonentity create itself; no more can any carnal man regenerate himself, or work true saving grace in his own soul.-Bishop Hopkins. 1670.

“There are two kinds of baptism, and both necessary: the one interior, which is the cleansing of the heart, the drawing of the Father, the operation of the Holy Ghost; and this baptism is when he believeth and trusteth that Christ is the only method of his salvation.”-Bishop Hooper. 1547.

“It is on all parts gladly confessed, that there may be, in divers cases, life by virtue of inward baptism, where outward is not found.”-Richard Hooker.

“There is a baptism of the Spirit as of water.”-Bishop Jeremy Taylor. 1660.

6 “The mixture of those things by speech, which by nature are divided, is the mother of all error.”-Hooker. 1595.

7 For instance, Bishop Davenant and Bishop Hopkins frequently speak of a “Sacramental Regeneration,” when they are handling the subject of baptism, as a thing entirely distinct from Spiritual Regeneration. The general tenor of their writings is to speak of the godly as the regenerate, and the ungodly as the unregenerate. But with every feeling of respect for two such good men, the question yet remains,-What Scripture warrant have we for saying there are two Regenerations? I answer unhesitatingly,-We have none at all.

8 “Tell me, thou that in holy duties grudgest at every word that is spoken; that thinkest every summons to the public worship as unpleasant as the sound of thy passing bell; that sayest, 'When will the Sabbath be gone, and the ordinances be over?' What wilt thou do in heaven! What shall such an unholy heart do there, where a Sabbath shall be as long as eternity itself; where there shall be nothing but holy duties; and where there shall not be a spare minute, so much as for a vain thought, or an idle word? What wilt thou do in heaven, where whatsoever thou shalt hear, see, or converse with, all is holy? And by how much more perfect the holiness of heaven is than that of the saints on earth, by so much the more irksome and intolerable would it be to wicked men,-for if they cannot endure the weak light of a star, how will they be able to endure the dazzling light of the sun itself?”-Bishop Hopkins.

9 “Make sure to yourselves this great change. It is no notion that I have now preached unto you. Your nature and your lives must be changed, or, believe it, you will be found at the last day under the wrath of God, For God will not change or alter the word that is gone out of His mouth. He hath said it: Christ, who is the truth and word of God, hath pronounced it,-that without the new birth, or regeneration, no man shall inherit the kingdom of God.”-Bishop Hopkins. 1670.

10 “Regeneration, or the new birth, is of absolute necessity unto eternal life. There is no other change simply necessary, but only this. If thou art poor, thou mayest so continue, and yet be saved. If thou art despised, thou mayest so continue, and yet be saved. If thou art unlearned, thou mayest so continue, and yet be saved. Only one change is necessary. If thou art wicked and ungodly, and continuest so, Christ, Who hath the keys of heaven, Who shutteth and no man openeth, hath Himself doomed thee, that thou shalt in no wise enter into the kingdom of God.”-Bishop Hopkins. 1670.

11 “Let none conclude that they have no grace because they have many imperfections in their obedience. Thy grace maybe very weak and imperfect, and yet thou mayest be truly born again to God, and be a genuine son and heir of heaven.” Hopkins. 1670.

Remember Lot!

REMEMBER LOT!

"He lingered."- Genesis 19:16.

_____ BY THE RIGHT REV.

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LONDON: S. W. PARTRIDGE & CO.

_____ "HE LINGERED."

Genesis 19:16. WHO is this man that lingered?-Lot, the nephew of faithful Abraham. And when did he linger?-The very morning Sodom was to be destroyed. And where did he linger?-Within the walls of Sodom itself. And before whom did he linger?-Under the eyes of the two angels, who were sent to bring him out of the city.

Reader, the words are solemn, and full of food for thought. I trust they will make you think. Who knows but they are the very words your soul requires? The voice of the Lord Jesus commands you to "remember Lot's wife." (Luke 17:32) The voice of one of His ministers invites you this day to remember Lot.

Let me try to show you,-

I. What Lot was himself:

II. What the text already quoted tells you of him:

III. What reasons may account for his lingering:

IV. What kind of fruit his lingering brought forth.

I. What was Lot?

This is a most important point. If I leave it unnoticed, I shall perhaps miss that class of professing Christians I want especially to benefit. You would perhaps say, after reading this paper, "Ah, Lot was a poor, dark creature,-an unconverted man,-a child of this world!-no wonder he lingered."

But mark now what I say. Lot was nothing of the kind. Lot was a true believer,-a real child of God,-a justified soul,-a righteous man.

Has any one of you grace in his heart?-So also had Lot.

Has any one of you a hope of salvation?-So also had Lot.

Is any one of you a "new creature"?-So also was Lot.

Is any one of you a traveller in the narrow way which leads unto life?-So also was Lot.

Do not think this is only my private opinion,-a mere arbitrary fancy of my own,-a notion unsupported by Scripture. Do not suppose I want you to believe it, merely because I say it. The Holy Ghost has placed the matter beyond controversy, by calling him "just," and "righteous" (2 Peter 2:7-8), and has given us evidence of the grace that was in him.

One evidence is, that he lived in a wicked place, "seeing and hearing" evil all around him (2 Peter 2:8), and yet was not wicked himself. Now to be a Daniel in Babylon,-an Obadiah in Ahab's house,-an Abijah in Jeroboam's family,-a saint in Nero's court, and a righteous man in Sodom, a man must have the grace of God.

Another evidence is, that he "vexed his soul with the unlawful deeds" he beheld around him. (2 Peter 2:8) He was wounded, grieved, pained, and hurt at the sight of sin. This was feeling like holy David, who says, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not Thy word." "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law." (Psalms 119:136, Psalms 119:158) Nothing will account for this but the grace of God.

Another evidence is, that he "vexed his soul from day to day" with the unlawful deeds he saw (2 Peter 2:8) He did not at length become cool and lukewarm about sin, as many do. Familiarity and habit did not take off the fine edge of his feelings, as too often is the case. Many a man is shocked and startled at the first sight of wickedness, and yet becomes at last so accustomed to see it, that he views it with comparative unconcern. This is especially the case with those who live in towns and cities. But it was not so with Lot. And this is a great mark of the reality of his grace.

Such an one was Lot,-a just and righteous man, a man sealed and stamped as an heir of heaven by the Holy Ghost Himself.

Reader, before you pass on, remember that a true Christian may have many a blemish, many a defect, many an infirmity, and yet be a true Christian nevertheless. You do not despise gold because it is mixed with much dross. You must not undervalue grace because it is accompanied by much corruption. Read on, and you will find that Lot paid dearly for his "lingering." But do not forget, as you read, that Lot was a child of God.

II. Let us pass on to the second thing I spoke

of. What does the text, already quoted, tell us about Lot's behaviour?

The words are wonderful and astounding: "He lingered;" and the more you consider the time and circumstances, the more wonderful you will think them.

Lot knew the awful condition of the city in which he stood; "the cry" of its abomination "had waxen great before the Lord" (Genesis 19:13): and yet "he lingered."

Lot knew the fearful judgment coming down on all within its walls; the angels had said plainly, "The Lord hath sent us to destroy it" (Genesis 19:13): and yet Lot knew that God was a God who always kept His word, and if He said a thing would surely do it. He could hardly be Abraham's nephew, and live long with him, and not be aware of this. Yet "he lingered."

Lot believed there was danger,-for he went to his sons-in-law, and warned them to flee: "Up!" he said, "Get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." (Genesis 19:14) And yet "he lingered."

Lot saw the angels of God standing by, waiting for him and his family to go forth. And yet "be lingered."

Lot heard the voice of those ministers of wrath ringing in his ears to hasten him. "Arise! lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." (Genesis 19:15) And yet "he lingered."

He was slow when he should have been quick,-backward when he should have been forward,-trifling when he should have been hastening,-loitering when he should have been hurrying,-cold when he should have been hot. It is passing strange! It seems almost incredible! It appears too wonderful to be true! But the Spirit writes it down for our learning. And so it was.

And yet, reader, there are many of the Lord Jesus Christ's people very like Lot.

Mark well what I say. I repeat it that there may be no mistake about my meaning. I have shown you that Lot "lingered,"-I say that there are many Christian men and Christian women in this day very like Lot.

There are many real children of God who appear to know far more than they live up to, and see far more than they practise, and yet continue in this state for many years. Wonderful that they go as far as they do, and yet go no further!

They hold the Head, even Christ, and love the truth. They like sound preaching, and assent to every article of Gospel doctrine, when they hear it. But still there is an indescribable something which is not satisfactory about them. They are constantly doing things which disappoint the expectations of their ministers, and of more advanced Christian friends. Marvellous that they should think as they do, and yet stand still!

They believe in heaven, and yet seem faintly to long for it;-and in hell, and yet seem little to fear it. They love the Lord Jesus; but the work they do for Him is small. They hate the devil; but they often appear to tempt him to come to them. They know the time is short; but they live as if it were long, They know they have a battle to fight; yet a man might think they were at peace. They know they have a race to run; yet they often look like people sitting still. They know the Judge is at the door, and there is wrath to come; and yet they appear half asleep. Astonishing they should be what they are, and yet be nothing more!

And what shall we say of these people? They often puzzle godly friends and relations. They often cause great anxiety. They often give rise to great doubts and searchings of heart. But they may be classed under one sweeping description: they are all brethren and sisters of Lot. They linger.

These are they who get the notion into their minds, that it is impossible for all believers to be very holy and very spiritual. They allow that eminent holiness is a beautiful thing. They like to read about it in books, and even to see it occasionally in others. But they do not think that all are meant to aim at so high a standard.

At any rate, they seem to make up their minds it is beyond their reach.

These are they who get into their heads false ideas of charity, as they call it. They would fain please everybody, and suit everybody, and be agreeable to everybody. But they forget they ought first to be sure that they please God.

These are they who dread sacrifices, and shrink from self-denial. They never appear able to apply our Lord's command, to "cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye." (Matthew 5:29-30) They spend their lives in trying to make the gate more wide, and the cross more light. But they never succeed.

These are they who are always trying to keep in with the world. They are ingenious in discovering reasons for not separating decidedly, and in framing plausible excuses for attending questionable amusements, and keeping up questionable friendships. One day you are told of their attending a Bible reading: the next day perhaps you hear of their going to a ball. They are constantly labouring to persuade themselves that to mix a little with worldly people on their own ground does good. Yet in their case it is very clear they do no good, and only get harm.

These are they who cannot find it in their heart to quarrel with their besetting sin, whether it be sloth, indolence, ill-temper, pride, selfishness, impatience, or what it may. They allow it to remain a tolerably quiet and undisturbed tenant of their hearts. They say it is their health, or their constitutions, or their temperaments, or their trials, or their way. Their father, or mother, or grandmother, was so before themselves, and they are sure they cannot help it. And when you meet after the absence of a year or so, you hear the same thing.

But all, all, all may be summed up in one single sentence. They are the brethren and sisters of Lot. They linger.

Ah, reader, if you are a lingering soul, you are not happy! You know you are not. It would be strange indeed if you were so. Lingering is the sure destruction of a happy Christianity. A lingerer's conscience forbids him to enjoy inward peace.

Perhaps at one time you did run well. But you have left your first love,-you have never felt the same comfort since, and you never will till you return to your first works. Like Peter, when the Lord Jesus was taken prisoner, you are following the Lord afar off; and, like him, you will find the way not pleasant, but hard.

Come and look at Lot. Come and mark Lot's history. Come and consider Lot's lingering, and be wise.

III. Let us next consider the reasons that may account for Lot's lingering.

This is a question of great importance, and I ask your serious attention to it. To know the root of a disease is one step towards a remedy. He that is forewarned is forearmed.

Who is there among the readers of this paper that feels secure, and has no fear of lingering? Come and listen while I tell you a few passages of Lot's history. Do as he did, and it will be a miracle indeed if you do not get into the same state of soul at last.

One thing then I observe in Lot is this, he made a wrong choice in early life.

There was a time when Abraham and Lot lived together. They both became rich, and could live together no longer. Abraham, the elder of the two, in the true spirit of humility and courtesy, gave Lot the choice of the country, when they resolved to part company: "If you," he said, "will take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." (Genesis 13:9)

And what did Lot do?-We are told he saw the plains of Jordan, near Sodom, were rich, fertile and well watered. It was a good land for cattle, and full of pastures. He had large flocks and herds, and it just suited his requirements. And this was the land he chose for a residence, simply because it was a rich, well watered land.

It was near the town of Sodom! He cared not for that.

The men of Sodom, who would be his neighbours, were wicked! It mattered not.

They were sinners before God exceedingly! It made no difference to him.

The pasture was rich. The land was good. He wanted such a country for his flocks and herds. And before that argument all scruples and doubts, if indeed he had any, at once went down.

He chose by sight, and not by faith. He asked no counsel of God to preserve him from mistakes. He looked to the things of time, and not of eternity. He thought of his worldly profit, and not of his soul. He considered only what would help him in this life,-he forgot the solemn business of the life to come. This was a bad beginning.

But I observe also that Lot mixed with sinners when there was no occasion for his doing so.

We are first told that he "pitched his tent toward Sodom." (Genesis 13:12) This, as I have already shown, was a great mistake.

But the next time he is mentioned, we find him actually living in Sodom itself. The Spirit says expressly, "He dwelt in Sodom." (Genesis 14:12)

His tents were left. The country was forsaken. He occupied a house in the very streets of that wicked town.

We are not told the reasons of this change. We are not aware that any occasion could have arisen for it. We are sure there could have been no command of God. Perhaps his wife liked the town better than the country, for the sake of society. It is plain she had no grace herself. Perhaps she persuaded Lot it was needful for the education of his daughters. Perhaps the daughters urged living in the town for the sake of gay company:-they were evidently light-minded young women. Perhaps Lot liked it himself, in order to make more of his flocks and herds. Men never want reasons to confirm their wills. But one thing is very clear,-Lot dwelt in the midst of Sodom without good cause.

Reader, when a child of God does these two things, which I have named, you never need be surprised if you hear, by and by, unfavourable accounts about his soul You never need wonder if he becomes deaf to the warning voice of affliction, as Lot was (Genesis 14:12), and turns out a lingerer in the day of trial, and danger, as Lot did.

Make a wrong choice,-an unscriptural choice,-in life, and settle yourself down unnecessarily in the midst of worldly people, and I know no surer way to damage your own spirituality, and to go backward about your eternal concerns.

This is the way to make the pulse of your soul beat feebly and languidly.

This is the way to make the edge of your feeling about sin become blunt and dull.

This is the way to dim the eyes of your spiritual discernment, till you can scarcely distinguish good from evil, and stumble as you walk.

This is the way to bring a moral palsy on your feet and limbs, and make you go tottering and trembling along the road to Zion, as if the grass hopper was a burden.

This is the way to sell the pass to your worst enemy,-to give the devil the vantage ground in the battle,-to tie your arms in fighting,-to fetter your legs in running,-to dry up the sources of your strength,-to cripple your own energies,-to cut off your own hair, like Samson, and give yourself into the hands of the Philistines, put out your own eyes, grind at the mill, and become a slave.

Reader, wake up and mark well what I am saying. Settle these things down in your mind. Do not forget them. Recollect them in the morning. Recall them to memory at night. Let them sink down deeply into your heart. If ever you would be safe from lingering, beware of needless mingling with worldly people. Beware of Lot's choice. If you would not settle down into a dry, dull, sleepy, barren, heavy, carnal, stupid, torpid state of soul, beware of Lot's choice.

Remember this in choosing a dwelling-place, or residence. It is not enough that the house is comfortable,-the situation good,-the air fine,-the neighbourhood pleasant,-the expenses small,-the living cheap. There are other things yet to be considered. You must think of your immortal soul. Will the house you think of help you towards heaven or hell?-Is the Gospel preached within an easy distance?-Is Christ crucified with in reach of your door?-Is there a real man of God near, who will watch over your soul? I charge you, if you love life, not to overlook this. Beware of Lot's choice.

Remember this in choosing a calling, a place, or profession in life. It is not enough that the salary is high,-the wages good,-the labour light,-the advantages numerous,-the prospects of getting on most favourable. Think of your soul, your immortal soul. Will it be fed or starved? Will it be prospered or drawn back? I beseech you, by the mercies of God, to take heed what you do. Make no rash decision. Look at the place in every light, the light of God as well as the light of the world. Gold may be bought too dear. Beware of Lot's choice.

Remember this in choosing a husband or wife, if you are unmarried. It is not enough that your eye is pleased,-that your tastes are met,-that your mind finds congeniality,-that there is amiability and affection,-that there is a comfortable home for life. There needs something more than this. There is a life yet to come. Think of your soul, your immortal soul. Will it be helped upwards, or dragged downwards by the union you are planning?-Will it be made more heavenly, or more earthly,-drawn nearer to Christ, or to the world?-Will its religion grow in vigour, or will it decay? I pray you, by all your hopes of glory, allow this to enter into your calculations. Think, as old Baxter said, and think, and think, and think again, before you commit yourself. "Be not unequally yoked." (2 Corinthians 6:14) Matrimony is nowhere named among the means of conversion. Remember Lot's choice.

Remember this if you are ever offered a situation on a railway. It is not enough to have good pay, and regular employment, the confidence of the directors, and the best chance of rising to a higher post. These things are very well in their way, but they are not everything. How will your soul fare if you serve a railway company that runs Sunday trains?-What day in the week will you have for God and eternity?-What opportunities will you have for hearing the Gospel preached? I solemnly warn you to consider this. It will profit you nothing to fill your purse, if you bring leanness and poverty on your soul Beware of selling your Sabbath for the sake of a good place. Beware of Lot's choice.

Reader, you may perhaps think, "a believer need not fear,-he is a sheep of Christ, he will never perish,-he cannot come to much harm, it cannot be that such small matters can be of great importance."

Well: you may think so; but I warn you, if you neglect them, your soul will never prosper! A true believer will certainly not be cast away, although he may linger; but if he does linger, it is vain to suppose that his religion will thrive.

Grace is a tender plant. Unless you cherish it and nurse it well, it will soon become sickly in this evil world. It may droop, though it cannot die.

The brightest gold will soon become dim, when exposed to a damp atmosphere.

The hottest iron will soon become cold. It requires pains and toil to bring it to a red heat. It requires nothing but letting alone, or a little cold water, to become black and hard.

You may be an earnest zealous Christian now. You may feel like David in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved." (Psalms 30:6) But be not deceived. You have only got to walk in Lot's steps, and make Lot's choice, and you will soon come to Lot's state of soul. Allow yourself to do as he did,-presume to act as he acted, and be very sure you will soon discover you have become a wretched lingerer, like him.

You will find, like Samson, the presence of the Lord is no longer with you.

You will prove to your own shame an undecided, hesitating man, in the day of trial.

There will come a canker on your religion, and eat out its vitality without your knowing it.

There will come a consumption on your spiritual strength, and waste it away insensibly.

And at length you will wake up to find your hands hardly able to do the Lord's work, and your feet hardly able to carry you along the Lord's way, and your faith no bigger than a grain of mustard seed;-and this, perhaps, at some turning point in your life, at a time when the enemy is coming in like a flood, and your need is the sorest.

Ah, reader, if you would not become a lingerer in religion, consider these things! Beware of doing what Lot did.

IV. Let us enquire now what kind of fruit Lot's lingering spirit bore at last.

I would not pass over this point for many reasons, and especially in the present day.

There are not a few who will feel disposed to say, "After all Lot was saved,-he was justified,-he got to heaven. I want no more. If I do but get to heaven, I shall be content."

Reader, if this be the thought of your heart, just stay a moment, and listen to me a little longer. I will show you one or two things in Lot's history which deserve attention, and may perhaps induce you to alter your mind.

I think it of first importance to dwell upon this subject. I always will contend that eminent holiness, and eminent usefulness, are most closely connected,-that happiness and following the Lord fully go side by side,-and that if believers will linger, they must not expect to be useful in their day and generation, or to enjoy great comfort and peace in believing.

Mark then, for one thing, Lot did no good among the inhabitants of Sodom.

Lot lived in Sodom many years. No doubt he had many precious opportunities for speaking of the things of God, and trying to turn away souls from sin. But Lot seems to have effected just nothing at all. He appears to have had no weight or influence with the people who lived around him. He possessed none of that respect and reverence which even the men of the world will frequently concede to a bright servant of God.

Not one righteous person could be found in all Sodom, outside the walls of Lot's home. Not one of his neighbours believed his testimony. Not one of his acquaintances honoured the Lord when he worshipped. Not one of his servants served his master's God. Not one of "all the people from every quarter" cared a jot for his opinion when he tried to restrain their wickedness. "This one fellow came in to sojourn," said they, "and he will needs be a judge." (Genesis 19:9) His life carried no weight. His words were not listened to. His religion drew none.

And truly I do not wonder. As a general rule, lingering souls do no good to the world, and bring no credit to God's cause. Their salt has too little savour to season the corruption around them. They are not epistles of Christ who can be known and read of all. (2 Corinthians 3:2) There is nothing magnetic, and attractive, and Christ-reflecting about their ways. Remember this.

Mark another thing. Lot helped no relation towards heaven.

We are not told how large his family was. But this we know,-he had a wife and two daughters at least, in the day he was called out of Sodom, if he had not more children besides.

But whether Lot's family was large or small, one thing, I think, is perfectly clear,-there was not one among them all that feared God.

When he "went out and spake to his sons-in-law, which married his daughters," and warned them to flee from the coming judgments, we are told, "he seemed to them as one that mocked." (Genesis 19:14) What fearful words those are. It was as good as saying, "Who cares for anything you say?" So long as the world stands, those words will be a painful proof of the contempt with which a lingerer in religion is regarded.

And what was Lot's wife? She left the city in his company, but she did not go far. She had not faith to see the need of such a speedy flight. She left her heart in Sodom when she began to flee. She looked back from behind her husband, in spite of the plainest command not to do so (Genesis

19:17), and was at once turned into a pillar of salt.

And what were Lot's two daughters? They escaped indeed,-but only to do the devil's work. They became their father's tempters to wickedness, and led him to commit the foulest of sins.

In short, Lot stood alone in his family. He was not made the means of keeping one soul back from the gates of hell.

And I do not wonder. Lingering souls are seen through by their own families, and, when seen through, despised. Their nearest relations understand inconsistency, if they understand nothing else in religion. They draw the sad, but not unnatural conclusion, "Surely if he believed all he professes to believe, he would not go on as he does." Lingering parents seldom have godly children. The eye of the child drinks in far more than the ear. A child will always observe what you do much more than what you say. Remember this.

Mark a third thing. Lot left no evidences behind him when he died.

We know but little about Lot after his flight from Sodom, and all that we do know is unsatisfactory. His pleading for Zoar, because it was "a little one,"-his departure from Zoar afterwards,-and his conduct in the cave,-all, all tell the same story. All show the weakness of the grace that was in him, and the low state of soul into which he had fallen.

We know not how long he lived after his escape. We know not where he died, or when he died,-whether he saw Abraham again,-what was the manner of his death,-what he said, or what he thought. All these are hidden things. We are told of the last days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David,-but not one word about Lot. Oh, what a gloomy death-bed the death-bed of Lot must have been!

The Scripture appears to draw a veil around him on purpose. There is a painful silence about his latter end. He seems to go out like an expiring lamp, and leave an ill savour behind him. And had we not been specially told in the New Testament that Lot was "just" and "righteous," I verily believe we should have doubted whether Lot was a saved soul at all.

But I do not wonder at his sad end. Lingering believers will generally reap according as they have sown. Their lingering often meets them when their spirit is in departing. They have little peace at the last. They reach heaven, to be sure, but they reach it in darkness and storm. They are saved, but "saved so as by fire." (1 Corinthians 3:15)

Reader, consider these three things I have just mentioned. Do not misunderstand my meaning. It is amazing to observe how readily people catch at the least excuse for misunderstanding the things that concern their souls!

I do not tell you that believers who do not "linger" will, as a matter of course, be great instruments of usefulness to the world. Noah preached one hundred and twenty years, and none believed him. The Lord Jesus was not esteemed by His own people, the Jews.

Nor yet do I tell you that believers who do not linger, will, as a matter of course, be the means of converting their families and relations. David's children were, many of them, ungodly. The Lord Jesus was not believed on even by his own brethren.

But I do say it is almost impossible not to see a connection between Lot's evil choice and Lot's lingering;-and between Lot's lingering and his unprofitableness to his family and the world. I believe the Spirit meant us to see it. I believe the Spirit meant to make it a beacon to all professing Christians. And I am sure the lessons I have tried to draw from the whole history, deserve serious reflection.

Let me speak a few parting words to all who read this paper, and especially to all who call themselves believers in Christ.

I have no wish to make your hearts sad. I do not want to give you a gloomy view of the Christian course. My only object is to give you friendly warnings. I desire your peace and comfort. I would fain see you happy, as well as safe,-and joyful, as well as justified. I speak as I have done for your good.

You live in days when a lingering, Lot-like religion abounds. The stream of profession is far broader than it once was, but far less deep in many places. A certain kind of Christianity is almost fashionable now. To belong to some party in the Church of England, and show a zeal for its interests,-to talk about the leading controversies of the day,-to buy popular religious books as fast as they come out, and lay them on your table,-to attend meetings,-subscribe to societies,-and discuss the merits of preachers,-all these are now comparatively easy and common attainments. They no longer make a person singular. They require little or no sacrifice. They entail no cross.

But to walk closely with God, to be really spiritually-minded,-to behave like strangers and pilgrims,-to be distinct from the world in employment of time, in conversation, in amusements, in dress,-to bear a faithful witness for Christ in all places,-to leave a savour of our Master in every society, to be prayerful, humble, unselfish, meek,-to be jealously afraid of sin, and tremblingly alive to our danger from the world,-these, these are still rare things. They are not common among those who are called true Christians, and, worst of all, the absence of them is not felt and bewailed as it should be.

Reader, I give you good counsel this day. Do not turn from it. Do not be angry with me for plain speaking. I bid you give diligence to make your calling and election sure. I bid you not to be slothful,-not to be careless, not to be content with a small measure of grace,-not to be satisfied with being a little better than the world. I solemnly warn you not to attempt doing what never can be done,-I mean, to serve Christ, and yet keep in with the world. I call upon you, and beseech you, I charge you, and exhort you,-by all your hopes of heaven, and desires of glory,-do not be a lingering soul.

Would you know what the times demand?-the shaking of nations,-the uprooting of ancient things,-the overturning of kingdoms,-the stir and restlessness of men's minds?-They all say,-Christian! do not linger!

Would you be found ready for Christ at His second appearing,-your loins girded,-your lamp burning, yourself bold, and prepared to meet Him. Then do not linger!

Would you enjoy much sensible comfort in your religion,-feel the witness of the Spirit within you,-know whom you have believed,-and not be a gloomy and melancholy Christian? Then do not linger!

Would you enjoy strong assurance of your own salvation, in the day of sickness, and on the bed of death?-Would you see with the eye of faith heaven opening, and Jesus rising to receive you? Then do not linger!

Would you leave great broad evidences behind you when you are gone?-Would you like us to lay you in the grave with comfortable hope, and talk of your state after death without a doubt? Then do not linger!

Would you be useful to the world in your day and generation?-Would you draw men from sin to Christ, and make your Master's cause beautiful in their eyes? Then do not linger!

Would you help your children and relatives towards heaven, and make them say, "We will go with you"?-and not make them infidels and despisers of all religion? Then do not linger!

Would you have a great crown in the day of Christ's appearing, and not be the least and smallest star in glory, and not find yourself the last and lowest in the kingdom of God? Then do not linger!

Oh, let not one of us linger! Time does not,-death does not,-judgment does not,-the devil does not,-the world does not. Neither let the children of God linger.

Reader, are you a lingerer? Has your heart felt heavy, and your conscience sore, while you have been reading these pages? Does something within you whisper, "I am the man"? Reader, listen to what I am saying,-How is it with your soul?

If you are a lingerer, you must just go to Christ at once and be cured,-you must use the old remedy. You must bathe in the old fountain. You must turn again to Christ and be healed. The way to do a thing is to do it. Do this at once.

Think not for a moment your case is past recovery. Think not because you have been long living in a dry and heavy state of soul, that there is no hope of revival. Is not the Lord Jesus Christ an appointed Physician for the soul? Did He not cure every form of disease? Did not He cast out every kind of devil? Did He not raise poor backsliding Peter, and put a new song in his mouth? Oh, doubt not, but earnestly believe that He will yet revive His work within you! Only turn from lingering, and confess your folly, and come,-come at once to Christ. Blessed are the words of the prophet: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity."-"Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heat your backsliding." (Jeremiah 3:13, Jeremiah 3:22)

Reader, remember the souls of others, as well as your own. If at any time you see any brother or sister lingering, try to awaken them,-try to arouse them,-try to stir them up. Let us all exhort one another as we have opportunity. Let us provoke unto love and good works. Let us not be afraid to say to each other, "Brother, or sister, have you forgotten Lot? Awake! and remember Lot;-Awake, and linger no more."

Chapter 66

Self Exertion

PRACTICAL RELIGION. BEING PLAIN PAPERS

ON THE DAILY DUTIES, EXPERIENCE, DANGERS, AND

PRIVILEGES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. BY JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

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SELF-EXERTION.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”- Luke 13:24.

THERE was once a man who asked our Lord Jesus Christ a very deep question. He said to Him, “Lord, are there few that be saved?”

Who this man was we do not know. What his motive was for asking this question we are not told. Perhaps he wished to gratify an idle curiosity: perhaps he wanted an excuse for not seeking salvation himself. The Holy Ghost has kept back all this from us: the name and motive of the inquirer are both hidden.

But one thing is very clear, and that is the vast importance of the saying of our Lord to which the question gave rise. Jesus seized the opportunity to direct the minds of all around Him to their own plain duty. He knew the train of thought which the man's inquiry had set moving in their hearts: He saw what was going on within them. “Strive,” He cries, “to enter in at the strait gate.” Whether there be few saved or many, your course is clear;-strive to enter in. Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. A day shall come when many will seek to enter in and shall not be able. “Strive to enter in now.”

I desire to call the serious attention of all who read this paper to the solemn lessons which this saying of the Lord Jesus is meant to teach. It is one which deserves special remembrance in the present day. It teaches unmistakeably that mighty truth, our own personal responsibility for the salvation of our souls. It shows the immense danger of putting off the great business of religion, as so many unhappily do. On both these points the witness of our Lord Jesus Christ in the text is

clear. He, who is the eternal God, and who spoke the words of perfect wisdom, says to the sons of men,-“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

(I) Here is a description of the way of salvation. Jesus calls it “the strait gate.”

(II) Here is a plain command. Jesus says, “Strive to enter in.”

(III) Here is an awful prophecy. Jesus says, “Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” May the Holy Ghost apply the subject to the hearts of all into whose hands this paper may fall! May all who read it know the way of salvation experimentally, obey the command of the Lord practically, and be found safe in the great day of His second coming!

I. Here is a description of the way of salvation Jesus calls it “the strait gate.”

There is a gate which leads to pardon, peace with God, and heaven. Whosoever goes in by that gate shall be saved. Never, surely, was a gate more needed. Sin is a vast mountain between man and God. How shall a man climb over it?-Sin is a high wall between man and God. How shall man get through it?-Sin is a deep gulf between man and God. How shall man cross over it?-God is in heaven, holy, pure, spiritual, undefiled, light without any darkness at all, a Being who cannot bear that which is evil, or look upon iniquity. Man is a poor fallen worm, crawling on earth for a few years,-sinful, corrupt, erring, defective,-a being whose imagination is only evil, and whose heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. How shall man and God be brought together? How shall man ever draw near to his Maker without fear and shame? Blessed be God, there is a way! There is a road. There is a path. There is a door. It is the gate spoken of in the words of Christ,-“the strait gate.”

This gate was made for sinners by the Lord Jesus Christ. From all eternity He covenanted and engaged that He would make it. In the fulness of time He came into the world and made it, by His own atoning death on the cross. By that death He made satisfaction for man's sin, paid man's debt to God, and bore man's punishment. He built a great gate at the cost of His own body and blood. He reared a ladder on earth whose top reached to heaven. He made a door by which the chief of sinners may enter into the holy presence of God, and not be afraid. He opened a road by which the vilest of men, believing in Him, may draw near to God and have peace. He cries to us, “I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” (John 10:9) “I am the way: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” (John 14:6) “By Him,” says Paul, “we have boldness and access with confidence.” (Ephesians 3:12) Thus was the gate of salvation formed.

This gate is called the strait gate, and it is not called so without cause. It is always strait, narrow, and difficult to pass through to some persons, and it will be so as long as the world stands. It is narrow to all who love sin, and are determined not to part with it. It is narrow to all who set their affection on this world, and seek first its pleasures and rewards. It is narrow to all who dislike trouble, and are unwilling to take pains and make sacrifices for their souls. It is narrow to all who like company, and want to keep in with the crowd. It is narrow to all who are self-righteous, and think they are good people, and deserve to be saved. To all such the great gate, which Christ made, is narrow and strait. In vain they seek to pass through. The gate will not admit them. God is not unwilling to receive them; their sins are not too many to be forgiven: but they are not willing to be saved in God's way. Thousands, for the last eighteen centuries, have tried to make the

gate-way wider: thousands have worked and toiled to get to heaven on lower terms. But the gate never alters. It is not elastic: it will not stretch to accommodate one man more than another. It is still the strait gate.

Strait as this gate is, it is the only one by which men can get to heaven. There is no side door; there is no bye-path; there is no gap or low-place in the wall. All that are ever saved will he saved only by Christ, and only by simple faith in Him.-Not one will be saved by repentance. To-day's sorrow does not wipe off yesterday's score.-Not one will be saved by his own works. The best works that any man can do are little better than splendid sins.-Not one will be saved by his formal regularity in the use of the outward means of grace. When we have done all, we are poor “unprofitable servants.” Oh, no! it is mere waste of time to seek any other road to eternal life. Men may look right and left, and weary themselves with their own devices, but they will never find another door. Proud men may dislike the gate if they will. Profligate men may scoff at it, and make a jest of those who use it. Lazy men may complain that the way is hard. But men will discover no other salvation than that of faith in the blood and righteousness of a crucified Redeemer. There stands between us and heaven one great gate: it may be strait; but it is the only one. We must either enter heaven by the strait gate, or not at all.

Strait as this gate is, it is a gate ever ready to open. No sinners of any kind are forbidden to draw near: whosoever will may enter in and be saved. There is but one condition of admission: that condition is that you really feel your sins and desire to be saved by Christ in His own way. Art thou really sensible of thy guilt and vileness? Hast thou a truly broken and contrite heart? Behold the gate of salvation, and come in. He that made it declares,-“Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37) The question to be considered is not whether you are a great sinner or a little sinner-whether you are elect or not,-whether you are converted or not. The question is simply this, “Do you feel your sins? Do you feel labouring and heavy-laden? Are you willing to put your soul into Christ's hand?” Then if that be the case, the gate will open to you at once. Come in this very day. “Wherefore standest thou without?” (Genesis 24:31)

Strait as this gate is, it is one through which thousands have gone in and been saved. No sinner was ever turned back, and told he was too bad to be admitted, if he came really sick of his sins. Thousands of all sorts have been received, cleansed, washed, pardoned, clothed, and made heirs of eternal life. Some of them seemed very unlikely to be admitted: you and I might have thought they were too bad to be saved. But He that built the gate did not refuse them. As soon as they knocked, He gave orders that they should be let in.

Manasseh, King of Judah, went up to this gate. None could have been worse than he. He had despised his good father Hezekiah's example and advice. He had bowed down to idols. He had filled Jerusalem with bloodshed and cruelty. He had slain his own children. But as soon as his eyes were opened to his sins, and he fled to the gate for pardon, the gate flew wide open, and he was saved.

Saul the Pharisee went up to this gate. He had been a great offender. He had been a blasphemer of Christ, and a persecutor of Christ's people. He had laboured hard to stop the progress of the Gospel. But as soon as his heart was touched, and he found out his own guilt and fled to the gate for pardon, at once the gate flew wide open, and he was saved.

Many of the Jews who crucified our Lord went up to this gate. They had been grievous sinners indeed. They had refused and rejected their own Messiah. They had delivered Him to Pilate, and entreated that He might be slain. They had desired Barabbas to be let go, and the Son of God to be crucified. But in the day when they were pricked to the heart by Peter's preaching, they fled to the gate for pardon, and at once the gate flew open, and they were saved.

The jailer at Philippi went up to this gate. He had been a cruel, hard, godless man. He had done all in his power to ill-treat Paul and his companion. He had thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. But when his conscience was aroused by the earthquake, and his mind enlightened by Paul's teaching, he fled to the gate for pardon, and at once the gate flew open, and he was saved.

But why need I stop short in Bible examples? Why should I not say that multitudes have gone to “the strait gate “since the days of the Apostles, and have entered in by it and been saved? Thousands of all ranks, classes, and ages,-learned and unlearned, rich and poor, old and young,-have tried the gate and found it ready to open,-have gone through it and found peace to their souls. Yes: thousands of persons yet living have made proof of the gate, and found it the way to real happiness. Noble-men and commoners, merchants and bankers, soldiers and sailors, farmers and tradesmen, labourers and workmen, are still upon earth, who have found the strait gate to be “a way of pleasantness and a path of peace.” They have not brought up an evil report of the country inside. They have found Christ's yoke to be easy, and His burden to be light. Their only regret has been that so few enter in, and that they themselves did not enter in before.

This is the gate which I want every one to enter, into whose hand this paper may fall. I want you not merely to go to church or chapel, but to go with heart and soul to the gate of life. I want you not merely to believe there is such a gate, and to think it a good thing, but to enter by faith and be saved.

Think what a privilege it is to have a gate at all. The angels, who kept not their first estate, fell, never to rise again. To them there was no door of escape opened.-The heathen never heard of any way to eternal life. What would not many a black man and many a red man give, if be only heard one plain sermon about Christ?-The Jews in Old Testament times only saw the gate dimly and far away. “The way into the holiest was not made manifest, while the first tabernacle was standing.” (Hebrews 9:8) You have the gate set plainly before you: you have Christ and full salvation offered to you, without money and without price. You never need be at a loss which way to turn. Oh, consider what a mercy this is! Beware that you do not despise the gate and perish in unbelief. Better a thousand times not to know of the gate than to know of it and yet tarry outside. How indeed will you escape if you neglect so great salvation?

Think what a thankful man you ought to be if you have really gone in at the strait gate. To be a pardoned, forgiven, justified soul,-to be ready for sickness, death, judgment and eternity,-to be ever provided for in both worlds,-surely this is matter for daily praise. True Christians ought to be more full of thanksgivings than they are. I fear that few sufficiently remember what they were by nature, and what debtors they are to grace. A heathen remarked that singing hymns of praise was one special mark of the early Christians. Well would it be for Christians in the present day, if they knew more of this frame of mind. It is no mark of a healthy state of soul when there is much complaining and little praise. It is an amazing mercy that there is any gate of salvation at all; but it

is a still greater mercy when we are taught to enter in by it and be saved.

II. In the second place, here is a plain command.-Jesus says to us, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” There is often much to be learned in a single word of Scripture. The words of our Lord Jesus in particular, are always full of matter for thought. Here is a word which is a striking example of what I mean. Let us see what the great Teacher would have us gather out of the word “Strive.”

“STRIVE” teaches that a man must use means diligently, if he would have his soul saved. There are means which God has appointed to help man in his endeavours to approach Him. There are ways in which a man must walk, if he desires to be found of Christ. Public Worship, reading the Bible, hearing the Gospel preached,-these are the kind of things to which I refer. They lie, as it were, in the middle, between man and God. Doubtless no one can change his own heart, or wipe away one of his sins, or make himself in the least degree acceptable to God; but I do say that if man could do nothing but sit still, Christ would never have said “Strive.”

“STRIVE” teaches that man is a free agent, and will be dealt with by God as a responsible being. The Lord Jesus does not bid us to wait, and wish, and feel, and hope, and desire. He says, “Strive.” I call that miserable religion which teaches people to be content with saying, “We can do nothing of ourselves,” and makes them continue in sin. It is as bad as teaching people that it is not their fault if they are not converted, and that God only is to blame if they are not saved. I find no such theology in the New Testament. I hear Jesus saying to sinners, “Come-repent-believe-labour-ask-seek-knock.” I see plainly that our salvation, from first to last, is entirely of God; but I see with no less plainness that our ruin, if lost, is wholly and entirely of ourselves. I maintain that sinners are always addressed as accountable and responsible; and I want no better proof of this than is contained in the word “Strive.”

“STRIVE” teaches that a man must expect many adversaries and a hard battle, if he would have his soul saved. And this, as a matter of experience, is strictly true. There are no “gains without pains” in spiritual things any more than in temporal. That roaring lion, the devil, will never let a soul escape from him without a struggle. The heart which is naturally sensual and earthly will never be turned to spiritual things without a daily fight. The world, with all its opposition and temptations, will never be overcome without a conflict. But why should all this surprise us? What great and good thing was ever done without trouble? Wheat does not grow without ploughing and sowing; riches are not obtained without care and attention; success in life is not won without hardships and toil; and heaven, above all, is not to be reached without the cross and the battle. The “violent take the kingdom by force.” (Matthew 11:12) A man must “strive.”

“STRIVE” teaches that it is worth while for a man to seek salvation. That may well be said. If there be anything that deserves a struggle in this world, it is the prosperity of the soul. The objects for which the great majority of men strive are comparatively poor and trifling things. Riches, and greatness, and rank, and learning, are “a corruptible crown.” The incorruptible things are all within the strait gate. The peace of God which passeth all understanding,-the bright hope of good things to come,-the sense of the Spirit dwelling in us,-the consciousness that we are pardoned, safe, ready, insured, provided for in time and eternity, whatever may happen,-these are true gold, and durable riches. Well may the Lord Jesus call on us to “strive.”

“STRIVE” teaches that laziness in religion is a great sin. It is not merely a misfortune, as some fancy,-a thing for which people are to be pitied, and a matter for regret. It is something far more than this. It is a breach of a plain commandment. What shall be said of the man who transgresses God's law, and does something which God says, Thou shalt not do? There can be but one answer. He is a sinner. “Sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4) And what shall be said of the man who neglects his soul, and makes no effort to enter the strait gate? There can be only one reply. He is omitting a positive duty. Christ says to him, “Strive,” and behold, he sits still

“STRIVE” teaches that all outside the strait gate are in great danger. They are in danger of being lost for ever. There is but a step between them and death. If death finds them in their present condition, they will perish without hope. The Lord Jesus saw that clearly. He knew the uncertainty of life and the shortness of time: He would fain have sinners make haste and delay not, lest they put off soul business too late. He speaks as one who saw the devil drawing near to them daily, and the days of their life gradually ebbing away. He would have them take heed they be not too late: therefore He cries, “Strive.”

That word “Strive,” raises solemn thoughts in my mind. It is brimful of condemnation for thousands of baptized persons. It condemns the ways and practices of multitudes who profess and call themselves Christians. Many there are who neither swear, nor murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor lie; but one thing unhappily cannot be said of them: they cannot be said to “strive” to be saved. The “spirit of slumber” possesses their hearts in everything that concerns religion. About the things of the world they are active enough: they rise early, and late take rest; they labour; they toil; they are busy; they are careful: but about the one thing needful they never “strive” at all.

What shall I say of those who are irregular about public worship on Sundays? There are thousands all over Great Britain who answer this description. Sometimes, if they feel disposed, they go to some church or chapel, and attend a religious service; at other times they stay at home and read the paper, or idle about, or look over their accounts, or seek some amusement. Is this “striving”? I speak to men of common sense. Let them judge what I say.

What shall I say of those who come regularly to a place of worship, but come entirely as a matter of form? There are many in every parish of Great Britain in this condition. Their fathers taught them to come; their custom has always been to come: it would not be respectable to stay away. But they care nothing for the worship of God when they do come. Whether they hear law or Gospel, truth or error, it is all the same to them. They remember nothing afterwards. They put off their form of religion with their Sunday clothes, and return to the world. And is this “striving”? I speak to men of common sense. Let them judge what I say.

What shall I say of those who seldom or never read the Bible? There are thousands of persons, I fear, who answer this description. They know the Book by name; they know it is commonly regarded as the only Book which teaches us how to live and how to die: but they can never find time for reading it. Newspapers, reviews, novels, romances, they can read, but not the Bible. And is this “striving” to enter in? I speak to men of common sense Let them judge what I say.

What shall I say of those who never pray? There are multitudes, I firmly believe, in this condition. Without God they rise in the morning, and without God they lie down at night. They ask nothing; they confess nothing; they return thanks for nothing; they seek nothing. They are all dying

creatures, and yet they are not even on speaking terms with their Maker and their Judge! And is this striving"? I speak to men of common sense. Let them judge what I say.

It is a solemn thing to be a minister of the Gospel. It is a painful thing to look on, and notice the ways of mankind in spiritual matters. We hold in our hands that great statute Book of God, which declares that without repentance, and conversion, and faith in Christ, and holiness, no man living can be saved. In discharge of our office we urge on men to repent, believe, and be saved; but, alas, how frequently we have to lament that our labour seems all in vain. Men attend our churches, and listen, and approve, but do not "strive" to be saved. We show the sinfulness of sin; we unfold the loveliness of Christ; we expose the vanity of the world; we set forth the happiness of Christ's service; we offer the living water to the wearied and heavy laden sons of toil: but, alas, how often we seem to speak to the winds. Our words are patiently heard on Sundays; our arguments are not refuted: but we see plainly in the week that men are not "striving" to be saved. There comes the devil on Monday morning, and offers his countless snares; there comes the world, and holds out its seeming prizes: our hearers follow them greedily. They work hard for this world's goods; they toil at Satan's bidding: but for the one thing needful they will not "strive" at all.

I am not writing from hearsay. I speak what I have seen. I write down the result of thirty-seven years' experience in the ministry. I have learned lessons about human nature during that period which I never knew before. I have seen how true are our Lord's words about the narrow way. I have discovered how few there are that "strive" to be saved.

Earnestness about temporal matters is common enough. Striving to be rich and prosperous in this world is not rare at all. Pains about money, and business, and politics,-pains about trade, and science, and fine arts, and amusements,-pains about rent, and wages, and labour, and land,-pains about such matters I see in abundance both in town and country. But I see few who take pains about their souls. I see few anywhere who "strive" to enter in at the strait gate.

I am not surprised at all this. I read in the Bible that it is only what I am to expect. The parable of the great supper is an exact picture of things that I have seen with my own eyes ever since I became a minister. (Luke 14:16) I find, as my Lord and Saviour tells me, that "men make excuse." One has his piece of land to see; another has his oxen to prove; a third has his family hindrances. But all this does not prevent my feeling deeply grieved for the souls of men. I grieve to think that they should have eternal life so close to them, and yet be lost because they will not "strive" to enter in and be saved.

I know not in what state of soul many readers of this paper may be. But I warn you to take heed that you do not perish for ever for want of "striving." Do not suppose that it needs some great scarlet sin to bring you to the pit of destruction. You have only to sit still and do nothing, and you will find yourself there at last. Yes! Satan does not ask you to walk in the steps of Cain, and Pharaoh, and Ahab, and Belshazzar, and Judas Iscariot. There is another road to hell quite as sure,-the road of spiritual indolence, spiritual laziness, and spiritual sloth. Satan has no objection to your being a respectable member of the Christian Church. He will let you pay your tithes, and rates, and pew rents; he will allow you to sit comfortably in church every Sunday you live. He knows full well, that so long as you do not "strive," you must come at last to the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched. Take heed that you do not come to this end. I repeat it, you have only to do nothing, and you will be lost.

If you have been taught to “strive” for your soul's prosperity, I entreat you never to suppose you can go too far. Never give way to the idea that you are taking too much trouble about your spiritual condition, and that there is no need for so much carefulness. Settle it rather in your mind that “in all labour there is profit,” and that no labour is so profitable as that bestowed on the soul. It is a maxim among good farmers that the more they do for the land the more the land does for them. I am sure it should be a maxim among Christians that the more they do for their religion the more their religion will do for them. Watch against the slightest inclination to be careless about any means of grace. Beware of shortening your prayers, your Bible reading, your private communion with God. Take heed that you do not give way to a thoughtless, lazy manner of using the public services of God's house. Fight against any rising disposition to be sleepy, critical, and fault-finding, while you listen to the preaching of the Gospel. Whatever you do for God, do it with all your heart and mind and strength. In other things be moderate,-and dread running into extremes. In soul matters fear moderation just as you would fear the plague. Care not what men think of you. Let it be enough for you that your Master says, “STRIVE.”

III. The last thing I wish to consider in this paper is the awful prophecy which the Lord Jesus delivers. He says, “Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” When shall this be? At what period shall the gate of salvation be shut for ever? When shall “striving” to enter be of no use? These are serious questions. The gate is now ready to open to the chief of sinners; but a day comes when it shall open no more.

The time foretold by our Lord is the time of His own second coming to judge the world. The long-suffering of God will at last have an end. The throne of grace will at length be taken down, and the throne of judgment shall be set up in its place. The fountain of living waters shall at length be closed. The strait gate shall at last be barred and bolted. The day of grace will be passed and over. The day of reckoning with a sin-laden world shall at length begin. And then shall be brought to pass the solemn prophecy of the Lord Jesus,-“Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

All prophecies of Scripture that have been fulfilled hitherto, have been fulfilled to the very letter. They have seemed to many unlikely, improbable, impossible, up to the very time of their accomplishment; but not one word of them has ever failed.

The promises of good things have come to pass, in spite of difficulties that seemed insuperable. Sarah had a son when she was past bearing; the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt and planted in the promised land; the Jews were redeemed from the captivity of Babylon, after seventy years, and enabled once more to build the temple; the Lord Jesus was born of a pure virgin, lived, ministered, was betrayed, and cut off, precisely as Scripture foretold. The Word of God was pledged in all these cases, that it should be. And so it was.

The predictions of judgments on cities and nations have come to pass, though at the time they were first spoken they seemed incredible. Egypt is the basest of kingdoms; Edom is a wilderness; Tyre is a rock for drying nets; Nineveh, that “exceeding great city,” is laid waste, and become a desolation; Babylon is a dry land and a wilderness,-her broad walls are utterly broken down; the Jews are scattered over the whole earth as a separate people. In all these cases the Word of God foretold that it should be so. And so it was.

The prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ which I press on your attention this day, shall be fulfilled in like manner. Not one word of it shall fail when the time of its accomplishment is due. “Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

There is a time coming when seeking God shall be useless. Oh, that men would remember that! Too many seem to fancy that the hour will never arrive when they shall seek and not find: but they are sadly mistaken. They will discover their mistake one day to their own confusion, except they repent. When Christ comes “many shall seek to enter in, and not be able.”

There is a time coming when many shall be shut out from heaven for ever. It shall not be the lot of a few, but of a great multitude; it shall not happen to one or two in this parish, and one or two in that: it shall be the miserable end of a vast crowd. “Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

Knowledge shall come to many too late. They shall see at last the value of an immortal soul, and the happiness of having it saved. They shall understand at last their own sinfulness and God's holiness, and the glorious fitness of the Gospel of Christ. They shall comprehend at last why ministers seemed so anxious, and preached so long, and entreated them so earnestly to be converted. But, alas, they shall know all this too late!

Repentance shall come to many too late. They shall discover their own exceeding wickedness and be thoroughly ashamed of their past folly. They shall be full of bitter regret and unavailing lamentations, of keen convictions and of piercing sorrows. They shall weep, and wail, and mourn, when they reflect on their sins. The remembrance of their lives will be grievous to them; the burden of their guilt will seem intolerable. But, alas, like Judas Iscariot, they will repent too late!

Faith shall come to many too late. They will no longer be able to deny that there is a God, and a devil, a heaven, and a hell. Deism, and scepticism, and infidelity shall be laid aside for ever; scoffing, and jesting, and free-thinking shall cease. They will see with their own eyes, and feel in their own bodies, that the things of which ministers spoke were not cunningly devised fables, but great real truths. They will find out to their cost that evangelical religion was not cant, extravagance, fanaticism, and enthusiasm: they will discover that it was the one thing needful, and that for want of it they are lost for ever. Like the devil, they will at length believe and tremble, but too late!

A desire of salvation shall come to many too late. They shall long after pardon, and peace, and the favour of God, when they can no more be had. They will wish they might have one more Sunday over again, have one more offer of forgiveness, have one more call to prayer. But it will matter nothing what they think, or feel, or desire then: the day of grace will be over; the gate of salvation will be bolted and barred. It will be too late!

I often think what a change there will be one day in the price and estimation at which things are valued. I look round this world in which my lot is cast; I mark the current price of everything this world contains; I look forward to the coming of Christ, and the great day of God. I think of the new order of things, which that day will bring in; I read the words of the Lord Jesus, when He describes the master of the house rising up and shutting the door; and as I read, I say to myself, “There will be a great change soon.”

What are the dear things now? Gold, silver, precious stones, bank notes, mines, ships, lands, houses, horses, carriages, furniture, meat, drink, clothes, and the like. These are the things that are thought valuable; these are the things that command a ready market; these are the things which you can never get below a certain price. He that has much of these things is counted a wealthy man. Such is the world!

And what are the cheap things now? The knowledge of God, the free salvation of the Gospel, the favour of Christ, the grace of the Holy Ghost, the privilege of being God's son, the title to eternal life, the right to the tree of life, the reversion of a mansion in heaven, the promises of an incorruptible inheritance, the offer of a crown of glory that fadeth not away. These are the things that no man hardly cares for. They are offered to the sons of men without money and without price: they may be had for nothing,-freely and gratuitously. Whosoever will may take his portion. But, alas, there is no demand for these things! They go a begging. They are scarcely looked at. They are offered in vain. Such is the world!

But a day is coming upon us all when the value of everything shall be altered. A day is coming when bank-notes shall be as useless as rags, and gold shall be as worthless as the dust of the earth. A day is coming when thousands shall care nothing for the things for which they once lived, and shall desire nothing so much as the things which they once despised. The halls and palaces will be forgotten in the desire of a “house not made with hands.” The favour of the rich and great will be no more remembered, in the longing for the favour of the King of kings. The silks, and satins, and velvets, and laces, will be lost sight of in the anxious want of the robe of Christ's righteousness. All shall be altered, all shall be changed in the great day of the Lord's return. “Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

It was a weighty saying of some wise man, that “hell is truth known too late.” I fear that thousands of professing Christians in this day will find this out by experience. They will discover the value of their souls when it is too late to obtain mercy, and see the beauty of the Gospel when they can derive no benefit from it. Oh, that men would be wise betimes! I often think there are few passages of Scripture more awful than that in the first chapter of Proverbs,-“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” (Proverbs 1:24-31)

Some reader of this paper may be one of those who neither like the faith nor practice which the Gospel of Christ requires. You think us extreme when we beseech you to repent and be converted. You think we ask too much when we urge you to come out from the world, and take up the cross, and follow Christ. But take notice that you will one day confess that we were right. Sooner or later, in this world or the next, you will acknowledge that you were wrong. Yes! it is a melancholy consideration for the faithful minister of the Gospel, that all who hear him will one day allow that his counsel was good. Mocked, despised, scorned, neglected as his testimony may be

on earth, a day is coming which shall prove effectually that truth was on his side. The rich man who hears us and yet makes a god of this world the tradesman who hears us and yet makes his ledger his Bible,-the farmer who hears us and yet remains cold as the clay on his land,-the labourer who hears us and feels no more for his soul than a stone,-all, all will at length acknowledge before the world that they were wrong. All will at length desire earnestly that very mercy which we now set before them in vain. “They will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

Some reader of this paper may be one of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Such a one may well take comfort when he looks forward. You often suffer persecution now for your religion's sake. You have to bear hard words and unkind insinuations. Your motives are often misrepresented, and your conduct slandered. The reproach of the cross has not ceased. But you may well take courage when you look forward and think of the Lord's second coming. That day shall make amends for all. You will see those who now laugh at you because you read the Bible, and pray, and love Christ, in a very different state of mind. They will come to you as the foolish virgins came to the wise, saying, “Give us of your oil, because our lamps are gone out.” (Matthew 25:8) You will see those who now hate you and call you fools because, like Caleb and Joshua, you bring up a good report of Christ's service, altered, changed, and no longer like the same men. They will say, “Oh, that we had taken part with you! You have been the truly wise, and we the foolish.” Then fear not the reproach of men. Confess Christ boldly before the world. Show your colours, and be not ashamed of your Master. Time is short: eternity hastens on. The cross is only for a little season: the crown is for ever. Make sure work about that crown: leave nothing uncertain. “Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” And now let me offer to every one who reads this paper a few parting words, in order to apply the whole subject to his soul. You have heard the words of the Lord Jesus unfolded and expounded. You have seen the picture of the way of salvation: it is a strait gate.-You have heard the command of the King: “Strive to enter in.”-You have been told of His solemn warning: “Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”-Bear with me a little longer while I try to impress the whole matter on your conscience. I have yet something to say on God's behalf.

(1) For one thing, I will ask you a plain question. Have you entered in at the strait gate or not? Old or young, rich or poor, churchman or dissenter, I repeat my question, Have you entered in at the strait gate?

I ask not whether you have heard of it, and believe there is a gate. I ask not whether you have looked at it, and admired it, and hope one day to go in. I ask whether you have gone up to it, knocked at it, been admitted, and are now inside?

If you are not inside, what good have you got from your religion? You are not pardoned and forgiven. You are not reconciled to God. You are not born again, sanctified, and meet for heaven. If you die as you are, the devil will have you for ever, and your soul will be eternally miserable.

Oh, think, think what a state this is to live in! Think, think above all things, what a state this is to die in! Your life is but a vapour. A few more years at most and you are gone: your place in the world will soon be filled up; your house will be occupied by another. The sun will go on shining; the grass and daises will soon grow thick over your grave; your body will be food for worms, and your soul will be lost to all eternity.

And all this time there stands open before you a gate of salvation. God invites you. Jesus Christ offers to save you. All things are ready for your deliverance. One thing only is wanting, and that is that you should be willing to be saved.

Oh think of these things, and be wise!

(2) For another thing, I will give plain advice to all who are not yet inside the strait gate. That advice is simply this: to enter in without a day's delay.

Tell me, if you can, of any one who ever reached heaven excepting through “the strait gate.” I know of none. From Abel, the first who died, down to the end of the list of Bible names, I see none saved by any way but that of faith in Christ.

Tell me, if you can, of any one who ever entered in at the strait gate without “striving.” I know of none excepting those who die in infancy. He that would win heaven must be content to fight for it.

Tell me, if you can, of any one who ever strove earnestly to enter, and failed to succeed. I know of none. I believe that however weak and ignorant men may be, they never seek life heartily and conscientiously, at the right door, and are left without an answer of peace.

Tell me, if you can, of any one who ever entered in at the strait gate, and was afterwards sorry. I know of none. I believe the footsteps on the threshold of that gate are all one way. All have found it a good thing to serve Christ, and have never regretted taking up His cross.

If these things are so, seek Christ without delay, and enter in at the gate of life while you can! Make a beginning this very day. Go to that merciful and mighty Saviour in prayer, and pour out your heart before Him. Confess to Him your guilt and wickedness and sin. Unbosom yourself freely to Him: keep nothing back. Tell Him that you cast yourself and all your soul's affairs wholly on His hands, and ask Him to save you according to His promise, and put His Holy Spirit within you.

There is everything to encourage you to do this. Thousands as bad as you have applied to Christ in this way, and not one of them has been sent away and refused. They have found a peace of conscience they never knew before, and have gone on their way rejoicing. They have found strength for all the trials of life and none of them have been allowed to perish in the wilderness. Why should not you also seek Christ?

There is everything to encourage you to do what I tell you at once. I know no reason why your repentance and conversion should not be as immediate as that of others before you. The Samaritan woman came to the well an ignorant sinner, and returned to her home a new creature. The Philippian jailor turned from darkness to light, and became a professed disciple of Christ in a single day. And why should not others do the same? Why should not you give up your sins, and lay hold on Christ this very day?

I know that the advice I have given you is good. The grand question is, Will you take it?

(3) The last thing I have to say shall be a request to all who have really entered in at the strait gate. That request is, that you will tell others of the blessings which you have found.

I want all converted people to be missionaries. I do not want them all to go out to foreign lands, and preach to the heathen; but I do want all to be of a missionary spirit, and to strive to do good at

home. I want them to testify to all around them that the strait gate is the way to happiness, and to persuade them to enter in by it.

When Andrew was converted he found his brother Peter, and said to him, “We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.” (John 1:41-42) When Philip was converted he found Nathaniel, and said to him, “We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathaniel said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see.” (John 1:45-46) When the Samaritan woman was converted, she “left her waterpot, and went into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (John 4:28-29) When Saul the Pharisee was converted, “Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the son of God.” (Acts 9:20)

I long to see this kind of spirit among Christians in the present day. I long to see more zeal to commend the strait gate to all who are yet outside, and more desire to persuade them to enter in and be saved. Happy indeed is that Church whose members not only desire to reach heaven themselves, but desire also to take others with them!

The great gate of salvation is yet ready to open, but the hour draws near when it will be closed for ever. Let us work while it is called today, for “the night cometh when no man can work.” (John 9:4) Let us tell our relatives and friends, that we have proved the way of life and found it pleasant, that we have tasted the bread of life and found it good.

I have heard it calculated that if every believer in the world were to bring one soul to Christ each year, the whole human race would be converted in less than twenty years. I make no comment on such a calculation. Whether such a thing might be or not, one thing is sure: that thing is, that many more souls might probably be converted to God, if Christians were more zealous to do good.

This, at least, we may remember, that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) He that endeavours to show his neighbour the strait gate is doing a work which God approves. He is doing a work which angels regard with interest, and with which the building of a pyramid will not compare in importance. What saith the Scripture? “He which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” (James 5:20) Let us all awaken to a deeper sense of our responsibility in this matter. Let us look round the circle of those among whom we live, and consider their state before God. Are there not many of them yet outside the gate, unforgiven, unsanctified, and unfit to die? Let us watch for opportunities of speaking to them. Let us tell them of the strait gate, and entreat them to “strive to enter in.”

Who can tell what “a word spoken in due season” may do? Who can tell what it may do when spoken in faith and prayer? It may be the turning-point in some man's history. It may be the beginning of thought, prayer, and eternal life. Oh, for more love and boldness among believers! Think what a blessing to be allowed to speak one converting word!

I know not what the feelings of my readers may be on this subject. My heart's desire and prayer is that you may daily remember Christ's solemn words,-“Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Keep these words in mind, and then be careless about the souls of others, if you can.

Self Inquiry

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

Self-Inquiry

"Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do."- Acts 15:36. The text which heads this page contains a proposal which the Apostle Paul made to Barnabas after their first missionary journey. He proposed to revisit the Churches they had been the means of founding, and to see how the were getting on. Were their members continuing steadfast in the faith? Were they growing in grace? Were they going forward, or standing still? Were they prospering, or falling away? "Let us go again and visit our brethren in see how they do."

This was a wise and useful proposal. Let us lay it to heart, and apply it to ourselves in the nineteenth century. Let us search our ways, and find out how matters stand between ourselves and God. Let us "see how we do." I ask every reader of this volume to begin its perusal by joining me in self-inquiry. If ever self-inquiry about religion was needed, it is needed at the present day.

We live in an age of peculiar spiritual privileges. Since the world began there never was such an opportunity for a man's soul to be saved as there is in England at this time. There never were so many signs of religion in the land, so many sermons preached, so many services held in churches and chapels, so many Bibles sold, so many religious books and tracts printed, so many Societies for evangelising mankind supported, so much outward respect paid to Christianity. Things are done everywhere now-a-days which a hundred years ago would have been thought impossible. Bishops support the boldest and most aggressive efforts to reach the unconverted. Deans and Chapters throw open the naves of cathedrals for Sunday evening sermons! Clergy of the narrowest High Church School advocate special missions, and vie with the Evangelical brethren in proclaiming that going to church on Sunday is not enough to take a man to heaven. In short, there is a stir about religion now-a-days to which there has been nothing like since England was a nation, and which the cleverest sceptics and infidels cannot deny. If Romaine, and Venn, and Berridge, and Rowlands, and Grimshaw, and Hervey, had been told that such things would come to pass about a century after their deaths, they would have been tempted to say, with the Samaritan nobleman, "If the LORD should windows of heavens might such a thing be." (2 Kings 7:19). But the Lord has opened the floodgates of heaven. There is more taught now-a-days in England of the real Gospel, and of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, in one week, than there was in a year in Romaine's time. Surely I have a right to say that we live in an age of spiritual privileges. But are we any better for it? In an age like this it is well to ask, "How do we do about our

souls?"

We live in an age of special spiritual danger. Never perhaps since the world began was there such an immense amount of mere outward profession of religion as there is in the present day. A painfully large proportion of all the congregations in the land consists of unconverted people, who know nothing of heart-religion, never come to the Lord's Table, and never confess Christ in their daily lives. Myriads of those who are always running after preachers, and crowding to hear special sermons, are nothing better than empty tubs, and tinkling cymbals, without a bit of real vital Christianity at home.* The parable of the sower is continually receiving most vivid and painful illustrations. The way-side hearers, the stony-ground hearers, the thorny-ground hearers abound on every side.

The life of many religious persons, I fear, in this age, is nothing better than a continual course of spiritual dram-drinking. They are always morbidly craving fresh excitement; and they seem to care little what it is if they only get it. All preaching seems to be the same to them; and they appear unable to "see differences" so long as they hear what is clever, have their ears tickled, and sit in a crowd. Worst of all, there are hundreds of young unestablished believers who are so infected with the same love of excitement, that they actually think it a duty to be always seeking it. Insensibly almost to themselves, they take up a kind of hysterical, sensational, sentimental Christianity, until they are never content with the "old paths" and, like the Athenians, are always running after something new. To see a calm-minded young believer, who is not stuck up, self confident, self-conceited, and more ready to teach than learn, but content with a daily steady effort to grow up into Christ's likeness, and to do Christ's work quietly and unostentatiously, at home, is really becoming almost a rarity! Too many young professors, alas, behave like young recruits who have not spent all their bounty money. They show how little deep root they have, and how little knowledge of their hearts, by noise, forwardness, readiness to contradict and set down old Christians, and over-weaning trust in their own fancied soundness and wisdom! Well will it be for many young professors of this age if they do not end, after being tossed about for a while, and "carried to and fro by every wind of doctrine," by joining some petty, narrow-minded, censorious sect, or embracing some senseless, unreasoning crotchetty heresy. Surely, in times like these there is great need for self-examination. When we look around us, we may well ask, "How do we do about our souls?"

In handling this question, I think the shortest plan will be to suggest a list of subjects for self-inquiry, and to get them in order. By so doing I shall hope to meet the case of every one into whose hands this volume may fall. I invite every reader of this paper to join me in calm, searching self-examination, for a few short minutes. I desire to speak to myself as well as to you. I approach you not as an enemy, but as a friend. "My heart's desire and prayer to God is that you may be saved" (Romans 10:1). Bear with me if I say things which at first sight look harsh and severe. Believe me, he is your best friend who tells you the most truth.

(1) Let me ask, in the first place, Do we ever think about our souls at all?"

Thousands of English people, I fear, cannot answer that question satisfactorily. They never give the subject of religion any place in their thoughts. From the beginning of the year to the end they are absorbed in the pursuit of business, pleasure, politics, money, or self-indulgence of some kind or another. Death, and judgement, and eternity, and heaven, and hell, and a world to come, are

never calmly looked at and considered. They live on as if they were never going to die, or rise again, or stand at the bar of God, or receive an eternal sentence! They do not openly oppose religion, for they have not sufficient reflection about it to do so; but they eat and drink, and sleep, and get money, and spend money, as if religion was a mere fiction and not a reality. They are neither Romanists, nor Socinians, nor infidels, nor High Church, nor Low Church, nor Broad Church. They are just nothing at all, and do not take the trouble to have opinions. A more senseless and unreasonable way of living cannot be conceived; but they do not pretend to reason about it. They simply never think about God, unless frightened for few minutes by sickness, death in their families, or an accident. Barring such interruptions, they appear to ignore religion altogether, and hold on to their way cool and undisturbed, as if there were nothing worth thinking of except this world.

It is hard to imagine a life more unworthy of an immortal creature than such a life as I have just described, for it reduces a man to the level of a beast. But it is literally and truly the life of multitudes in England; and as they pass away their place is taken by multitudes like them. The picture, no doubt, is horrible, distressing, and revolting: but, unhappily, it is only too true. In every large town, in every market, on every stock-exchange, in every club, you may see specimens of this class by the scores-men who think of everything under the sun except the one thing needful-the salvation of their souls. Like the Jews of old they do not "consider their ways," they do not "consider their latter end;" they do not "consider that they do evil" (Isaiah 1:3; Haggai 1:7; Deuteronomy 32:29; Ecclesiastes 5:1). Like Gallio they "care for none of these things:" they are not in their way. (Acts 18:17) If they prosper in the world, and get rich, and succeed in their line of life, they are praised, and admired by their contemporaries. Nothing succeeds in England like success! But for all this they cannot live forever. They will have to die and appear before the bar of God, and be judged; and then what will the end be? When a large class of this kind exists in our country, no reader need wonder that I ask whether he belongs to it. If you do, you ought to have a mark set on your door, as there used to be a mark on a plague-stricken house two centuries ago, with the words, "Lord have mercy on us," written on it. Look at the class I have been describing, and then look at your own soul.

(2) Let me ask, in the second place, whether we ever do anything about our souls?

There are multitudes in England who think occasionally about religion, but unhappily never get beyond thinking. After a stirring sermon,-or after a funeral,-or under the pressure of illness,-or on Sunday evening,-or when things are going on badly in their families,-or when they meet some bright example of a Christian,-or when they fall in with some striking religious book or tract,-they will at the time think a good deal, and even talk a little about religion in a vague way. But they stop short, as if thinking and talking were enough to save them. They are always meaning, and intending, and purposing, and resolving, and wishing, and telling us that they "know" what is right, and "hope" to be found right in the end, but they never attain to any action. There is no actual separation from the service of the world and sin, no real taking up the cross and following Christ, no positive doing in their Christianity. Their life is spent in playing the part of the son in our Lord's parable, to whom the father said, "'Go and work today in the vineyard:' and he answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go" (Matthew 21:30). They are like those whom Ezekiel describes, who liked his preaching, but never practised what he preached:-"They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them. . . .And

lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words but they do them not." (Ezekiel 33:31-32). In a day like this, when hearing and thinking without doing, is so common, no one can justly wonder that I press upon men the absolute need of self-examination. Once more, then, I ask my readers to consider the question of my text,-"How do we do about our souls?"

(3) Let me ask, in the third place, whether we are trying to satisfy our consciences with a mere formal religion?

There are myriads in England at this moment who are making shipwreck on this rock. Like the Pharisees of old, they make much ado about the outward part of Christianity, while the inward and spiritual part is totally neglected. They are careful to attend all the services of their place of worship, and regular in using all its forms and ordinances. They are never absent from Communion when the Lord's Supper is administered. Sometimes they are most strict in observing Lent, and attach great importance to Saints' days. They are often keen partisans of their own Church, or sect, or congregation, and ready to contend with any one who does not agree with them. Yet all this time there is no heart in their religion. Anyone who knows them intimately can see with half an eye that their affections are set on things below, and not on things above; and that they are trying to make up for the want of inward Christianity by an excessive quantity of outward form. And this formal religion does them no real good. They are not satisfied. Beginning at the wrong end, by making the outward things first, they know nothing of inward joy and peace, and pass their days in a constant struggle, secretly conscious that there is something wrong, and yet not knowing why. Well, after all, if they do not go on from one stage of formality to another, until in despair they take a fatal plunge, and fall into Popery! When professing Christians of this kind are so painfully numerous, no one need wonder if I press upon him the paramount importance of close self-examination. If you love life, do not be content with the husk, and shell, and scaffolding of religion. Remember our Saviour's words about the Jewish formalists of His day: "These people draweth nigh with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship." (Matthew 15:8-9). It needs something more than going diligently to church, and receiving the Lord's Supper, to take our souls to heaven. Means of grace and forms of religion are useful in their way, and God seldom does anything for His church without them. But let us beware of making shipwreck on the very lighthouse which helps to show the channel into the harbour. Once more I ask, "How do we do about our souls?"

(4) Let me ask, in the fourth place, whether we have received the forgiveness of our sins?

Few reasonable Englishmen would think of denying that they are sinners. Many perhaps would say that they are not as bad as many, and that they have not been so very wicked, and so forth. But few, I repeat, would pretend to say that they had always lived like angels, and never done, or said, or thought a wrong thing all their days. In short, all of us must confess that we are more or less "sinners," and, as sinners, are guilty before God; and, as guilty, we must be forgiven, or be lost and condemned forever at the last day.-Now it is the glory of the Christian religion that it provides for us the very forgiveness that we need-full, free, perfect, eternal, and complete. It is a leading article in that well-known creed which most Englishmen learn when they are children. They are taught to say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." This forgiveness of sins has been purchased for us by the eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has purchased it for us by

coming into the world to be our Saviour, and by living, dying, and rising again, as our Substitute, in our behalf. He has bought it for us at the price of His own most precious blood, by suffering in our place on the cross, and making satisfaction for our sins. But this forgiveness, great, and full, and glorious as it is, does not become the property of every man and woman as a matter of course. It is not a privilege which every member of a Church possesses, merely because he is a Churchman. It is a thing which each individual must receive for himself by his own personal faith, lay hold on by faith, appropriate by faith, and make his own by faith; or else, so far as he is concerned, Christ will have died in vain. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). No terms can be imagined more simple, and more suitable to man. As good old Latimer said in speaking of the matter of justification, "It is but believe and have." It is only faith that is required; and faith is nothing more than the humble, heartfelt trust of the soul which desires to be saved. Jesus is able and willing to save; but man must come to Jesus and believe. All that believe are at once justified and forgiven: but without believing there is no forgiveness at all.

Now here is exactly the point, I am afraid, where multitudes of English people fail, and are in imminent danger of being lost forever. They know that there is no forgiveness of sin excepting in Christ Jesus. They can tell you that there is no Saviour for sinners, no Redeemer, no Mediator, excepting Him who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, dead, and buried. But here they stop, and get no further! They never come to the point of actually laying hold of Christ by faith, and becoming one with Christ and Christ in them. They can say, He is a Saviour, but not my Saviour-a Redeemer, but not my Redeemer-a Priest, but not my Priest-an Advocate, but not my Advocate: and so they live and die unforgiven! No wonder that Martin Luther said, "Many are lost because they cannot use possessive pronouns." When this is the state of many in this day, no one need wonder that I ask men whether they have received the forgiveness of sins. An eminent Christian lady once said, in her old age,-"The beginning of eternal life in my soul, was a conversation I had with an old gentleman who came to visit my father when I was only a little girl. He took me by the hand one day and said, 'My dear child, my life is nearly over, and you will probably live many years after I am gone. But never forget two things. One is, that there is such a thing as having our sins forgiven while we live. The other is, that there is such a thing as knowing and feeling that we are forgiven.' I thank God I have never forgotten his words."-How is it with us? Let us not rest till we "know and feel", as the Prayer Book says, that we are forgiven. Once more let us ask, in the matter of forgiveness of sins, "How do we do?"

(5) Let me ask, in the fifth place, whether we know anything by experience of conversion to God.

Without conversion there is no salvation. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall never enter the kingdom of heaven."-"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."-"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."-"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." (Matthew 18:3; John 3:3; Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

We are all by nature so weak, so worldly, so earthly-minded, so inclined to sin, that without a thorough change we cannot serve God in life, and could not enjoy Him after death. Just as ducks, as soon as they are hatched, take naturally to water, so do children, as soon as they can do anything, take to selfishness, lying, and deceit; and none pray or love God, unless they are taught. High or low, rich or poor, gentle or simple, we all need a complete change-a change which is the

special office of the Holy Ghost to give us. Call it what you please-new birth, regeneration, renewal, new creation, quickening, repentance-the thing must be had if we are to be saved: and if we have the thing it will be seen.

Sense of sin and deep hatred of it, faith in Christ and love to Him, delight in holiness and longing after more of it, love for God's people and distaste for the things of the world,-these, these are the signs and evidences which always accompany conversion. Myriads around us, it may be feared, know nothing about it. They are, in Scripture language, dead, and asleep, and blind, and unfit for the kingdom of God. Year after year, perhaps, they go on repeating the words of the creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost;" but they are utterly ignorant of His changing operations on the inward man. Sometimes they flatter themselves they are born again, because they have been baptised, and go to church, and receive the Lord's Supper; while they are totally destitute of the marks of the new birth, as described by John in his first Epistle. And all this time the words of Scripture are clear and plain,-"Except ye be converted, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom." (Matthew 18:3).

In times like these, no reader ought to wonder that I press the subject of conversion on men's souls. No doubt there are plenty of sham conversions in such a day of religious excitement as this. But bad coin is no proof that there is no good money: nay, rather it is a sign that there is some money current which is valuable, and is worth imitation. Hypocrites and sham Christians are indirect evidence that there is such a thing as real grace among men. Let us search our own hearts then, and see how it is with ourselves. Once more let us ask, in the matter of conversion, "How do we do?"

(6) Let me ask, in the sixth place, whether we know anything of practical Christian holiness?

It is as certain as anything in the Bible that "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). It is equally certain that it is the invariable fruit of saving faith, the real test of regeneration, the only sound evidence of indwelling grace, the certain consequence of vital union with Christ.

Holiness is not absolute perfection and freedom from all faults. Nothing of the kind! The wild words of some who talk of enjoying "unbroken communion with God for many months, are greatly to be deprecated, because they raise unscriptural expectations in the minds of young believers, and so do harm. Absolute perfection is for heaven, and not for earth, where we have a weak body, a wicked world, and a busy devil continually near our souls. Nor is real Christian holiness ever attained, or maintained, without a constant fight and struggle. The great Apostle, who said "I fight,-I labour,-I keep under my body and bring it into subjection" (1 Corinthians 9:27), would have been amazed to hear of sanctification without personal exertion, and to be told that believers only need to sit still, and everything will be done for them!

Yet, weak and imperfect as the holiness of the best saints may be, it is a real true thing, and has a character about it as unmistakable as light and salt. It is not a thing which begins and ends with noisy profession: it will be seen much more than heard. Genuine Scriptural holiness will make a man do his duty at home and by the fireside, and adorn his doctrine in the little trials of daily life. It will exhibit itself in passive graces as well as in active. It will make a man humble, kind, gentle, unselfish, good-tempered, considerate of others, loving, meek, and forgiving. It will not constrain him to go out of the world, and shut himself up in a cave, like a hermit. But it will make him do his duty in that state to which God has called him, on Christian principles, and after the pattern of

Christ.

Such holiness, I know well, is not common. It is a style of practical Christianity which is painfully rare in these days. But I can find no other standard of holiness in the Word of God,- no other which comes up to the pictures drawn by our Lord and His Apostles. In an age like this no reader can wonder if I press this subject also on men's attention. Once more let us ask-In the matter of holiness, how is it with our souls? "How do we do?"

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Sense of sin and deep hatred of it, faith in Christ and love to Him, delight in holiness and longing after more of it, love for God's people and distaste for the things of the world,-these, these are the signs and evidences which always accompany conversion. Myriads around us, it may be feared, know nothing about it. They are, in Scripture language, dead, and asleep, and blind, and unfit for the kingdom of God. Year after year, perhaps, they go on repeating the words of the creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost;" but they are utterly ignorant of His changing operations on the inward man. Sometimes they flatter themselves they are born again, because they have been baptised, and go to church, and receive the Lord's Supper; while they are totally destitute of the marks of the new birth, as described by John in his first Epistle. And all this time the words of Scripture are clear and plain,-"Except ye be converted, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom." (Matthew 18:3).

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(6) Let me ask, in the sixth place, whether we know anything of practical Christian holiness?

It is as certain as anything in the Bible that "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). It is equally certain that it is the invariable fruit of saving faith, the real test of regeneration, the only sound evidence of indwelling grace, the certain consequence of vital union with Christ.

Holiness is not absolute perfection and freedom from all faults. Nothing of the kind! The wild words of some who talk of enjoying "unbroken communion with God for many months, are greatly to be deprecated, because they raise unscriptural expectations in the minds of young believers, and so do harm. Absolute perfection is for heaven, and not for earth, where we have a weak body, a wicked world, and a busy devil continually near our souls. Nor is real Christian holiness ever attained, or maintained, without a constant fight and struggle. The great Apostle, who said "I fight,-I labour,-I keep under my body and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. ix. 27), would have been amazed to hear of sanctification without personal exertion, and to be told that believers only need to sit still, and everything will be done for them!

Yet, weak and imperfect as the holiness of the best saints may be, it is a real true thing, and has a character about it as unmistakable as light and salt. It is not a thing which begins and ends with noisy profession: it will be seen much more than heard. Genuine Scriptural holiness will make a man do his duty at home and by the fireside, and adorn his doctrine in the little trials of daily life. It will exhibit itself in passive graces as well as in active. It will make a man humble, kind, gentle, unselfish, good-tempered, considerate of others, loving, meek, and forgiving. It will not constrain him to go out of the world, and shut himself up in a cave, like a hermit. But it will make him do his duty in that state to which God has called him, on Christian principles, and after the pattern of Christ.

Such holiness, I know well, is not common. It is a style of practical Christianity which is painfully rare in these days. But I can find no other standard of holiness in the Word of God,-no other which comes up to the pictures drawn by our Lord and His Apostles. In an age like this no reader can wonder if I press this subject also on men's attention. Once more let us ask-In the matter of holiness, how is it with our souls? "How do we do?"

(9) Let me ask, in the ninth place, whether we know anything of living the life of habitual communion with Christ?

By "communion," I mean that habit of "abiding in Christ" which our Lord speaks of, in the fifteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, as essential to Christian fruitfulness (John 15:4-8). Let it be distinctly understood that union with Christ is one thing, and communion is another. There can be no communion with the Lord Jesus without union first; but unhappily there may be union with the Lord Jesus, and afterwards little or no communion at all. The difference between the two things is not the difference between two distinct steps, but the higher and lower ends of an inclined plane. Union is the common privilege of all who feel their sins, and truly repent, and come to Christ by faith, and are accepted, forgiven, and justified in Him. Too many believers, it may be feared, never get beyond this stage! Partly from ignorance, partly from laziness, partly from the fear of man, partly from secret love of the world, partly from some unmortified besetting sin, they are content with a little faith, and a little hope, and a little peace, and a little measure of holiness. And they live on all their lives in this condition, doubting, weak, hesitant, and bearing fruit only "thirty-fold" to the very end of their days!

Communion with Christ is the privilege of those who are continually striving to grow in grace, and faith, and knowledge, and conformity to the mind of Christ in all things-who "forget what is behind," and "do not consider themselves yet to have taken hold of it, but "press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Php_3:13-14) Union is the

bud, but communion is the flower: union is the baby, but communion is the strong man. He that has union with Christ does well; but he that enjoys communion with Him does far better. Both have one life, one hope, one heavenly seed in their hearts,-one Lord, one Saviour, one Holy Spirit, one eternal home: but union is not as good as communion! The grand secret of communion with Christ is to be continually "living the life of faith in Him," and drawing out of Him every hour the supply that every hour requires. To me, said St. Paul, "to live is Christ."-I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Galatians 2:20; Php_1:21).

Communion like this is the secret of the abiding "joy and peace in believing," which eminent saints like Bradford and Rutherford notoriously possessed. None were ever more humble, or more deeply convinced of their own infirmities and corruption. They would have told you that the seventh chapter of Romans precisely described their own experience. They would have endorsed every word of the "Confession" put into the mouths of true believers, in our Prayer-book Communion Service. They would have said continually, "The remembrance of our sins is grievous to us; the burden of them is intolerable." But they were ever looking unto Jesus, and in Him they were ever able to rejoice.-Communion like this is the secret of the splendid victories which such men as these won over sin, the world, and the fear of death. They did not sit still idly, saying, "I leave it all to Christ to do for me," but, strong in the Lord, they used the Divine nature He had implanted in them, boldly and confidently, and were "more than conquerors through Him who loved them." (Romans 8:37). Like St. Paul they would have said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." (Php_4:13).

Ignorance of this life of communion is one among many reasons why so many in this age are hankering after the Confessional, and strange views of the "real presence" in the Lord's Supper. Such errors often spring from imperfect knowledge of Christ, and obscure views of the life of faith in a risen, living, and interceding Saviour. Is communion with Christ like this a common thing? Alas! It is very rare indeed! The greater part of believers seem content with the barest elementary knowledge of justification by faith, and half-a-dozen other doctrines, and go doubting, limping, halting, groaning along the way to heaven, and experience little of the sense of victory or of joy.

The Churches of these latter days are full of weak, powerless, and uninfluential believers, saved at last, "but so as by fire," but never shaking the world, and knowing nothing of an "abundant entrance." (1 Corinthians 3:15; 2 Peter 1:11). Despondency and Feeble-mind and Much-afraid, in "Pilgrim's Progress," reached the celestial city as really and truly as Valiant-for-the-truth and Greatheart. But they certainly did not reach it with the same comfort, and did not do a tenth part of the same good in the world! I fear there are many like them in these days! When things are so in the Churches, no reader can wonder that I inquire how it is with our souls. Once more I ask-In the matter of communion with Christ, "How do we do?

(10) Let me ask, in the tenth and last place, whether we know anything of being ready for Christ's second coming?

That He will come again the second time is as certain as anything in the Bible. The world has not yet seen the last of Him. As surely as He went up visibly and in the body on the Mount of Olives before the eyes of His disciples, so surely will he come again in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory (Acts 1:11). He will come to raise the dead, to change the living, to reward His saints, to punish the wicked, to renew the earth, and take the curse away-to purify the world, even

as He purified the temple-and to set up a kingdom where sin shall have no place, and holiness shall be the universal rule. The Creeds which we repeat and profess to believe, continually declare that Christ is coming again.

The early Christians made it a part of their religion to look for His return. Backward they looked to the cross and the atonement for sin, and rejoiced in Christ crucified. Upward they looked to Christ at the right hand of God, and rejoiced in Christ interceding. Forward they looked to the promised return of their Master, and rejoiced in the thought that they would see Him again. And we ought to do the same.

What have we really got from Christ? And what do we know of Him? And what do we think of Him? Are we living as if we long to see Him again, and love His appearing?-Readiness for that appearing is nothing more than being a real, consistent Christian. It requires no man to cease from his daily business. The farmer need not give up his farm, nor the shopkeeper his counter, nor the doctor his patients, nor the carpenter his hammer and nails, nor the bricklayer his mortar and trowel, nor the blacksmith his smithy. Each and all cannot do better than be found doing his duty, but doing it as a Christian, and with a heart packed up and ready to be gone. In the face of truth like this no reader can feel surprised if I ask, How is it with our souls in the matter of Christ's second coming? The world is growing old and running to seed. The vast majority of Christians seem like the men in the time of Noah and Lot, who were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, planting and building, up to the very day when flood and fire came. Those words of our Master are very solemn and heart-searching, -"Remember Lot's wife."-"Take heed lest at any time your heart be overcharged with the cares of this life, and that day come upon you unawares." (Luke 17:32; Luke 21:34). Once more I ask-In the matter of readiness for Christ's second coming, "How are we doing?

I end my inquiries here. I might easily add to them; but I trust I have said enough, at the beginning of this volume, to stir up self-inquiry and self-inquiry and self-examination in many minds. God is my witness that I have said nothing that I do not feel of paramount importance to my own soul. I only want to do good to others.

Let me now conclude with a few words of practical application.

(a) Is any reader of this paper asleep and utterly thoughtless about Christianity?

Oh, awake and sleep no more! Look at the churchyards and cemeteries. One by one the people around you are dropping into them, and you must lie there one day. Look forward to a world to come, and lay your hand on your heart, and say, if you dare, that you ready to die and meet God. Ah! You are like one sleeping in a boat drifting down the stream towards the falls of Niagara! "What meanest thou, oh sleeper! Arise and call on thy God!"-"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light!"" (Jonah 1:6; Ephesians 5:14).

(b) Is any reader of this paper feeling self-condemned, and afraid that there is no hope for his soul?

Cast aside your fears, and accept the offer of our Lord Jesus Christ to sinners. Hear Him saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." (John 7:37). Him that cometh unto me I will in

no wise cast out." (John 6:37).

Doubt not that these words are for you as well as for anyone else. Bring all your sins, and unbelief, and sense of guilt, and unfitness, and doubts, and infirmities-bring all to Christ. "This man receiveth sinners," and He will receive you (Luke 15:2). Do not stand still, wavering between two opinions, and waiting for a convenient season. On your feet! He's calling you. Come to Christ this very day (Mark 10:49).

(c) Is any reader of this paper a professing believer in Christ, but a believer without much joy and peace and comfort?

Take advice this day. Search your own heart, and see whether the fault is not entirely your own. Very likely you are sitting at ease, content with a little faith, and a little repentance, a little grace and a little sanctification, and unconsciously shrinking back from extremes. You will never be a very happy Christian at this rate, if you live to the age of Methuselah. Change your plan, if you love life and would see good days, without delay. Come out boldly, and act decidedly. Be thorough, thorough, very through in your Christianity, and set your face fully towards the sun. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you. Strive to get nearer to Christ, to abide in Him, to cleave to Him, and to sit at His feet like Mary, and drink full draughts out of the fountain of life. "These things," says St. John, "we write unto you that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:4). "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." (1 John 1:7).

(d) Is any reader of this paper a believer oppressed with doubts and fears, on account of his feebleness, infirmity, and sense of sin?

Remember the text that says of Jesus, A bruised reed will He not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." (Matthew 12:20). Take comfort in the thought that this text is for you. What though your faith be weak? It is better than no faith at all. The least grain of life is better than death. Perhaps you are expecting too much in this world. Earth is not heaven. You are yet in the body. Expect little from self, but much from Christ. Look more to Jesus, and less to self.

(e) Finally, is any reader of this paper sometimes downcast by the trials he meets with on the way to heaven, bodily trials, family trials, trials of circumstances, trials from neighbours, and trials from the world?

Look up to a sympathising Saviour at God's right hand, and pour out your heart before Him. He can be touched with the feelings of your trials, for He Himself suffered when He was tempted.-Are you alone? So was He. Are you misrepresented and slandered? So was He. Are you forsaken by friends? So was He. Are you persecuted? So was He. Are you wearied in body and grieved in spirit? So was He. Yes! He can feel for you, and He can help as well as feel. Then learn to draw nearer to Christ. The time is short. Yet in a little while, and all will be over: we shall soon be "with the Lord." "There is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off." (Proverbs 23:18). "You have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry." (Hebrews 10:36-37).

Chapter 68

Seven Bishops

[chapter taken from]

LIGHT FROM OLD TIMES;

OR, Protestant Facts and Men WITH AN INTRODUCTION FOR OUR OWN DAYS.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

”EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS,” “KNOTS UNTIED,” ETC., ETC.

”If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to

the battle?"- 1 Corinthians 14:8.

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JAMES II. AND THE SEVEN BISHOPS. THE reign of James II. is a period of English history which has left a greater mark on this country than any period since the Reformation. It is a period to which we owe our civil and religious liberties, and the maintenance of our Protestantism, and as such it deserves the attention of every true-hearted Englishman. I propose in this paper to give a general sketch of the leading events in the reign of James II., and a more particular account of the famous trial of the Seven Bishops. If the whole subject does not throw broad, clear light on our position and duties in the present day, I am greatly mistaken.

The reign of James II. was a singularly short one. It began in February, 1685, and ended in December, 1688. Short as his reign was, it is no exaggeration to say that it contains a more disgraceful list of cruel, stupid, unjust, and tyrannical actions, for which the Sovereign alone can be held responsible, than the reign of any constitutional monarch of this land, with the single exception of Bloody Mary. It is a reign, in fact, in our English annals without one redeeming feature. Not one grand victory stirs our patriotic feelings; not one first-class statesman or general, and hardly a bishop beside Ken and Pearson, rouses our admiration; and the majestic name of Sir Isaac Newton among men of science stands almost alone. There were few giants in the land. It

was an era of mediocrity; it was an age not of gold, or silver, or brass, or iron, but of lead. We turn away from the picture with shame and disgust, and it abides in our memories as a picture in which there is no light and all shade.

The chief explanation of this singularly disgraceful reign is to be found in the fact that James II. was a narrow-minded, obstinate, zealous, thorough-going member of the Church of Rome. As soon as he ascended the throne he surrounded himself with priests and Popish advisers, and placed confidence in none but Papists. Within a month of his accession, says Evelyn in his diary, “the Romanists were swarming at Court with greater confidence than had ever been seen in England since the Reformation.”1 At his coronation he refused to receive the Sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England. He set up a Popish chapel at his Court, and attended Mass. He strained every nerve throughout his reign to encourage the spread of Popery and discourage Protestantism. He procured the visit of a Popish nuncio, and demeaned himself before him as no English sovereign ever did since the days of King John. He told Barillon, the French Ambassador, that his first object was to obtain for the Romanists the free exercise of their religion, and then at last to give them absolute supremacy.2 All this was done in a country which, little more than a century before, had been freed from Popery by the martyred Reformers, and blessed with organized Protestantism by the reign of Elizabeth. Can any one wonder that the God of Providence was displeased, and refused to show the light of His countenance on the land? James II.'s reign was an unhappy and discreditable time in the annals of England, because the King was a thorough-going Papist.

The second explanation of the disgraceful character of James II.'s times is to be found in the low moral condition of the whole nation when he came to the throne. The misgovernment of James I. and Charles I., the semi-Popish proceedings of Archbishop Laud, the fierce civil war of the Commonwealth, the iron rule of Oliver Cromwell, the rebound into unbridled licentiousness which attended the Restoration and reign of Charles II., the miserably unwise and unjust Act of Uniformity, the unceasing persecution of true religion, under the pretence of doing God service, and making men of one mind-all these things had borne their natural fruit. The England of James II.'s time was morally vile and rotten to the core. The Court seems to have thrown aside common decency, and to have regarded adultery and fornication as no sin at all. Evelyn's description of what he saw at Whitehall the very week that Charles II. died is sad and disgusting. On Sunday evening, the 1st of February, 1685, Evelyn, it seems, was at Whitehall. A week after he recorded his impressions of the scene which he then witnessed: “I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, and, as it were, total forgetfulness of God, it being Sunday evening. The King sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleveland, Mazarin, etc.: a French boy singing love songs in that glorious gallery; whilst above twenty of the great courtiers and other dissolute persons were at Basset around a large table, a bank of at least two thousand in gold before them.” On Monday morning, the 2nd of February, the King was struck with apoplexy.

Charles Knight (History of England) truly says:-

“The high public spirit, the true sense of honour, which had characterized the nobles and gentry of England during the Civil War, was lost in the selfishness, the meanness, the profligacy, of the twenty-eight years that succeeded the Restoration. Traitors were hatched in the sunshine of corruption. The basest expediency had been the governing principle of statesmen and lawyers;

the most abject servility had been the leading creed of divines. Loyalty always wore the livery of the menial. Patriotism was ever flaunting the badges of faction. The bulk of the people were unmoved by any proud resentments or eager hopes., They went on in their course of industrious occupation, without much caring whether they were under an absolute or a constitutional government, as long as they could eat, drink, and be merry. They had got rid of the Puritan severity; and if decency was outraged in the Court and laughed at on the stage, there was greater license for popular indulgences."

The leading statesmen were too often utterly untruthful, and ready to take bribes. The judges were, as a rule, mean, corrupt, ignorant creatures of the Court. The Church of England, which ought to have been a bulwark against wickedness, had never recovered the suicidal loss of its life-blood caused by the Act of Uniformity in 1662, and was a weak, timid, servile body. The bishops and clergy, with a few brilliant exceptions, were very unlike the Reformers, and always unwilling to find fault with any great man, or to dispute the Divine right of kings to do as they pleased. The Dissenters were crushed to the earth by petty intolerant restrictions; and, between fine, imprisonments and persecutions, were little able to do anything to mend the times, and could barely keep their heads above water.

Last, but not least, we must not forgot that for at least a hundred years England had been incessantly exposed to the untiring machinations of the Jesuits. Ever since the accession of Elizabeth, those mischievous agents of Popery had been compassing sea and land to undo the work of the Reformation, and to bring back our country to the thraldom of the Church of Rome. Disguised in every possible way, and professing anything by the Pope's permission and dispensation, in order to accomplish their end, these Jesuits throughout the days of the Stuarts were incessantly at work. To set Churchmen against Dissenters, Calvinists against Arminians, sect against sect, party against party, and so to weaken the Protestant cause, was their one constant employment. How much of the bitter divisions between Churchmen and Nonconformists, how much of the religious strife which defiled the early part of the seventeenth century is owing to the Jesuits, I believe the last day alone will declare. Those only who read "Panzani's Memoirs," or Dean Goode's "Rome's Tactics," can have any idea of the mischief they did. In short, if there ever was an era in modern history when a Popish King of England could promote Popery, and do deeds of astounding cruelty and injustice without let or hindrance, that era was the reign of James II. What might have been the final result, with such a king and such a field of action, if he had not gone too fast and overshot his mark, is impossible to say. God in His infinite goodness had mercy on England, and delivered us from his wicked designs. But the things that he did, while he reigned,3 and the singular manner in which he at last over-reached himself by the trial of the Seven Bishops, and lost his throne, ought never to be forgotten by any Englishman who is a true Protestant and loves his country.

There are five leading events, or salient points, in this reign, which are specially worth remembering. They follow each other in regular order, from the accession of James to his abdication. One common aim and object underlaid them all; that aim was to pull down Protestant-ism and to plant Popery on its ruins.

(1) The first disgraceful page in the history of James II.'s reign is his savage and brutal treatment of the Nonconformists and Dissenters. Our great historian, Macaulay, says: "He hated the Puritan

sect with a manifold hatred, theological and political, hereditary and personal. He regarded them as the foes of heaven as well as the foes of all legitimate authority in Church and State.”4 The plain truth is, that James, with all his natural dullness of character, had sense enough to know that for many years the most decided and zealous advocates of Protestantism had been the Nonconformists, and that when Churchmen under Archbishop Laud's mischievous influence had become lukewarm, Nonconformists had been the most inveterate enemies of Popery. Knowing this, he began his reign by attempting to crush the Nonconformists entirely. If his predecessors had chastised them with rods, he tried to chastise them with scorpions. If he could not convert them, he would silence them by prosecutions, fines, and imprisonments, and, like Pharaoh, “make their lives grievous” by hard measures. He argued, no doubt, that, if he could only stop the mouths of the Nonconformists, he would soon make short work of the Church of England, and he cunningly began with the weaker party. In both cases, happily, he reckoned without his host.

To describe how the unhappy Nonconformists at that period were summoned, fined, silenced, driven from their homes, and allowed no rest for the sole of their foot, would be an endless task. Two pictures will suffice to give an idea of the treatment to which they were subjected. One picture shall be taken from England, and the other from Scotland. Each picture shows things which happened with the King's sanction within three months after he came to the throne.

The English picture is the so-called trial of Baxter, the famous author of “The Saint's Rest,” a book which is deservedly held in honour down to this day. Baxter was tried at Westminster Hall before James' detestable tool, Chief Justice Jeffreys, in May, 1685. He was charged with having published seditious matter reflecting on the bishops, in his “Paraphrase on the New Testament.” A more absurd and unfounded accusation could not have been made. The book is still extant, and any one will see at a glance that there was no ground for the charge. From the very opening of the trial it was clear which way the verdict was intended to go. The Lord Chief Justice of England behaved as if he were counsel for the prosecution and not judge. He used abusive language towards the defendant, such as was more suited to Billingsgate than a court of law; while the counsel for the defence were brow-beaten, silenced, and put down, or else interrupted by violent invectives against their client. At one stage the Lord Chief Justice exclaimed: “This is an old rogue who hath poisoned the world with his Kidderminster doctrines. He encouraged all the women and maids to bring their bodkins and thimbles to carry on war against the King of ever blessed memory. An old schismatical knave! A hypocritical villain!” By and by he called Baxter “an old blockhead, an unthankful villain, a conceited, stubborn, fanatical dog.” “Hang him!” he said, “this one old fellow hath cast more reproaches on the constitution and discipline of our Church than will be wiped off for a hundred years. But I'll handle him for it; for he deserves to be whipped through the city.” Shortly afterwards, when Baxter began to say a few words on his own behalf, Jeffreys stopped him, crying out “Richard, Richard, dost thou think we'll hear thee poison the court? Richard, thou art an old fellow, and an old knave; thou hast written books enough to load a cart, every one as full of sedition, I might say of treason, as an egg is full of meat. Hadst thou been whipped out of thy writing trade forty years ago, it had been happy.” It is needless to say in such a court as this Baxter was at once found guilty. He was fined five hundred marks, which it was known he could not pay; condemned to lie in prison till he paid it, and bound over to good behaviour for seven years. And the issue of the matter was that the holy author of “The Saint's Rest,” a poor, old, diseased, childless widower, lay for two years in Southwark gaol.

The Scotch picture of the Nonconformists' sufferings under James II. is even blacker than the English one. I shall take it substantially from Wodrow's and Macaulay's history. In the very same month that Baxter was tried, two women named Margaret Maclachlan and Margaret Wilson, the former an aged widow, the latter a girl of eighteen, suffered death for their religion in Wigtonshire, at the hands of James II.'s myrmidons. They were both godly women, innocent of any crime but Nonconformity. They were offered their lives if they would abjure the cause of the insurgent covenanters, and attend the Episcopal worship. They both refused; and they were sentenced to be drowned. They were carried to a spot on the shore of the Solway Firth, which the tide overflowed twice a day, and were fastened to stakes fixed in the sand between high and low water-mark. The elder woman was placed nearest to the advancing water, in the hopes that her last agonies might terrify the younger one into submission. The sight was dreadful. But the courage of the young survivor did not fail. She saw her fellow-sufferer drowned, and saw the sea draw nearer and nearer to herself, but gave no signs of alarm. She prayed and sang verses of Psalms, till the waves choked her voice. When she had tasted the bitterness of death, she was, by cruel mercy, unbound and restored to life. When she came to herself, pitying friends and neighbours implored her to yield. “Dear Margaret,” they cried, “only say, God save the King.” The poor girl, true to her theology, gasped out, “May God save him if it be God's will.” Her friends crowded round the presiding officer, crying,” She has said it, indeed, sir, she has said it.” “Will she take the abjuration?” he sternly demanded. “Never,” she exclaimed. “I am Christ's; let me go.” And once more bound to the stake, the waters of the Solway closed over her for the last time. Her epitaph may be seen to this day in Wigton churchyard.

Such were the dealings of James with Protestant Nonconformists at the beginning of his reign. I make no comment on them. These two examples speak for themselves; and they do not stand alone. The story of the murder of John Brown, of Priesthill, by Claverhouse, is as sad as that of Margaret Wilson. No wonder that a deep dislike to Episcopacy is rooted down in the hearts of Scotch people to this very day! They never forget such stories as Margaret Wilson's. Even in England I wish I could add that vile prosecutions like that of Baxter had called forth any expression of disapproval from English Churchmen. But, alas! for a season, James persecuted and prospered, and no man opposed him.

(2) The second black page in the history of James II.'s reign is the detestable cruelty with which he punished those English counties which had taken any part in Monmouth's rebellion, in the autumn of 1685. Concerning that miserable rebellion there can, of course, be but one opinion among sensible men. It is vain to deny that the brief insurrection, which ended with the battle of Sedgemoor, was an enormous folly as well as a crime. We all know how Monmouth, its unhappy leader, paid for it by dying on the scaffold. But it is equally vain to deny that the bloodthirsty ferocity with which James avenged himself on all who had favoured Monmouth's cause, or taken arms in his support, is unparalleled in the annals of English History.

The proceedings of that military monster, Colonel Kirke, immediately after the defeat and dispersion of the rebel army, surpassed anything that we heard of in the Indian Mutiny. At Taunton he is said to have hanged at least a hundred so-called rebels within a week after the battle of Sedgemoor, and many without even the form of a trial. Not a few of his wretched victims were quartered, and their heads and limbs sent to be hanged in chains in the neighbouring villages. “So many dead bodies were quartered,” says Macaulay (i. 629), “that the executioner under the

gallows stood ankle deep in blood."

But even the diabolical cruelties of Colonel Kirke were surpassed by the execrable sentences of Judge Jeffreys, when he went on Circuit to the Assizes in Hampshire, Dorsetshire, and Somersetshire, two months after the battle of Sedgemoor. In Dorsetshire he hanged about seventy, in Somersetshire no less than two hundred and thirty-three. The number of those transported for life was 541. The greater part of these were poor ignorant rustics, many of them men of blameless private character, who had taken arms under the idea that Protestantism was at stake; and they died for no other offence than that of simply following Monmouth, a political adventurer, for a few short weeks. The Assize was long known as the bloody Assize. "In Somersetshire," says Macaulay, "on the green of every large village which had furnished Monmouth with soldiers, ironed corpses clattering in the wind, or human heads and quarters stuck on pole: poisoned the air, and made the traveller sick with horror. In many parishes the peasantry could not even assemble in God's house without seeing the ghastly face of some neighbour's skull grinning at them on the porch." In Hampshire, Jeffreys actually sentenced to death a venerable old lady named Lady Lisle, aged above seventy, for no other crime than that of affording temporary shelter to an insurgent; and nothing but the indignant remonstrance of the Winchester clergy prevented her being burned alive. Lord Feversham, the conqueror of Sedgemoor, and Lord Clarendon, the King's brother-in-law, in vain interceded for her. Jeffreys was allowed to work his will, and she was actually beheaded in Winchester market-place.

For all this abominable cruelty, James II. must always be held responsible. The vile agents who shed this blood were his tools, and he had only to speak the word and the work of death would have ceased. Hallam, the historian, expressly says (iii. 93) that the King was the author of all this bloodshed, and that Jeffreys afterward declared "he had not been bloody enough for his employer." But the real secret of the King's savage and detestable conduct was a determination to put down Protestantism by a reign of terror, and deter men from any future movement in its favour. And, after all, the truth must be spoken. James was a bigoted member of a Church which for ages has been too often "drunken with the blood of saints and the martyrs of Jesus." He only walked in the steps of the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands; in the steps of Charles IX. at the massacre of St. Bartholomew; in the steps of the Duke of Savoy in Piedmont, until Cromwell interfered and obliged him to cease; and in the steps of the hateful Spanish Inquisition. One thing is very certain: there never was a petty insurrection so ruthlessly quenched in blood as Monmouth's rebellion was quenched by James the Papist. Blood makes a great stain. He found to his cost one day that the blood shed by Kirke and Jeffreys with his sanction had cried to heaven, and was not forgotten. When the Prince of Orange landed at Torbay, the western counties joined him to a man, and forsook James.

(3) The third black page in the history of James II.'s reign was his daring attempt to gag the pulpit, and stop the mouths of all who preached against Popery.

Preaching in every age of the Church has always been God's chief instrument for setting forward religious truth, and checking error. Preaching was one principal agency by which the great work of the Reformation was effected in England. The Church of Rome knows that full well, and, wherever she dares, she has always endeavoured to exalt ceremonials and to depreciate the pulpit. To use old Latimer's quaint words, "Whenever the devil gets into a church, his plan is to cry, 'Up with

candles and down with preaching.'" Next to an open and free Bible, the greatest obstacle to the progress of Popery is a free pulpit, and the public exposition of God's Word. That James II., like all thorough-going Papists, knew all this, we cannot doubt for a moment. We need not, therefore, wonder that in 1686 he commenced an attack on the English pulpit. If he could once silence that mighty organ, he hoped to pave the way for the advance of Popery. “He took on himself,' says Macaulay (ii. 91)-

“To charge the clergy of the Established Church to abstain from touching on controverted points of doctrine in their discourses. Thus, while sermons in defence of the Roman Catholic religion were preached every Sunday and holiday in the Royal Chapel, the Church of the State, the Church of the great majority of the nation, was forbidden to explain and vindicate her own principles.”

William Sherlock, Master of the Temple, was the first to feel the royal displeasure. His pension was stopped, and he was severely reprimanded. John Sharpe, Dean of Norwich, and Rector of St. Giles', gave even greater offence. In reply to an appeal from a parishioner, he delivered an animated discourse against the pretensions of the Church of Rome. Compton, the Bishop of London, was immediately ordered to suspend him, and on his objecting to do so, he was himself suspended from all spiritual functions, and the charge of his diocese was committed to two time-serving prelates named Spratt and Crewe. Compton was already famous for his dislike to Popery. When James came to the throne he had boldly declared in the House of Lords that “the Constitution was in danger.” We can well understand that James was anxious to suppress him. (Ranke, iv. 277.)

Singularly enough, this high-handed proceeding worked round for good. For the first time since his accession to the throne, James received a distinct check. The attacks on Sherlock, Sharpe, and Bishop Compton, roused the spirit of the whole body of the English clergy. To preach against the errors of Popery was now regarded as a point of honour and duty. The London clergy set an example which was bravely followed all over the country. The King's prohibition to handle controversial subjects was everywhere disregarded. It was impossible to punish an offence which was committed every Sunday by thousands of divines from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-upon-Tweed; and from the Land's End to the North Foreland. Moreover, the spirit of the congregations was thoroughly roused. There were old men living in London whose grandfathers had heard Latimer preach, and had seen John Rogers burnt at Smithfield. There were others whose parents had seen Laud beheaded for trying to Romanize the Church, and prosecuting Protestant Churchmen. Such men as these were thoroughly stirred and disgusted by James's movement; and if the clergy had been silent about Popery, they would have resented their silence as unfaithfulness and sin.

The printing-presses, besides, both at London, Oxford, and Cambridge, poured forth a constant stream of anti-Popish literature, and supplied all who could read with ample information about every error of the Church of Rome. Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Sherlock, Patrick, Tenison, Wake, Fowler, Clagett, and many others wrote numerous treatises of all kinds to expose Popery, which exist to this day, and which at the time produced an immense effect. Many of these are to be found in the three huge folios called “Gibson's Preservative,” and Macaulay estimates that as many as 20,000 pages of them are to be found in the British Museum.

The whole affair is a striking instance of God's power to bring good out of evil. The very step by which this unhappy Popish monarch thought to silence his strongest foe proved the first step towards his own ruin. Up to this date he seemed to carry everything before him. From this date he began to fall. From the moment he put forth his hand to touch the ark, to interfere with the Word of God, to silence its preachers, he never prospered, and every succeeding step in his reign was in the downward direction. Like Haman, he had dared to meddle with God's peculiar servants, and like Haman he fell, never to rise again.

(4) The fourth black page in the history of James II.'s reign is his tyrannical invasion of the rights of the two great Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in 1687.

The influence of these two venerable bodies in England has always been very great, and I trust they will always be so governed that it will never become less. But it is no exaggeration to say that it never was so great as towards the end of the seventeenth century. Beside them there were no universities or colleges. King's College, London; University College, Durham; St. Aidan's; Highbury; St. Bees, and Cuddesdon did not exist. Oxford and Cambridge stood alone. They were the fountains of all the learning of the day, and the training school of all the ablest divines and lawyers, poets and orators of the land. Even among the Puritans it would be hard to find any man of ability who had not begun his career and picked up his first knowledge at some college in Oxford or Cambridge. In short, the two Universities were the intellectual heart of England, and every pulsation of that heart was felt throughout the kingdom.

All this, we need not doubt, even the dull mind of James II. clearly perceived. He saw that he had little chance of Romanizing England until he could get hold of the two Universities, and this he resolved to try. He was encouraged, probably, to make the attempt by the notorious loyalty to the House of Stuart which Oxford and Cambridge had always exhibited. Both the Universities had suffered heavily for their attachment to the King's side during the unhappy Commonwealth wars. Many a Head of a College had been displaced and his position filled by one of Cromwell's Puritans. Owen had ruled at Christ Church and Goodwin at Magdalen. Many a College plate-chest was sadly empty compared to its state in olden times, having given up its silver to be melted down in aid of Charles I., and to buy arms and ammunition. Ever since the Reformation, the two Universities had exhibited the most obsequious subserviency to the Crown, had stoutly maintained the divine right of kings, and had often approached the throne in addresses full of fulsome adulation. I believe that James flattered himself that they would go on yielding everything to his will, and fondly dreamed that in a few years they would be completely under the Pope's command, and the education of young England would be in the hands of the Church of Rome. It was a grand and intoxicating prospect. But he reckoned without his host. He little knew the spirit that was yet left by the Isis and the Cam.

James opened his campaign and crossed the Rubicon by attacking the University of Cambridge. The law was clear and distinct, that no person should be admitted to any degree without taking the “Oath of Supremacy,” and another oath called the “Oath of Obedience.” Nevertheless, in February, 1687, a royal letter was sent to Cambridge directing that a Benedictine monk, named Alban Francis, should be admitted as Master of Arts. Between reverence for the King and reverence for their own statutes, the academical officers were naturally placed in a most perplexing position. To their infinite credit they took the right course, and steadily refused to admit the King's nominee

unless he took the oaths. The result was that the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge was summoned to appear before the New Court of High Commission, presided over by Jeffreys, together with deputies appointed by the Senate. When the day arrived, Dr. Pechell, the Vice-Chancellor, a man of no particular vigour or ability, accompanied by eight distinguished men, of whom the famous Isaac Newton was one, appeared before this formidable tribunal. Their case was as clear as daylight. They offered to prove that they had done nothing contrary to law and practice, and had only carried out the plain meaning of their statutes. But Jeffreys would hear nothing. He treated the whole party with as much vulgar insolence as if they were felons being tried before him at the Old Bailey, and they were thrust out of court without a hearing. They were soon called in and informed that the Commission had determined to deprive Pechell of the Vice-Chancellorship, and to suspend him from all the emoluments to which he was entitled as Master of a College. “As for you,” said Jeffreys to Isaac Newton and his seven companions, with disgusting levity, “I send you home with a text of Scripture, 'Go your way and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.'”

From Cambridge James turned to Oxford. Here, it must be avowed, he began his operations with great advantages. Popery had already effected a lodgment in the citadel, and got allies in the heart of the University. Already a Roman Catholic named Massey had been made Dean of Christ Church by the nomination of the Crown, and the House had submitted. Already University College was little better than a Romish seminary by the perversion of the Master, Obadiah Walker, to Popery. Mass was daily said in both Colleges. But this state of things had caused an immense amount of smouldering dissatisfaction throughout Oxford. The undergraduates hooted Walker's congregation, and chanted satirical ballads under his windows without the interference of Proctors. The burden of one of their songs has been preserved to this day, and you might have heard at night in High Street, near the fine old college, such words as these:- “Here old Obadiah

Sings Ave Maria.” In short, any careful observer might have foreseen that Oxford feeling towards the King was undergoing a great change, and that it would take very little to create a blaze.

Just at this crisis the President of Magdalen College died, and it became the duty of the Fellows, according to their statutes, to elect a successor, either from their own society or from New College. With an astounding mixture of folly and audacity, the King actually recommended the Fellows to elect to the vacant place a man named Anthony Farmer, a person of infamous moral character, utterly destitute of any claim to govern a college; a drunkard, a Papist, and a person disqualified by the statutes of Waynflete, as he was neither Fellow of New College nor of Magdalen. To their infinite credit the Fellows of Magdalen, by an overwhelming majority, refused to elect the King's nominee, resolved to face his displeasure, and deliberately chose for their President a man named John Hough, a Fellow of eminent virtue and prudence. At once they were treated with the utmost violence, injustice, and indignity. The King insisted on their accepting another President of his own selection, and commanded them to take a mean creature of the Court named Parker, Bishop of Oxford. The Fellows firmly refused, saying they had lawfully elected Hough, and they would have no other President. In vain they were threatened and insulted, first by the King himself, and then by a Special Commission sent down from London. They stood firm, and would not give way one inch. The Commission finally pronounced Hough an intruder, dismissed him from his presidency, and charged the Fellows no longer to recognise his authority, but to assist at the admission of the Bishop of Oxford. It was then that the gallant Hough publicly addressed the following remarkable words to the Commission: “My Lords, you have this day deprived me of my freehold. I hereby

protest against all your proceedings as illegal, unjust, and null, and I appeal from you to our sovereign Lord the King in his Courts of Justice.” But though thus driven from his office by force, Hough was backed by the general feeling of the whole University, and of almost every one connected with Magdalen. At the installation of his successor (Parker) only two Fellows out of forty attended the ceremony. The college porter, -Robert Gardner, threw down his keys. The butler refused to scratch Hough's name out of the buttery books. No blacksmith in all the city of Oxford could be found to force the locks of the President's lodge, and the Commissioners were obliged to employ their own servants to break open the doors with iron bars.

But the matter did not end here. On the day that Hough was expelled from his Presidency and Parker installed, the Commissioners invited the Vice-Chancellor of 1687 to dine with them. The Vice-Chancellor that year was Gilbert Ironside, Warden of Wadham, and afterwards Bishop of Hereford. He refused. “My taste,” he said, “differs from that of Colonel Kirke's. I cannot eat my meals with appetite under a gallows.” The Scholars of Magdalen refused to pull off their caps to the new ruler of Magdalen. The Demies refused to perform their academical exercises and attend lectures, saying that they were deprived of their lawful governor, and would submit to no usurped authority. Attempts were made to bribe them by the offer of some of the lucrative fellowships declared vacant. But one undergraduate after another refused, and one who did accept was turned out of the Hall by the rest. The expulsion of the Fellows was followed by the expulsion of a crowd of Demies. A few weeks after this Parker died, some said of mortification and a broken heart. He was buried in the antechapel of Magdalen; but no stone marks his grave. Then the King's whole plan was carried into effect. The College was turned into a Popish seminary, and Bonaventura Giffard, a Roman Catholic Bishop, was made President. In one day twelve Papists were made Fellows. The Roman Catholic service was performed in the chapel, and the whole work of violence and spoliation was completed.

Such were the dealings of James II. with Oxford and Cambridge. Their gross injustice was only equalled by their gross impolicy. In his furious zeal for Popery, the King completely over-reached himself. He alienated the affections of the two most powerful educational institutions in the land, and filled the hearts of thousands of the ablest minds in England with a deep sense of wrong. And when the end came, as it did within eighteen months, he found that no places deserted his cause so readily as the two over which he had ridden roughshod, the two great English Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

(5) The fifth dark page in the history of James II.'s reign is his rash attempt to trample down the English nobility and gentry in the counties, and substitute for them servile creatures of his own who would help forward his designs.

In order to understand this move of the misguided King, it must be remembered that he wanted to get a new House of Commons, a House which would do his bidding and not oppose his Romanizing plans. He knew enough of England to be aware that ever since the days of Simon de Montfort every intelligent Englishman has attached great importance to an elected Parliament. He had not entirely forgotten the iron hand of the Long Parliament in his father's days. He rightly judged that he would never succeed in overthrowing Protestantism without the sanction of a House of Commons, and that sanction he resolved to try to obtain.

“Having determined to pack a Parliament,” says Macaulay, “James set himself energetically and methodically to the work. A proclamation appeared in the Gazette” (at the end of 1687) “announcing that the King had determined to revise the Commissions of Peace and of Lieutenancy, and to retain in public employment only such gentlemen as would support his policy.” At the same time a Committee of Seven Privy Councillors sat at Whitehall, including Father Petre, an ambitious Jesuit, for the purpose of “regulating,” as it was called, all the municipal corporations in boroughs.

“The persons on whom James principally relied for assistance [continues Macaulay], were the Lord Lieutenants. Every Lord Lieutenant received written orders directing him to go down immediately into his county. There he was to summon before him all his deputies, and all the Justices of the Peace, and to put to them a set of interrogatories framed for the purpose of finding out how they would act at a general election. He was to take down their answers in writing, and transmit them to the Government. He was to furnish a list of such Romanists and Protestant Dissenters as were best qualified for commissions as magistrates, and for command in the militia. He was also to examine the state of all the boroughs in his county, and to make such reports as might be needful to guide the London board of regulators. And it was intimated to each Lord Lieutenant that he must perform these duties himself, and not delegate them to any other person.”

The first effect of these audacious and unconstitutional orders might have opened the eyes of any king of common sense. The spirit of the old Barons who met at Runnymede proved to be not extinct. Even before this time the Duke of Norfolk had stopped at the door of the Popish chapel which James attended, and when James remonstrated and said, “Your Grace's father would have gone farther,” had boldly replied, “Your Majesty's father would not have gone so far.” But now it became clear that many other peers beside the Duke of Norfolk were Protestant to the backbone. Half the Lord Lieutenants in England flatly refused to do the King's dirty work, and to stoop to the odious service imposed on them. They were immediately dismissed, and inferior men, of more pliant and supple consciences were pitchforked into their places.

The list of high-minded noblemen who resisted the King's will on this memorable occasion is even now most remarkable, and deserves to be had in remembrance. One great name follows another in grand succession in Macaulay's pages, until one's breath is almost taken away by the sight of the King's folly. In Essex, the Earl of Oxford; in Staffordshire, the Earl of Shrewsbury; in Sussex, the Earl of Dorset; in Yorkshire, the Duke of Somerset in the East Riding, and Lord Fauconberg in the North Riding; in Shropshire, Lord Newport; in Lancashire, the Earl of Derby; in Wiltshire, the Earl of Pembroke; in Leicestershire, the Earl of Rutland; in Buckinghamshire, the Earl of Bridgwater; in Cumberland, the Earl of Thanet; in Warwickshire, the Earl of Northampton; in Oxfordshire, the Earl of Abingdon; in Derbyshire, the Earl of Scarsdale; and in Hampshire, the Earl of Gainsborough-all were summarily sent to the rightabout; and for what? Simply, as every one knew, because they preferred a good conscience to Crown favour, principle to place, and Protestantism to Popery. The gallant words of the Earl of Oxford, who was turned out in Essex, when the King demanded an explanation of his refusal to obey, spoke the sentiments of all: “Sir, I will stand by your Majesty against all enemies to the last drop of blood; but this is a matter of conscience, and I cannot comply.”

A viler piece of ingratitude than this move of James can hardly be conceived. Most of the noblemen whom he dismissed were the representatives of great families who, in the Commonwealth wars, made immense sacrifices in his father's cause. Some of them, like the Earl of Derby, could tell of fathers and grandfathers who had died for King Charles. Many of them could show swords and helmets hanging over their Elizabethan fireplaces which had been notched and dented in fighting against the Parliamentary forces at Edgehill, Marston Moor, and Naseby. Not a few of them could point to ruined castles and halls, to parks despoiled of their timber, plate-chests emptied of their contents, and properties sadly impoverished in the days when Cavaliers fought against Roundheads. And now, forsooth, the son of the martyred Charles, as they had fondly called him, turned round upon them, trampled on their feelings, and required them to lie down, and let him walk over their consciences. Can we wonder that they keenly resented the King's conduct! At one fell swoop he destroyed the affection of half the leading men in the English counties, and from being his friends they became his foes.

In fact, the ingratitude of the King was now only equalled by his folly and impolicy. No sooner was his new machinery for packing a subservient Parliament put in motion, than it broke down and utterly failed. From every corner of the realm there came the tidings of failure. The new Lord Lieutenants could do nothing. The Magistrates and candidates for Parliament evaded inquiries, and refused to pledge themselves to do the King's will. Arguments, promises, and threats were alike in vain. A deep-rooted suspicion had got into men's minds that James wanted to subvert Protestantism, and re-introduce Popery, and they would not give way. From Norfolk, the Duke of Norfolk reported that out of seventy leading gentlemen in the county only six held out any hopes of supporting the Court. In Hertfordshire the Squires told Lord Rochester that they would send no man to Parliament who would vote for taking away the safeguards of the Protestant religion. The gentry of Bucks, Shropshire, and Wiltshire held the same language. The Magistrates and Deputy-Lieutenants of Cornwall and Devonshire told Lord Bath, without a dissenting voice, that they would sacrifice life and property for the Crown, but that the Protestant religion was clearer to them than either. “And, Sir,” said Lord Bath to the King, “if your Majesty dismisses them, their successors would give the same answer.” In Lancashire, a very Romish county, the new Lord Lieutenant reported that one-third of the Magistrates were opposed to the Court. In Hampshire the whole of the Magistrates, excepting five or six, declared they would take no part in the civil or military government of the county while the King was represented there by the Duke of Berwick, a Papist.

The sum of the whole matter is this. The attack of James on the independence of the county gentry and nobility was as completely a failure as his attack on the pulpit and the Universities. It was worse than this. It sowed the seeds of disaffection to his person from one end of England to the other, and alienated from him thousands of leading men, who, under other circumstances, would perhaps have stood by him to the last. And the result was, that when the Prince of Orange landed at Torbay a year afterwards, he found friends in half the counties in England. By the over-ruling providence of God and his own judicial blindness, James paved the way to his own ruin. “The Thanes fell from him.” The nobility, one after another, forsook him, and he was left friendless and alone.

I come now to the closing scene in King James' disgraceful reign, the prosecution and trial of the Seven Bishops. The importance of that event is so great, and the consequences which resulted

from it were so immense, that I must enter somewhat fully into its details. I do so the more willingly because attempts are sometimes made now-a-days to misrepresent this trial, to place the motives of the bishops in a wrong light, and to obscure the real issues which were at stake. Some men will do anything in these times to mystify the public mind, to pervert history, and to whitewash the Church of Rome. But I have made it my business to search up every authority I can find about this era. I have no doubt whatever what is the true account of the whole affair. And I shall try to set before my readers the “thing as it is.”

The origin of the trial of the Seven Bishops was a proclamation put forth by James II., on the 27th of April, 1688, called the “Declaration of Indulgence.” It was a Declaration which differed little from one put forth in April, 1687. But it was followed by an “Order of Council” that it was to be read on two successive Sundays, in Divine Service, by all the officiating ministers in all the churches and chapels of the kingdom. In London the reading was to take place on the 20th and 27th of May, and in other parts of England on the 3rd and 10th of June. The bishops were directed to distribute copies of the Declaration throughout their respective dioceses. The substance of the Declaration was short and simple. It suspended all penal laws against Nonconformists. It authorized both Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters to perform their worship publicly. It forbade the King's subjects, on pain of his displeasure, to molest any assembly. It abrogated all those Acts of Parliament which imposed any religious test as a qualification for any civil or military office. To us who live in the present century, the Declaration may seem very reasonable and harmless. To the England of the seventeenth century it wore a very different aspect! Men knew the hand from which it came, and saw the latent intention. Under the specious plea of toleration and liberty, the object of the Declaration was to advance Popery and give license and free scope to the Church of Rome, and to all its schemes for reconquering England.

This famous Declaration, we can see at a glance, placed the bishops and clergy in a most awkward position. What were they to do? What was the path of duty? They were thoroughly pinned on the horns of a dilemma. If they refused compliance to the King's wishes they would seem intolerant, illiberal, and unkind to the Nonconformists, as well as disloyal, disrespectful, and disobedient to their sovereign. If they yielded to the King's wishes, and read the Declaration, they would be assisting the propagation of Popery. The liberty James wanted them to proclaim was neither more nor less than indulgence to the Jesuits and the whole Church of Rome. In short, they found themselves between Scylla and Charybdis, and could not possibly avoid giving offence. Refusing to sanction the Declaration, they would certainly displease the King and perhaps irritate the Dissenters. Consenting to it, they would infallibly help the Pope. Never, perhaps, were English bishops and clergy placed in such a difficult and perplexing position!

God's ways, however, are not as man's ways, and light often arises out of darkness in quarters where it was not expected. At this critical juncture the Nonconformists, to their eternal honour, came forward and cut the knot, and helped the bishops to a right decision. The shrewd sons of the good old Puritans saw clearly what James meant. They saw that under a specious pretence of liberty, he wanted a fulcrum for a lever which would turn England upside down, and destroy the work of the Reformation. Like the noble-minded Roman ambassador before Pyrrhus, who was shown first a bag of gold, and then an elephant, they refused to be bribed just as they had formerly refused to be intimidated. They would have none of the Royal indulgence, if it could only be purchased at the expense of the nation's Protestantism. Baxter, and Bates, and Howe, and the

great bulk of the London Nonconformists, entreated the clergy to stand firm, and not to yield one inch to the King. Young Defoe said to his Nonconformist brethren, “I had rather the Church of England should pull our clothes off by fines and forfeitures, than the Papists should fall both upon the Church and the Dissenters, and pull our skins off by fire and faggot.”5

Oliver Heywood, a famous Nonconformist of the day, says distinctly in his account of the times, “though the Dissenters had liberty promised, we knew it was not out of love to us, but for another purpose. We heard the King had said he was forced to grant liberty at present to those whom his soul abhorred.”6

The immediate result was that a meeting of the London clergy was held, and after much debate, in which Tillotson, Sherlock, Patrick, and Stillingfleet took part, it was decided that the “Order in Council” should not be obeyed. No one contributed to this result more than Dr. Fowler, Vicar of St. Giles, Cripplegate, a well-known Broad Churchman. While the matter yet hung in the balance, and the final vote seemed doubtful, he rose and said: “I must be plain. The question to my mind is so simple, that argument can throw no new light on it, and can only beget heat. Let every man say Yes or No. But I cannot consent to be bound by the majority. I shall be sorry to cause a breach of unity. But this Declaration I cannot read.” This bold speech turned the scale. A resolution by which all present pledged themselves not to read the Declaration was drawn up, and was ultimately signed by eighty-five incumbents in London.

In the meantime the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft, showed himself not unequal to the emergency. He was naturally a cautious, quiet, and somewhat timid man, and the last person to be combative, and to quarrel with kings. Nevertheless he came out nobly and well, and rose to the occasion. As soon as the Order in Council appeared, he summoned to Lambeth Palace those few bishops, divines, and laymen who happened to be in London and took counsel with them. It was resolved to resist the King, and to refuse to read the Declaration. The Primate then wrote to all the bishops on the English bench, on whom he could depend, and urged them to come up to London at once, and join him in a formal protest and petition. But time was short. There were no railways in those days. Journeying was slow work. Eighteen bishops, says Burnet (“Own Times,” iii. 266), agreed with Sancroft. But with the utmost exertion only six bishops could get to London in time to help the Primate. These six, with the Archbishop at their head, assembled at Lambeth on the 18th of May, only two days before the fatal Sunday, when the King's Declaration was to be read in London, and before night agreed on a petition or protest to which all affixed their names.

The names of the six bishops who signed this remarkable document, beside Sancroft, deserve to be known and remembered. They were as follows: Lloyd of St. Asaph, Turner of Ely, Lake of Chichester, Ken of Bath and Wells, White of Peterborough, and Sir Jonathan Trelawney of Bristol. It is a curious fact that, with the single exception of Ken, the author of “Morning and Evening Hymns,” not one of the seven men who signed the petition could be called a remarkable man in any way. Not one, beside Ken, has made any mark in the theological world, or lives as a writer or preacher. Not one of the whole seven could be named in the same breath with Parker, or Whitgift, or Grindal, or Jewel, or Andrews, or Hall. They were probably respectable, worthy, quiet, old-fashioned High Churchmen; and that was all. But God loves to be glorified by using weak instruments. Whatever they were in other respects, they were of one mind in seeing the danger which threatened Protestantism, and in determination to stand by it to the death. It was not

jealousy of Dissenters but dislike to Popery, be it remembered, which actuated their conduct and knit them together. (Ranke, iv. 346.) All honour be to them. They have supplied an unanswerable proof that the real, loyal, honest, old-fashioned High Churchmen disliked Popery as much as any school in the Church.

The famous petition which the Seven Bishops drew up and signed on this occasion is a curious document. It is short, and tame, and cautious, and somewhat clumsily composed. But the worthy composers, no doubt, were pressed for time, and had no leisure to polish their sentences. Moreover, we know that they acted under the best advice, and were careful not to say too much and give needless offence.

“In substance (says Macaulay) nothing could be more skilfully framed. All disloyalty, all intolerance, were reverently disclaimed. The King was assured that the Church was still, as ever, faithful to the throne. He was also assured that the bishops, in proper time and place, would, as Lords of Parliament and members of the Upper House of Convocation, show they were by no means wanting in tenderness for the conscientious scruples of Dissenters. The Parliament, both in the late and present reign, had pronounced that the Sovereign was not constitutionally competent to dispense with statutes in matters ecclesiastical. The Declaration was therefore illegal, and the Petitioners could not in prudence, honour, or conscience, be parties to the solemn publication of an illegal Declaration in the House of God, and during the time of Divine Service.”

Pointless and tame as the Petition may seem to us, we must not allow ourselves to make any mistake as to the latent meaning of the document and the real object of the bishops in refusing to obey the King. We must do them justice. They were thoroughly convinced that the Declaration was intended to help Popery, and they were determined to make a stand and resist it. They had no ill-feeling towards Dissenters, and no desire to continue their disabilities. But they saw clearly that the whole cause of Protestantism was in jeopardy, and that, now or never, they must risk everything to defend it. Every historian of any worth acknowledges this, and it is vain to try to take any other view, unless we are prepared to write history anew. A cloud of witnesses agree here. There is an overwhelming mass of evidence to prove that the real reason why the Seven Bishops resolved to oppose the King, was their determination to maintain the principles of the Reformation and to oppose any further movement towards Rome. In one word, the cause for which they boldly nailed their colours to the mast was the good old cause of Protestantism versus Popery. Every one, Churchman or Dissenter, knew that in 1688, and it is a grievous shame that any one now should try to deny it. The denial can only be regarded as a symptom of ignorance or dishonesty.

It was quite late on Friday evening, May 18, when this Petition was finished and signed, and on Sunday morning, the 20th of May, the Royal Declaration had to be read in all the churches in London. There was therefore no time to be lost. Armed with their paper, six of the Seven Bishops (Sancroft being forbidden to come to Court) proceeded to Whitehall Palace, and had an interview with James II., at 10 o'clock at night. The King took the Petition, and read it with mingled anger and amazement. He was both deeply displeased and astonished, and showed it. He never thought that English bishops would oppose his will. “I did not expect this,” he said; “this is a standard of rebellion.” In vain Trelawney fell on his knees, saying, “No Trelawney can be a rebel. Remember that my family has fought for the Crown.” In vain Turner said, “We rebel! We are ready to die at your Majesty's feet.” In vain Ken said, “I hope you will grant us that liberty of conscience which you

grant to all mankind." It was all to no purpose. The King was thoroughly angry. "You are trumpeters of sedition," he exclaimed. "Go to your dioceses and see that I am obeyed." "We have two duties to perform," said noble Ken, "our duty to God and our duty to your Majesty. We honour you: but we fear God." The interview ended, and the bishops retired from the royal presence, Ken's last words being "God's will be done."

Before the sun rose on Saturday morning, May 19, the Bishops' Petition was printed, as a broadsheet, and hawked through all the streets of London. By whom this was done is not known to this day: but the printer is said to have made a thousand pounds by it in a few hours. The excitement was immense throughout the metropolis, and when Sunday came, next day, the churches were thronged with expecting crowds, wondering what the clergy would do, and whether they would read the King's Declaration. They were not left long in doubt. Out of one hundred parish Churches in the city and liberties of London, there were only four in which the Order in Council was obeyed, and in each case, as soon as the first words of the Declaration were uttered, the congregation rose as one man and left the Church. At Westminster Abbey the scene was long remembered by the boys of Westminster school. As soon as Bishop Spratt, who was then Dean, a mean, servile prelate, began to read the Declaration, the murmurs and noise of the people crowding out completely drowned his voice. He trembled so that men saw the paper shake in his hand; and long before he had done the Abbey was deserted by all but the choristers and the school. Timothy Hall, an infamous clergyman, who read the Declaration at St. Matthew's, Friday Street, was rewarded by the King with the vacant Bishopric of Oxford. But he bought his mitre very dear. Not one Canon of Christ Church attended his installation, and not one graduate would come to him for ordination.

A fortnight passed away, and on the 3rd of June the example of the London clergy was nobly followed in all parts of England. The Bishops of Norwich, Gloucester, Salisbury, Winchester, and Exeter, who were unable to reach London in time for the Lambeth Conference, had signed copies of the Petition, and, of course, refused to order obedience to the Declaration. The Bishop of Worcester declined to distribute it. In the great diocese of Chester, including all Lancashire, only three clergymen read it. In the huge diocese of Norwich, the stronghold of Protestantism, it was read in only four parishes out of twelve hundred. In short, it became evident that a spirit was awakened throughout the land which the Court had never expected, and that though the bishops and clergy might be broken, they would not bend. Whether the King could break them remained yet to be proved. On the evening of the 8th of June, all the Seven Bishops, in obedience to a summons from the King, appeared before him in Council at Whitehall. They went provided with the best legal advice, and acted carefully upon it. They calmly refused to admit anything to criminate themselves, unless forced to do it by the King's express command. They were questioned and interrogated about the meaning of words in their Petition, but their answers were so guarded and judicious that the King gained nothing by the examination. They steadily held their ground, and would neither withdraw their Petition, nor confess they had done wrong, nor recede from their decision about the Declaration. At last they were informed that they would be prosecuted for libel in the Court of King's Bench, and refusing, by their lawyers' advice, to enter into recognizances for their appearance, they were formally committed to the Tower. A warrant was made out, and a boat was ordered to take them down the river.

Their committal to the Tower was the means of calling out an enthusiastic expression of feeling in London, such as, perhaps, has never been equalled in the history of the metropolis. It was known from an early hour that the bishops were before the Council, and an anxious crowd had long waited round Whitehall to see what the result would be. But when the Londoners saw the seven aged prelates walking out of the palace under a guard of soldiers, and learned that they were going to prison (practically) in defence of English Protestantism, a scene of excitement ensued which almost baffles description. Hundreds crowded round them as they proceeded to Whitehall stairs, cheering them and expressing their sympathy. Many rushed into the mud and water up to their waists, blessing and asking their blessing. Scores of boats on the river full of people accompanied them down to the Tower with loud demonstrations of feeling. Even the very soldiers on guard in the Tower caught the infection and became zealous admirers of their prisoners. And when Sir E. Hales, the Popish governor, tried to check them, he was told by his subordinates that it was of no use, for his men “were all drinking the health of the bishops.”

The seven prelates were kept in the Tower for a week. Throughout that time the enthusiastic feeling of admiration for them flared higher and higher, and increased more and more every day. They were almost idolized, as martyrs who had refused to truckle to a Popish tyrant, like Latimer and Ridley in Mary's days. The Church of England at one bound rose cent. per cent. in public estimation. Episcopacy was never so popular as it was that week. Crowds of people, including many of the nobility, went to the Tower every day to pay their respects to the venerable prisoners. Among them a deputation of ten leading Nonconformist ministers went to express their sympathy, and when the King sent for four of them and upbraided them, they boldly replied that they “thought it a solemn duty to forget past quarrels and stand by the men who stood by the Protestant cause.” Even the Scotch Presbyterians were warmed and stirred in favour of the bishops, and sent messages of sympathy and encouragement. From every part of England came daily words of kindness and approbation. As for the men of Cornwall, they were so moved at the idea of their countryman, Trelawney, being in any danger, that a ballad was composed to suit the occasion, and sung over the county, of which the burden is still preserved.7 And shall Trelawney die? and shall Trelawney die?

Then twenty thousand Cornish boys shall know the reason why.

Even the miners took up the song and sung it with a variation Then thirty thousand underground shall know the reason why. A king of more common sense than James might well have been staggered by the astounding popularity of the seven episcopal prisoners, and would gladly have found some pretext for dropping further proceedings. But, unhappily for himself, he had not the wisdom to recede, and “drove on furiously,” like Jehu, and drove to his own destruction. He decided to go on with the prosecution. On the 15th of June the Seven Bishops were brought from the Tower to the Court of King's Bench, and ordered to plead to the information laid against them. Of course they pleaded “not guilty.” That day fortnight, the 29th of June, was fixed for their trial, and in the meantime they were allowed to be at liberty on their own recognizances. It was well for the Crown that they did not require bail. Twenty-one peers of the highest rank were ready to give security, three for each defendant, and one of the richest Dissenters in the City had begged, as a special favour, that he might have the honour of being bail for Bishop Ken.

On leaving the court, in order to go to their own lodgings, the bishops received almost as great an ovation as when they were sent to the Tower. The bells of many churches were set ringing, and many of the lower orders who knew nothing of the forms of law imagined that all was over, and the good cause had triumphed. But whether ignorantly or intelligently, such a crowd assembled round the prelates in Palace Yard, that they found it difficult to force their way through their friends and admirers. Nor could it be said for a moment that the people knew not wherefore they were come together. One common feeling actuated the whole mass, and that feeling was abhorrence of Popery and zeal for Protestantism. How deep that feeling was is evidenced by a simple anecdote supplied by Macaulay.

“Cartwright, Bishop of Chester, a timid sycophant of the Court, was silly and curious enough to mingle with the crowd as his noble-minded brethren came out of the Court. Some person who saw his episcopal dress supposed he was one of the accused, and asked and received his blessing. A bystander cried out, 'Do you know who blessed you?' 'Surely,' said the man, 'it was one of the seven.' 'No!' said the other, 'it was the Popish Bishop of Chester.' At once the enraged Londoner roared out, 'Popish dog, take your blessing back again.'”

At last, on the 29th of June, the ever-memorable trial of the Seven Bishops actually came off, and they were arraigned before a jury of their countrymen in the Court of King's Bench at Westminster. Such a crowd was probably never before or since seen in a court of law. Sixty peers according to Evelyn's diary, thirty-five according to Macaulay, sat near the four judges and testified their interest in the cause. Westminster Hall, Palace Yard, and all the streets adjoining, were filled with a multitude of people wound up to the highest pitch of anxious expectation. Into all the details of that well-fought day I cannot enter. How from morning till sunset the legal battle went on-how the Crown witnesses were cross-examined and worried-how triumphantly Somers, the fourth counsel of the bishops, showed that the alleged libel was neither false, nor libellous, nor seditious-how even the four judges were divided in opinion, and two of them went so far in their charge to the jury as to admit there was no libel-how the jury retired when it was dark to consider their verdict, and were shut up all night with the servants of the defendants sitting on the stairs to watch the doors and prevent roguery-how at length all the twelve jurymen were for acquittal except Arnold the King's brewer, and even he gave way when the biggest of the twelve said, “Look at me, I will stay here till I am no bigger than a tobacco pipe before I find the bishops guilty”-how at six in the morning the jury agreed, and at ten appeared in court, and by the mouth of their foreman, Sir Roger Langley, pronounced the bishops Not Guilty-how at the words coming out of his lips Lord Halifax waved his hat, and at least ten thousand persons outside the court raised such a shout that the roof of old Westminster Hall seemed to crack-how the people in the streets caught up the cheer and passed it on all over London-how many seemed beside themselves with joy, and some laughed and some wept-how guns were fired and bells rung, and horsemen galloped off in all directions to tell the news of a victory over Popery-how the jury could scarcely get out of the Hall, and were forced to shake hands with hundreds crying out “God bless you, you have saved us all to-day”-how when night came bonfires were lighted and all London was illuminated and huge figures of the Pope were burnt in effigy-all, all these things are so described in the burning words of Lord Macaulay's pictorial History that I shall not attempt to depict them. To go over the field so graphically occupied by that mighty “master of sentences” would be as foolish as to gild refined gold or paint the lily. Suffice it to say that the great battle of Protestantism against Popery was

fought at this trial, that a great victory was won, and that to the prosecution and acquittal of the Seven Bishops James II. owed the loss of his Crown.

For we must never forget that the consequences of the trial were enormously great, and that results flowed from it of which myriads never dreamed when they shouted and cheered on the 29th of June.-Within twenty-four hours of the trial a letter left England for Holland, signed by seven leading Englishmen, inviting the Prince of Orange to come over with an army and overthrow the Stuart dynasty. The hour had come at last, and the man was wanted.-Within four weeks of the trial, Archbishop Sancroft, warmed and softened by the events of May and June, drew up a circular letter to all the bishops of the Church of England, which is one of the most remarkable letters ever penned by an Archbishop of Canterbury, and has never received the attention it deserves. In this letter he solemnly enjoined the bishops and clergy “to have a tender regard to our brethren the Protestant Dissenters, to visit them at their homes, to receive them kindly at their own, and to treat them fairly whenever they meet them.” Above all, he charged them “to take all opportunities of assuring the Dissenters that the English bishops are really and sincerely irreconcilable enemies to the errors, superstitions, idolatries, and tyrannies of the Church of Rome.” And, lastly, he urged them “to exhort Dissenters to join with us in fervent prayer to the God of peace for the universal blessed union of all reformed churches both at home and abroad.” A wonderful pastoral that! Well would it have been for the Church of England if Lambeth had always held similar language, and not cooled down and forgotten the Tower. But it was one of the first results of the famous trial.-Last, but not least, within six months of the bishops' acquittal the Great Revolution took place, the Popish monarch lost his Crown and left England, and William and Mary were placed on the English throne. But before they were formally placed on the throne the famous “Declaration of Rights” was solemnly drawn up and signed by both Houses of Parliament. And what was the very first sentence of that Declaration? It is an assertion that “the late King James did endeavour to subvert and extirpate the Protestant religion-by assuming a power of dispensing with laws and by committing and prosecuting divers worthy prelates.” And what was the last sentence of the Declaration? It was the famous Oath of Supremacy, containing these words:-“I do declare that no foreign prince, person, prelate, state, or potentate hath, or ought to have, jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm. So help me God.” Such were the immediate consequences of the trial of the Seven Bishops. They are of unspeakable importance. They stand out to my eyes in the landscape of English history, like Tabor in Palestine, and no Englishman ought ever to forget them. To the trial of the Seven Bishops we owe our second deliverance from Popery.

It remains for me to point out three practical lessons which appear to flow naturally out of the whole subject.

(a) First and foremost, the reign of James II. ought to teach a lesson about English rulers and statesmen, whether Whig or Tory. That lesson is the duty of never allowing the Government of this great country to be placed again in the hands of a Papist.

If this lesson does not stand out plainly on the face of history, like the handwriting at Belshazzar's feast, I am greatly mistaken. Unless we are men who having eyes see not, and having ears hear not, let us beware of Popish rulers. We know what they were in Queen Mary's days. We tried them a second time under James II. If we love our country, let us never try them again. They cannot

possibly be honest, conscientious Papists if they do not labour incessantly to subvert English Protestantism, and turn everything upside down. I yield to no man in abhorrence of intolerance and religious persecution. I have not the slightest desire to put the clock back, and to revive such miserable disabilities as those of the Test and Corporation Acts. I am quite content with the Constitution as it is, and the laws which forbid the crown of England to be placed on the head of a Papist. But I hope we shall take care these laws are never repealed.

Some may think me an alarmist for saying such things. But I say plainly there is much in the outlook of the day to make a thinking man uncomfortable. I dislike the influence which certain well-known Roman Catholic divines are gradually getting among the upper classes. I dislike the growing disposition to make an idol of mere “earnestness,” to forget history, and to suppose that Rome has changed, and earnest Papists are as good as any Protestant. I dislike the modern principle, unknown to the good old Puritans, that States have nothing to do with religion, and that it matters not whether the sovereign is Protestant or Papist, Jew, Turk, Infidel, or Heretic. I see these things floating in the air. I confess they make me uncomfortable. I am sure we have need to stand on our guard, and to resolve that, God helping us, we will never allow the Pope to rule England again. If he does, we may depend upon it we shall have no more blessing from God. The offended God of the Bible will turn away His face from us, and we shall bid a long farewell to peace at home, influence abroad, comfort in our families, and national prosperity. Once more then, I say, let us move heaven and earth before we sanction a Popish prime minister or a Popish king. On the 28th January, 1689, the House of Commons resolved unanimously “that it bath been found by experience inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant kingdom to be governed by a Popish prince.” (Hallam, iii. 129.) I pray God that resolution may never be forgotten, and never be cancelled or expunged.

(b) In the second place, the reign of James II. ought to teach us a lesson about English Bishops and Clergy. That lesson is the duty of never forgetting that the true strength of the Established Church of England lies in loyal faithfulness to Protestant principles and bold unflinching opposition to the Church of Rome.

Never was the Church of England so unpopular as in the days of Laud, and never so popular as in the days of the Seven Bishops. Never was the Church so hated by Nonconformists as she was when Laud tampered with Rome, never so much beloved by them as when the Seven Bishops went to prison rather than help the Pope. Why was it that when Laud was committed to the Tower few hands were held up in his favour, and few said, “God bless him”? There is only one answer, men did not trust him, and thought him half a Papist.-Why was it that, when Sancroft and his companions were taken to the Tower fifty years afterwards, the heart of London was stirred, and the whole Metropolis rose up to do them honour? The answer again is simple. Men loved them and admired them because they stuck to Protestantism and opposed Rome.

(c) In the last place, the reign of James II. ought to teach a lesson to all loyal Churchmen. That lesson is the duty of using every reasonable and lawful means to resist the re-introduction of Romanism into the Church of England by the means of extreme Ritualism.

It is useless to deny that the times demand this, and that there is an organized conspiracy among us for Romanizing the Established Church of this country. Bishops see it and lament it in their charges. Statesmen see it and make no secret of it in public speeches. Dissenters see it and point

the finger of scorn. Romanists see it and rejoice. Foreign nations see it and lift up their hands in amazement. Whether this disgraceful apostasy is to prosper and succeed or not remains yet to be proved. But one thing, at any rate, is certain. This is no time to sit still, fold our arms, and go to sleep. The Church of England expects all her sons to do their duty, and much, under God, depends on the action of the laity.

It is false to say, as some of the advocates of extreme Ritualism constantly say, that those who oppose them want to narrow the limits of the Church of England, and to make it the exclusive Church of one party. I for one indignantly deny the charge. I have always allowed, and do allow, that our Church is largely comprehensive, and that there is room for honest High, honest Low, and honest Broad Churchmen within her pale. If any clergyman likes to preach in a surplice, or has the Lord's Supper weekly, or has Saints' day services, or daily matins and vespers, I have not the least wish to interfere with him, though I cannot see with his eyes. But I firmly maintain that the comprehensiveness of the Church has limits, and that those limits are the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Prayer-book.

Controversy and religious strife, no doubt, are odious things; but there are times when they are a positive necessity. Unity and peace are very delightful; but they are bought too dear if they are bought at the expense of truth. There is a vast amount of maundering, childish, weak talk now-a-days in some quarters about unity and peace, which I cannot reconcile with the language of St. Paul. It is a pity, no doubt, that there should be so much controversy; but it is also a pity that human nature should be so bad as it is, and that the devil should be loose in the world. It was a pity that Arius taught error about Christ's person: but it would have been a greater pity if Athanasius had not opposed him. It was a pity Tetzel went about preaching up the Pope's indulgences: it would have been a far greater pity if Luther had not withstood him. Controversy, in fact, is one of the conditions under which truth in every age has to be defended and maintained, and it is nonsense to ignore it.

Of one thing I am very certain. Whether men will come forward or not to oppose the Romanizing movement of these days, if the Church of England once gives formal legal unction to the revived Popish Mass and the revived detestable confessional, the people of this land will soon get rid of the Established Church of England. True to the mighty principles of the Reformation, our Church will stand and retain its hold on the affections of the country, and no weapon formed against us shall prosper. False to these principles, and re-admitting Popery, she will certainly fall, and no amount of histrionic, sensuous ceremonial will prevent her ruin. Like Ephesus, which left her first love,-like Thyatira, which suffered Jezebel to teach,-like Laodicea, which became lukewarm,-her candlestick will be taken away. The glory will depart from her. The pillar of cloud and fire will be removed. The best and most loyal of her children will forsake her in disgust, and, like an army whose soldiers have gone away, leaving nothing behind but officers and band, the Church will perish, and perish deservedly, for want of Churchmen.

FOOTNOTES 1 Knight, “History of England,” iv. 383.

2 If any one doubts this, I refer him to the Histories of England, Hallam iii. 73; Ranke iv. 216, 218, 219; Stoughton ii. 108.

3 Those who wish to make themselves acquainted with the reign of James II., would do well to study Burnet, Hallam, Macaulay, Charles Knight, Ranke, and Stoughton's “History of the Church of the Restoration,”

4 Macaulay, i. 494 5 C. Knight. History, iv. 419.

6 Heywood's Works, i. 287.

7 The following is said to have been the ballad, but it is doubtful whether any part except the chorus is as old as 1688:- A good sword and a trusty hand,

A merry heart and true;

King James' men shall understand

What Cornish men can do!

And have they fixed the where and when,

And shall Trelawney die?

Then twenty thousand Cornish men

Will know the reason why.

Chorus.

And shall they scorn Tre, Pol, and Pen?

And shall Trelawney die?

Here's twenty thousand Cornish men

Will know the reason why.

Outspake their Captain, brave and bold

A merry wight was he:

“If London Tower were Michael's Hold,

We'll set Trelawney free!

We'll cross the Tamar land to land,

The Severn is no stay,-

All side by side and hand to hand,

And who shall bid us nay?”

Chorus.

And shall they scorn, &c.

Chapter 69

Shall we Know?

[chapter taken from]

SHALL WE KNOW

ONE ANOTHER? AND OTHER PAPERS. BY THE

RIGHT REV. J. C. RYLE,

Lord Bishop of Liverpool.

_____

NEW EDITION.

Fortieth Thousand.

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SHALL WE KNOW ONE ANOTHER?

I PITY that man who never thinks about heaven. I use that word in the broadest and most popular sense. I mean by “heaven” the future dwelling-place of all true Christians, when the dead are raised, and the world has passed away. Cold and unfeeling must that heart be which never gives a thought to that dwelling-place! Dull and earthly must that mind be which never considers “heaven!”

We may die any day. “In the midst of life we are in death.” We must all die sooner or later. The youngest, the fairest, the strongest, the cleverest, all must go down one day before the scythe of the King of Terrors. This world shall not go on for ever as it does now. Its affairs shall at last be wound up. The King of kings will come, and take his great power, and reign. The judgment shall be set, the books opened, the dead raised, the living changed. And where do we all hope to go then? Why, if we know anything of true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we hope to go to “heaven.” Surely there is nothing unreasonable in asking men to consider the subject of heaven.

Now, what will heaven be like? The question, no doubt, is a deep one, but there is nothing presumptuous in looking at it. The man who is about to sail for Australia or New Zealand as a settler, is naturally anxious to know something about his future home, its climate, its employments, its inhabitants, its ways, its customs. All these are subjects of deep interest to him. You are leaving the land of your nativity, you are going to spend the rest of your life in a new hemisphere. It would be strange indeed if you did not desire information about your new abode. Now surely, if we hope to dwell for ever in that “better country, even a heavenly one,” we ought to seek all the knowledge we can get about it. Before we go to our eternal home we should try to become acquainted with it.

There are many things about heaven revealed in Scripture which I purposely pass over. That it is a prepared place for a prepared people; that all who are found there will be of one mind and of one experience, chosen by the same Father, washed in the same blood of atonement, renewed by the same Spirit; that universal and perfect holiness, love, and knowledge will be the eternal law of the kingdom—all these are ancient things, and I do not mean to dwell on them. Suffice it to say that heaven is the eternal presence of everything that can make a saint happy, and the eternal absence of everything that can cause sorrow. Sickness, and pain, and disease, and death, and poverty, and labour, and money, and care, and ignorance, and misunderstanding, and slander, and lying, and strife, and contention, and quarrels, and envies, and jealousies, and bad tempers, and infidelity, and scepticism, and irreligion, and superstition, and heresy, and schism, and wars, and fightings, and bloodshed, and murders, and law-suits—all, all these things shall have no place in heaven. On earth, in this present time, they may live and flourish. In heaven even their footprints shall not be known.

Hear what the inspired apostle St. John says: “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life”(Revelation 21:27). “There shall he no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever”(Revelation 22:5). “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 7:16-17). “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Hear what that glorious dreamer, John Bunyan, says, though writing with an uninspired pen: “I saw in my dream that these two men, Christian and Hopeful, went in at the gate. And lo! as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them; the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, ‘Enter ye into the joy of our Lord.’ I also heard the men themselves sing with a loud voice, saying, ‘Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.’

“Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold the city shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal.

“There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.’ And after that they shut up the gates; which when I had seen, I wished myself among them.”

But I will not dwell on these things. I purposely pass by them all. I wish to confine myself in this paper to one single point of deep and momentous interest. That point is the mutual recognition of saints in the next world. I want to examine the question, “Shall we know one another in heaven?”

Now, what saith the Scripture on this subject? This is the only thing I care to know. I grant freely that there are not many texts in the Bible which touch the subject at all. I admit fully that pious and

learned divines are not of one mind with me about the matter in hand. I have listened to many ingenious reasonings and arguments against the view that I maintain. But in theology I dare not call any man master and father. My only aim and desire is to find out what the Bible says, and to take my stand upon its teaching.

Let us hear what David said when his child was dead. “Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23). What can these words mean, but that David hoped to see his child, and meet him again in another world? This was evidently the hope that cheered him, and made him dry his tears. The separation would not be for ever.

Let us hear what St. Paul said to the Thessalonians. “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (1 Thessalonians 2:19). These words must surely mean that the apostle expected to recognise his beloved Thessalonian converts in the day of Christ’s second advent. He rejoiced in the thought that he would see them face to face at the last day; would stand side by side with them before the throne, and would be able to say, “Here am I, and the seals which thou didst give to my ministry.”

Let us hear what the same apostle says, in the same epistle, for the comfort of mourners. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). There would be no point in these words of consolation if they did not imply the mutual recognition of saints. The hope with which he cheers wearied Christians is the hope of meeting their beloved friends again. He does not merely say, “Sorrow not, for they are at rest—they are happy—they are free from pain and trouble—they are better off than they would be here below.” No! he goes a step further. He says, “God shall bring them with Christ, when he brings them back to the world. You are not parted for ever. You will meet again.”

I commend these three passages to the reader’s attentive consideration. To my eye, they all seem to point to only one conclusion. They all imply the same great truth, that saints in heaven shall know one another. They shall have the same body and the same character that they had on earth—a body perfected and transformed like Christ’s in his transfiguration, but still the same body—a character perfected and purified from all sin, but still the same character. But in the moment that we who are saved shall meet our several friends in heaven, we shall at once know them, and they will at once know us.

There is something to my mind unspeakably glorious in this prospect: few things so strike me in looking forward to the good things yet to come. Heaven will be no strange place to us when we get there. We shall not be oppressed by the cold, shy, chilly feeling that we know nothing of our companions. We shall feel at home. We shall see all of whom we have read in Scripture, and know them all, and mark the peculiar graces of each one. We shall look upon Noah, and remember his witness for God in ungodly times. We shall look on Abraham, and remember his faith; on Isaac, and remember his meekness; on Moses, and remember his patience; on David, and remember all his troubles. We shall sit down with Peter, and James, and John, and Paul, and remember all their toil when they laid the foundations of the Church. Blessed and glorious will that knowledge and communion be! If it is pleasant to know one or two saints, and meet them occasionally now, what

will it be to know them all, and to dwell with them for ever!

There is something unspeakably comforting, moreover, as well as glorious in this prospect. It lights up the valley of the shadow of death. It strips the sick-bed and the grave of half their terrors. Our beloved friends who have fallen asleep in Christ are not lost, but only gone before. The children of the same God and partakers of the same grace can never be separated very long. They are sure to come together again when this world has passed away. Our pleasant communion with our kind Christian friends is only broken off for a small moment, and is soon to be eternally resumed. These eyes of ours shall once more look upon their faces, and these ears of ours shall once more hear them speak. Blessed and happy indeed will that meeting be!—better a thousand times than the parting! We parted in sorrow, and we shall meet in joy; we parted in stormy weather, and we shall meet in a calm harbour; we parted amidst pains and aches, and groans, and infirmities: we shall meet with glorious bodies, able to serve our Lord for ever without distraction. And, best of all, we shall meet never to be parted, never to shed one more tear, never to put on mourning, never to say good-bye and farewell again. Oh! it is a blessed thought, that saints will know one another in heaven!

How much there will be to talk about! What wondrous wisdom will appear in everything that we had to go through in the days of our flesh! We shall remember all the way by which we were led, and say, “Wisdom and mercy followed me all the days of my life. In my sicknesses and pains, in my losses and crosses, in my poverty and tribulations, in my bereavements and separation, in every bitter cup I had to drink, in every burden I had to carry, in all these was perfect wisdom.” We shall see it at last, if we never saw it before, and we shall all see it together, and all unite in praising Him that “led us by the right way to a city of habitation.” Surely, next to the thought of seeing Christ in heaven, there is no more blessed and happy thought than that of seeing one another.

Shall we get to heaven at all? This, after all, is the grand question which the subject should force on our attention, and which we should resolve, like men, to look in the face. What shall it profit you and me to study theories about a future state, if we know not on which side we shall be found at the last day? Let us arouse our sleepy minds to a consideration of this momentous question. Heaven, we must always remember, is not a place where all sorts and kinds of persons will go as a matter of course. The inhabitants of heaven are not such a discordant, heterogeneous rabble as some men seem to suppose. Heaven, it cannot be too often remembered, is a prepared place for a prepared people. The dwellers in heaven will be all of one heart and one mind, one faith and one character. They will be ready for mutual recognition. But, are we ready for it? are we in tune? Shall we ourselves get to heaven?

Why should we not get to heaven? Let us set that question also before us, and fairly look it in the face. There sits at the right hand of God One who is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, and One who is as willing to save as he is able. The Lord Jesus Christ has died for us on the cross, and paid our mighty debt with his own blood. He is sitting at God’s right hand, to be the Advocate and Friend of all who desire to be saved. He is waiting at this moment to be gracious. Surely if we do not get to heaven the fault will be all our own. Let us arise and lay hold on the hand that is held out to us from heaven. Let us never forget that promise, “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1

John 1:9). The prison-doors are set wide open; let us go forth and be free. The lifeboat is alongside; let us embark in it and be safe. The bread of life is before us; let us eat and live. The Physician stands before us; let us hear his voice, believe, and make sure our interest in heaven.

Have we a good hope of going to heaven, a hope that is Scriptural, reasonable, and will bear investigation? Then let us not be afraid to meditate often on the subject of “heaven,” and to rejoice in the prospect of good things to come. I know that even a believer’s heart will sometimes fail when he thinks of the last enemy and the unseen world. Jordan is a cold river to cross at the very best, and not a few tremble when they think of their own crossing. But let us take comfort in the remembrance of the other side. Think, Christian reader, of seeing your Saviour, and beholding your King in his beauty. Faith will be at last swallowed up in sight, and hope in certainty. Think of the many loved ones gone before you, and of the happy meeting between you and them. You are not going to a foreign country; you are going home. You are not going to dwell amongst strangers, but amongst friends. You will find them all safe, all well, all ready to greet you, all prepared to join in one unbroken song of praise. Then let us take comfort and persevere. With such prospects before us, we may well cry, “It is worth while to be a Christian”

I conclude all with a passage from “Pilgrim’s Progress,” which well deserves reading. Said Pliable to Christian, “What company shall we have in heaven?”

Christian replied, “There we shall be with seraphim and cherubim, creatures that will dazzle your eyes to look upon. There, also, you shall meet with thousands and ten thousands that have gone before us to that place; none of them hurtful, but loving and holy; every one walking in the sight of God, and standing in his presence with acceptance for ever. In a word, there we shall see the elders with their golden crowns; there we shall see holy virgins with their golden harps, there we shall see men that by the world were cut in pieces, burnt in flames, eaten of beasts, drowned in the seas, for the love they bore to the Lord of the place; all well, and clothed with immortality as with a garment.”

Then said Pliable, “The hearing of this is enough to ravish one’s heart. But are these things to be enjoyed? How shall we get to be sharers hereof?”

Then said Christian, “The Lord, the Governor of the country, hath recorded that in this book; the substance of which is, if we be truly willing to have it, he will bestow it upon us freely.”

Then said Pliable, “Well, my good companion, glad am I to hear of these things. Come on, let us mend our pace.”

Chapter 70

Strive

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

STRIVE !

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."- Luke 13:24.

READER,

There was once a man who asked our Lord Jesus Christ a very deep question. He said to Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?"

Who this man was we do not know. What his motive was for asking this question we are not told. Perhaps he wished to gratify an idle curiosity. Perhaps he wanted an excuse for not seeking salvation himself. The Holy Ghost has kept back all this from us. The name and motive of the inquirer are both hidden.

But one thing is very clear, and that is the vast importance of the saying of our Lord to which the question gave rise. Jesus seized the opportunity to direct the minds of all around Him to their own plain duty. He knew the train of thought which the man's inquiry had set moving in their hearts. He saw what was going on within them. "Strive," he cries, "to enter in at the strait gate." Whether there be few saved or many, your course is clear, "Strive to enter in. Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. A day shall come when many will seek to enter in and shall not be able. Strive to enter in now."

Reader, I desire to call your serious attention to the solemn lessons which this saying of the Lord Jesus is meant to teach. It is one which deserves special remembrance in the present day. It teaches unmistakably that mighty truth, our own personal responsibility for the salvation of our souls. It shows the immense danger of putting off the great business of religion, as so many unhappily do. On both these points the witness of our Lord Jesus Christ in the text is clear. He, who is the eternal God, and who spoke the words of perfect wisdom, says to the sons of men, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

I. Here is a description of the way of salvation. Jesus calls it "the strait gate."

II. Here is a plain command. Jesus says, "Strive to enter in."

III. Here is an awful prophecy. Jesus says, "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

May the Holy Ghost apply the subject to the hearts of all who read this tract! May all who read it know the way of salvation experimentally, obey the command of the Lord practically, and be found safe in the great day of His second coming!

I. Here is a description of the way of salvation. Jesus calls it "the strait gate."

There is a gate which leads to pardon, peace with God, and heaven. Whosoever goes in by that gate shall be saved. Never, surely, was a gate more needed. Sin is a vast mountain between man and God. How shall man climb over it? Sin is a high wall between man and God. How shall man get through it? Sin is a deep gulf between man and God. How shall man cross over it? God is in heaven, holy, pure, spiritual, undefiled, light without any darkness at all, a Being who cannot bear that which is evil or look upon iniquity. Man is a poor fallen worm, crawling on earth for a few years,-sinful, corrupt, erring, defective,-a being whose imagination is only evil, and whose heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. How shall man and God be brought together? How shall man ever draw near to his Maker without fear and shame? Blessed be God! there is a way. There is a road. There is a path. There is a door. It is the gate spoken of in the words of Christ, "the strait gate."

This gate was made for sinners by the Lord Jesus Christ. From all eternity He covenanted and engaged that He would make it. In the fulness of time He came into the world and made it by His own atoning death on the cross. By that He made satisfaction for man's sin, paid man's debt to God, and bore man's punishment. He built a great gate at the cost of His own body and blood. He reared a ladder on earth whose top reached to heaven. He made a door by which the chief of sinners may enter unto the holy presence of God, and not be afraid. He opened a road by which the vilest of men, believing in Him, may draw near to God and have peace. He cries to us, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9). "I am the way, no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). By Him, says Paul, "we have boldness and access with confidence" (Ephesians 3:12). Thus was the gate of salvation formed.

This gate is called the strait gate, and it is not called so without cause. It is always strait, narrow, and difficult to pass through to some persons, and it will be so as long as the world stands. It is narrow to all who love sin, and are determined not to part with it. It is narrow to all who set their affections on this world, and seek first its pleasures and rewards. It is narrow to all who dislike trouble , and are unwilling to take pains and make sacrifices for their souls. It is narrow to all who like company, and want to keep in with the crowd. It is narrow to all who are self-righteous and think they are good people, and deserve to be saved. To all such the great gate, which Christ made, is narrow and strait. In vain they seek to pass through. The gate will not admit them. God is not unwilling to receive them. Their sins are not too many to be forgiven. But they are not willing to be saved in God's way. Thousands have tried to make the gateway wider. Thousands have worked and toiled to get to heaven on lower terms. But the gate never alters. It is not elastic. It will not stretch to accommodate one man more than another. It is still the strait gate.

Reader, strait as this gate is, it is the only one by which men can get to heaven. There is no side door. There is no bye-path. There is no gap or low place in the wall. All that are ever saved will he saved only by Christ, and only by simple faith in Him.-Not one will be saved by repentance. Today's sorrow does not wipe off yesterday's score.-Not one will be saved by his own works. The best works that any man can do are little better than splendid sins.-Not one will be saved by his

formal regularity in the use of the outward means of grace. When we have done all, we are poor unprofitable servants. Oh, no! it is mere waste of time, to seek any other road to eternal life. Men may look right and left, and weary themselves with their own devices, but they will never find another door. Proud men may dislike the gate if they will. Profligate men may scoff at it, and make a jest of those who use it. Lazy men may complain that the way is hard. But men will discover no other salvation, than that of faith in the blood and righteousness of a crucified Redeemer. There stands between you and heaven the great gate. It may be strait. But it is the only one. We must either enter heaven by the strait gate, or not at all.

Strait as this gate is, it is a gate ever ready to open. No sinners of any kind are forbidden to draw near. Whosoever will may enter in and be saved. There is but one condition of admission. That condition is that you really feel your sins and desire to be saved by Christ in His own way. Art thou really sensible of thy guilt and vileness? Hast thou a truly broken and contrite heart? Behold the gate of salvation and come in. He that made it declares, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." The question to be considered is not whether you are a great sinner or a little sinner,-whether you are elect or not,-whether you are converted or not. The question is simply this, "Do you feel your sins? Do you feel labouring and heavy-laden? Are you willing to put your soul into Christ's hand?" Then if that be the case, the gate will open to you at once. Come in this very day. Wherefore standest thou without?

Strait as this gate is, it is one through which thousands have gone in and been saved. No sinner was ever turned back and told he was too bad to be admitted, if he came really sick of his sins. Thousands of all sorts have been received, cleansed, washed, pardoned, clothed, and made heirs of eternal life. Some of them seemed very unlikely to be admitted. You and I might have thought they were too bad to be saved. But He that built the gate did not refuse them. As soon as they knocked, He gave orders that they should be let in.

Manasseh, king of Judah, went up to this gate. None could have been worse than he. He had despised his good father Hezekiah's example and advice. He had bowed down to idols. He had filled Jerusalem with bloodshed and cruelty. He had slain his own children. But as soon as his eyes were opened to his sins, and he fled to the gate for pardon, the gate flew wide open, and he was saved.

Saul the Pharisee went up to this gate. He had been a great offender. He had been a blasphemer of Christ, and a persecutor of Christ's people. He had laboured hard to stop the progress of the Gospel. But as soon as his heart was touched and he found out his own guilt, and fled to the gate for pardon, at once the gate flew wide open, and he was saved.

Many of the Jews who crucified our Lord went up to this gate. They had been grievous sinners indeed. They had refused and rejected their own Messiah. They had delivered Him to Pilate and entreated that He might be slain. They had desired Barabbas to be let go, and the Son of God to be crucified. But in the day when they were pricked to the heart, by Peter's preaching, they fled to the gate for pardon, and at once the gate flew open and they were saved.

The jailer at Philippi went up to this gate. He had been a cruel, hard, godless man. He had done all in his power to ill-treat Paul and his companion. He had thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. But when his conscience was aroused by the earthquake, and

his mind enlightened by Paul's teaching, he fled to the gate for pardon, and at once the gate flew open and he was saved.

But why need I stop short in Bible examples? Why should I not say that multitudes have gone to the strait gate since the days of the Apostles, and have entered in by it and been saved? Thousands of all ranks, classes, and ages,-learned and unlearned, rich and poor, old and young, have tried the gate and found it ready to open,-have gone through it and found peace to their souls. Yes! thousands of persons yet living have made proof of the gate, and found it the way to real happiness. Noblemen and commoners, merchants and bankers, soldiers and sailors, farmers and tradesmen, labourers and workmen, are still upon earth, who have found the strait gate to be a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. They have not brought up an evil report of the country inside. They have found Christ's yoke to be easy, and His burden to be light. Their only regret has been that so few enter in, and that they themselves did not enter in before.

Reader, this is the gate which I want every one to enter into whose hand this tract may fall. I want you not merely to go to church or chapel, but to go with heart and soul to the gate of life. I want you not merely to believe there is such a gate, and to think it a good thing, but to enter by faith and be saved.

Think what a privilege it is to have a gate at all. The angels who kept not their first estate fell, never to rise again. To them there was no door of escape opened. The heathen never heard of any way to eternal life. What would not many a black man and many a red man give, if he only heard one plain sermon about Christ. The Jews in the Old Testament times only saw the gate dimly and far away. The way into the holiest was not made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing. You have the gate set plainly before you. You have Christ and full salvation offered to you without money and without price. You never need be at a loss which way to turn. Oh, consider what a mercy this is!

Beware that you do not despise the gate and perish in unbelief. Better a thousand times not to know of the gate than to know of it and yet tarry outside. How indeed will you escape if you neglect so great salvation?

Think what a thankful man you ought to be if you have really gone in at the strait gate. To be a pardoned, forgiven, justified soul,-to be ready for sickness, death, judgment and eternity,-to be ever provided for in both worlds,-surely this is matter for daily praise. True Christians ought to be more full of thanksgiving then they are. I fear that few sufficiently remember what they were by nature, and what debtors they are to grace. A heathen remarked that singing hymns of praise was one special mark of the early Christians. Well would it be for Christians in the present day, if they knew more of this frame of mind. It is no mark of a healthy state of soul when there is much complaining and little praise. It is an amazing mercy that there is any gate of salvation at all. But it is a still greater mercy when we are taught to enter in by it and be saved.

II. In the second place, here is a plain command,-Jesus says to us , "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

There is often much to be learned in a single word of Scripture. The words of our Lord Jesus in particular are always full of matter for thought. Here is a word which is a striking example of what I mean. Let us see what the great Teacher would have us gather out of the word "Strive."

"STRIVE" teaches that a man must use means diligently, if he would have his soul saved. There are means which God has appointed, to help man in his endeavours to approach Him. There are ways in which a man must walk, if he desires to be found of Christ. Public worship, reading the Bible, hearing the Gospel preached,-these are the kind of things to which I refer. They lie, as it were, in the middle, between man and God. Doubtless no one can change his own heart, or wipe away one of his sins, or make himself in the least degree acceptable to God. But I do say, that if man could do nothing but sit still, Christ would never have said "strive."

"STRIVE" teaches that man is a free agent, and will be dealt with by God as a responsible being. The Lord Jesus does not bid us to wait, and wish, and feel, and hope, and desire. He says, "Strive." I call that miserable religion which teaches people to be content with saying, "we can do nothing of ourselves," and makes them continue in sin. It is as bad as teaching people that it is not their fault if they are not converted, and that God only is to blame if they are not saved. I find no such theology in the New Testament. I hear Jesus saying to sinners, Come-repent-believe-labour-ask-seek-knock." I see plainly that our salvation from first to last is entirely of God. But I see with no less plainness that our ruin, if lost, is wholly and entirely of ourselves. I maintain that sinners are always addressed as accountable and responsible. And I want no better proof of this than is contained in the word "Strive."

"STRIVE" teaches that a man must expect many adversaries and a hard battle, if he would have his soul saved. And this, as a matter of experience, is strictly true. There are no gains without pains in spiritual things any more than in temporal. That roaring lion the devil will never let a soul escape from him without a struggle. The heart which is naturally sensual and earthly will never be turned to spiritual things without a daily fight. The world with all its opposition and temptations, will never be overcome without a conflict. But why should all this surprise us? What great and good thing was ever done without trouble? Wheat does not grow without ploughing and sowing. Riches are not obtained without care and attention. Success in life is not won without hardships and toil. And heaven, above all, is not to be reached without the cross and the battle. The violent take the kingdom by force. (Matthew 11:12) A man must strive.

"STRIVE" teaches that it is worth while for a man to seek salvation. That may well be said. If there be anything that deserves a struggle in this world, it is the prosperity of the soul. The objects for which the great majority of men strive are comparatively poor and trifling things. Riches, and greatness, and rank, and learning, are a corruptible crown. The incorruptible things are all within the strait gate. The peace of God which passeth all understanding,-the bright hope of good things to come,-the sense of the Spirit dwelling in us,-the consciousness that we are pardoned, safe, ready, insured, provided for in time and eternity, whatever may happen,-these are true gold and durable riches. Well may the Lord Jesus call on us to strive.

"STRIVE" teaches that laziness in religion is a great sin. It is not merely a misfortune, as some fancy,-a thing for which people are to be pitied, and a matter for regret. It is something far more than this. It is a breach of a plain commandment. What shall be said of the man who transgresses God's law, and does something which God says, Thou shalt not do? There can be but one answer. He is a sinner. "Sin is the transgression of the law." And what shall be said of the man who neglects his soul, and makes no effort to enter the strait gate? There can be only one reply. He is omitting a positive duty. Christ says to him, " Strive," and behold, he sits still!

"STRIVE" teaches that all outside the strait gate are in great danger. They are in danger of being lost for ever. There is but a step between them and death. If death finds them in their present condition, they will perish without hope. The Lord Jesus saw that clearly. He knew the uncertainty of life and the shortness of time. He would fain have sinners make haste and delay not, lest they put off soul business too late. He speaks as one who saw the devil drawing near to them daily, and the days of their life gradually ebbing away. He would have them take heed they be not too late. Therefore He cries, "Strive."

Ah, reader, that word 'Strive', raises solemn thoughts in my mind. It is brimful of condemnation for thousands of baptized persons. It condemns the ways and practices of multitudes who profess and call themselves Christians. Many there are who neither swear, nor murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor lie. But one thing unhappily cannot be said of them. They cannot be said to "strive" to be saved. The spirit of slumber possesses their hearts in everything that concerns religion. About the things of the world they are active enough. They rise early, and late take rest. They labour. They toil. They are busy. They are careful. But about the one thing needful they never "strive" at all.

What shall I say of those who are irregular about public worship on Sundays? There are thousands all over Great Britain who answer this description. Sometimes, if they feel disposed, they go to some church or chapel, and attend a religious service. At other times they stay at home and read the paper, or idle about, or square their accounts, or seek some amusement. Is this "striving"? I speak to men of common sense. Let them judge what I say.

What shall I say of those who come regularly to a place of worship, but come entirely as a matter of form? There are many in every parish of Great Britain in this condition. Their fathers taught them to come. Their custom has always been to come. It would not be respectable to stay away. But they care nothing for the worship of God when they do come. Whether they hear law or Gospel, truth or error, it is all the same to them. They remember nothing afterwards. They put off their form of religion with their Sunday clothes, and return to the world. And is this striving? I speak to men of common sense. Let them judge what I say.

What shall I say of those who seldom or never read the Bible? There are thousands of persons, I fear, who answer this description. They know the Book by name. They know it is commonly regarded as the only Book which teaches us how to live and how to die. But they can never find time for reading it. Newspapers, reviews, novels, romances, they can read, but not the Bible. And "is this striving" to enter in? I speak to men of common sense. Let them judge what I say.

What shall I say of those who never pray? There are multitudes, I firmly believe, in this condition. Without God they rise in the morning, and without God they lie down at night. They ask nothing. They confess nothing. They return thanks for nothing. They seek nothing. They are all dying creatures, and yet they are not even on speaking terms with their Maker and their Judge. And is this "striving"? I speak to men of common sense. Let them judge what I say.

Ah, reader, believe me, it is a solemn thing to be a minister of the Gospel. It is a painful thing to look on and notice the ways of mankind in spiritual matters. We hold in our hands that great statute Book of God, which declares that without repentance and conversion, and faith in Christ, and holiness, no man living can be saved. In discharge of our office we urge on men to repent,

believe, and be saved. But, alas, how frequently we have to lament that our labour seems all in vain. Men attend our churches and listen, and approve, but do not "strive" to be saved. We show the sinfulness of sin. We unfold the loveliness of Christ. We expose the vanity of the world. We set forth the happiness of Christ's service. We offer the living water to the wearied and heavy-laden sons of toil. But, alas, how often we seem to speak to the winds. Our words are heard. Our arguments are not refuted. But we see plainly in the week that men are not "striving" to be saved. There comes the devil on Monday morning, and offers his countless snares. There comes the world, and holds out its seeming prizes. Our hearers follow them greedily. They work hard for this world's goods. They toil at Satan's bidding. But for the one thing needful they will not "strive" at all.

I am not writing from hearsay. I speak what I have seen. I write down the results of many years' experience in the ministry. I have learned lessons about human nature during that period which I never knew before. I have seen how true are our Lord's words about the narrow way. I have discovered how few there are that strive to be saved.

Earnestness about temporal matters is common enough. Striving to be rich and prosperous in this world is not rare at all. Pains about wheat, barley, and beans,-pains about rent, and wages, and labour, and land,-pains about pigs, and allotments, and eating and drinking,-pains about such matters I see in abundance. But I see few who take pains about their souls. I see few anywhere who "strive" to enter in at the strait gate.

I am not surprised at all this. I read in the Bible that it is only what I am to expect. The parable of the great supper is an exact picture of things that I have seen with my own eyes ever since I became a minister. I find, as my Lord and Saviour tells me, that "men make excuses." One has his piece of land to see. Another has his oxen to prove. A third has his family hindrances. But all this does not prevent my feeling deeply grieved for the souls of men. I grieve to think that they should have eternal life so close to them, and yet be lost because they will not "strive" to enter in and be saved.

Reader, I know not what your state of soul may be. But I warn you to take heed that you do not perish for ever for want of striving. Do not suppose that it needs some great scarlet sin to bring you to the pit of destruction. You have only to sit still and do nothing, and you will find yourself there at last. Yes! Satan does not ask you to walk in the steps of Cain, and Pharaoh, and Ahab, and Belshazzar, and Judas Iscariot. There is another road to hell quite as sure,-the road of spiritual indolence, spiritual laziness, and spiritual sloth. Satan has no objection to your being a respectable member of the Christian Church. He will let you pay your tithes, and rates, and pew rents. He will allow you to sit comfortably in church every Sunday you live. He knows full well that so long as you do not "strive," you must come at last to the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched. Take heed that you do not come to this end. I repeat it, you have only to do nothing, and you will be lost.

Reader, if you have been taught to strive for your soul's prosperity, I entreat you never to suppose you can go too far. Never give way to the idea that you are taking too much trouble about your spiritual condition, and that there is no need for so much carefulness. Settle it rather in your mind that "in all labour there is profit," and that no labour is so profitable as that bestowed on the soul. It is a maxim among good farmers that the more they do for the land the more the land does for them. I am sure it should be a maxim among Christians that the more they do for their religion the

more their religion will do for them. Watch against the slightest inclination to be careless about any means of grace. Beware of shortening your prayers, your Bible reading, your private communion with God. Take heed that you do not give way to a carnal, lazy manner of using the public services of God's house. Fight against any rising disposition to be sleepy, critical, and fault-finding, while you listen to the preaching of the Gospel. Whatever you do for God, do it with all your heart, and mind, and strength. In other things be moderate, and dread running into extremes. In soul matters fear moderation just as you would fear the plague. Care not what men think of you. Let it be enough for you that your Master says, "STRIVE."

III. The last thing I wish to consider in this tract is the awful prophecy which the Lord Jesus delivers. He says, "many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

When shall this be? At what period shall the gate of salvation be shut for ever? When shall striving to enter be of no use? These are serious questions. The gate is now ready to open to the chief of sinners. But a day comes when it shall open no more.

The time foretold by our Lord is the time of His own second coming to judge the world. The long-suffering of God will at last have an end. The throne of grace will at length be taken down, and the throne of judgment shall be set up in its place. The fountain of living waters shall at length be closed. The strait gate shall at last be barred and bolted. The day of grace will be past and over. The day of reckoning with a sin-laden world shall at length begin. And then shall be brought to pass the solemn prophecy of the Lord Jesus, "any shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Reader, all prophecies of Scripture that have been fulfilled hitherto, have been fulfilled to the very letter. They have seemed to many unlikely, improbable, impossible, up to the very time of their accomplishment. But not one word of them has ever failed.

The promises of good things have come to pass, in spite of difficulties that seemed insuperable. Sarah had a son when she was past bearing. The children of Israel were brought out of Egypt and planted in the promised land. The Jews were redeemed from the captivity of Babylon, after seventy years, and enabled once more to build the temple. The Lord Jesus was born of a pure virgin, lived, ministered, was sold, and cut off, precisely as Scripture foretold. The Word of God was pledged in all these cases, that it should be. And so it was.

The predictions of judgments on cities and nations have come to pass, though at the time they were first spoken they seemed incredible. Egypt is the basest of kingdoms. Edom is a wilderness. Tyre is a rock for drying nets. Nineveh, that exceeding great city, is laid waste, and become a desolation. Babylon is a dry land and a wilderness; her broad walls are utterly broken down. The Jews are scattered over the whole earth as a separate people. In all these cases the Word of God foretold that it should be so. And so it was.

Reader, the prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ which I press on your attention this day, shall be fulfilled in like manner. Not one word of it shall fail when the time of its accomplishment is due. "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

There is a time coming when seeking God shall be useless. Oh! that men would remember that! Too many seem to fancy that the hour will never arrive when they shall seek and not find. But they are sadly mistaken. They will discover their mistake one day to their own confusion, except they

repent. When Christ comes many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

There is a time coming when many shall be shut out from heaven for ever. I shall not be the lot of a few, but of a great multitude. It shall not happen to one or two in this parish, and one or two in that. It shall be the miserable end of a vast crowd. "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Knowledge shall come to many too late. They shall see at last the value of an immortal soul, and the happiness of having it saved. They shall understand at last their own sinfulness and God's holiness, and the glorious fitness of the Gospel of Christ. They shall comprehend at last why ministers seemed so anxious, and preached so long, and entreated them so earnestly to be converted. But, alas, they shall know all this too late!

Repentance shall come to many too late. They shall discover their own exceeding wickedness and be thoroughly ashamed of their past folly. They shall be full of bitter regret and unavailing lamentations, of keen convictions and of piercing sorrows. They shall weep, and wail, and mourn, when they reflect on their sins. The remembrance of their lives will be grievous to them. The burden of their guilt will seem intolerable. But, alas, like Judas Iscariot, they will repent too late!

Faith shall come to many too late. They will no longer be able to deny that there is a God, and a devil, a heaven, and a hell. Deism, and scepticism, and infidelity shall be laid aside for ever. Scoffing, and jesting, and free-thinking shall cease. They will see with their own eyes, and feel in their own bodies, that the things of which ministers spoke were not cunningly devised fables, but great real truths. They will find out to their cost that evangelical religion was not cant, extravagance, fanaticism, and enthusiasm. They will discover that it was the one thing needful, and that for want of it they are lost for ever. Like the devil, they will at length believe and tremble, but too late!

A desire of salvation shall come to many too late. They shall long for pardon, and peace, and the favour of God, when they can no more be had. They will wish they might have one more Sunday over again, have one more offer of forgiveness, have one more call to prayer. But it will matter nothing what they think, or feel, or desire then. The day of grace will be over. The gate of salvation will be bolted and barred. It will be too late!

Ah, reader, I often think what a change there will be one day in the price and estimation at which things are valued. I look round this world in which my lot is cast. I mark the current price of everything this world contains. I look forward to the coming of Christ, and the great day of God. I think of the new order of things, which that day will bring in. I read the words of the Lord Jesus, when He describes the master of the house rising up and shutting the door. And as I read, I say to myself, "There will be a great change soon."

What are the dear things now? Gold, silver, precious stones, bank notes, mines, ships, lands, houses, horses, carriages, furniture, meat, drink, clothes, and the like. These are the things that are thought valuable. These are the things that command a ready market. These are the things which you can never get below a certain price. He that has much of these things is counted a wealthy man. Such is the world.

And what are the cheap things now? The knowledge of God, the free salvation of the Gospel, the favour of Christ, the grace of the Holy Ghost, the privilege of being God's son, the title to eternal life, the right to the tree of life, the reversion of a mansion in heaven, the promises of an incorruptible inheritance, the offer of a crown of glory that fadeth not away. These are the things that no man hardly cares for. They are offered to the sons of men without money and without price. They may be had for nothing,-freely and gratuitously. Whosoever will may take his portion. But alas! there is no demand for these things. They go begging. They are scarcely looked at. They are offered in vain. Such is the world.

But a day is coming upon us all when the value of everything shall be altered. A day is coming when bank notes shall be as useless as rags, and gold shall be as worthless as the dust of the earth. A day is coming when thousands shall care nothing for the things for which they once lived, and shall desire nothing so much as the things which they once despised. The halls and palaces will be forgotten in the desire of a house not made with hands. The favour of the rich and great will be no more remembered, in the longing for the favour of the King of kings. The silks, and satins, and velvets, and laces, will be lost sight of in the anxious want of the robe of Christ's righteousness. All shall be altered, all shall be changed in the great day of the Lord's return. "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

It was a weighty saying of some wise man, that "hell is truth known too late." I fear that thousands of professing Christians in this day will find this out by experience. They will discover the value of their souls when it is too late to obtain mercy, and see the beauty of the Gospel when they can derive no benefit from it. Oh, that men would be wise betimes! I often think there are few passages of Scripture more awful, than that in the first chapter of Proverbs: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel; they despised all My reproof: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices" (Proverbs 1:24-31).

Reader, you may possibly be one of those who neither like the faith nor practice which the Gospel of Christ requires. You think us extreme when we beseech you to repent and be converted. You think we ask too much when we urge you to come out from the world, and take up the cross, and follow Christ. But take notice that you will one day confess that we were right. Sooner or later, in this world or the next, you will acknowledge that you were wrong. Yes! it is a melancholy consideration for the faithful minister of the Gospel, that all who hear him will one day allow that his counsel was good. Mocked, despised, scorned, neglected as his testimony may be on earth, a day is coming which shall prove effectually that truth was on his side. The rich man who hears us and yet makes a god of this world,-the tradesman who hears us and yet makes his ledger his Bible,-the farmer who hears us and yet remains cold as the clay on his land,-the labourer who hears us and feels no more for his soul than a stone,-all, all will at length acknowledge before the world that they were wrong. All will at length desire earnestly that very mercy which we now set before them in vain. "They will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Reader, if you are one of these who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, you may well take comfort when you look forward. You often suffer persecution now for your religion's sake. You have to bear hard words and unkind insinuations. Your motives are often misrepresented, and your conduct slandered. The reproach of the cross is not ceased. But you may well take courage when you look forward and think of the Lord's second coming. That day shall make amends for all. You will see those who now laugh at you because you read the Bible, and pray, and love Christ, in a very different state of mind. They will come to you as the foolish virgins came to the wise, saying, "Give us of your oil, because our lamps are gone out." You will see those who now hate you and call you fools because, like Caleb and Joshua, you bring up a good report of Christ's service, altered, changed, and no longer like the same men. They will say, "Oh, that we had taken part with you. You have been the truly wise, and we the foolish." Then fear not the reproach of men. Confess Christ boldly before the world. Show your colours, and be not ashamed of your Master. Time is short. Eternity hastens on. The cross is only for a little season. The crown is for ever. Make sure work about that crown. Leave nothing uncertain. "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

And now let me offer to every one who reads this tract a few words to apply the whole subject to his soul. You have heard the words of the Lord Jesus unfolded and expounded. You have seen the picture of the way of salvation. It is a strait gate. You have heard the command of the King, "Strive to enter in." You have been told of His solemn warning, "Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Bear with me a little longer while I try to impress the whole matter on your conscience. I have yet something to say on God's behalf.

1. For one thing, I will ask you a plain question. Have you entered in at the strait gate or not? Old or young, rich or poor, churchman or dissenter, I repeat my question; Have you entered in at the strait gate?

I ask not whether you have heard of it, and believe there is a gate. I ask not whether you have looked at it, and admired it, and hope one day to go in. I ask whether you have gone up to it, knocked at it, been admitted, and are now inside?

If you are not inside, what good have you got from your religion? You are not pardoned and forgiven. You are not reconciled to God. You are not born again, sanctified and meet for heaven. If you die as you are, the devil will have you for ever, and your soul will be eternally miserable.

Oh, think, think what a state this is to live in. Think, think above all things, what a state this is to die in. Your life is but a vapour. A few more years at most and you are gone. Your place in the world will soon be filled up. Your house will be occupied by another. The sun will go on shining. The grass and daisies will soon grow thick over your grave. Your body will be food for worms. And your soul will be lost to all eternity.

And all this time there stands open before you a gate of salvation. God invites you. Jesus Christ offers to save you. All things are ready for your deliverance. One thing only is wanting, and that is that you should be willing to be saved.

Oh, reader, think of these things, and be wise.

2. For another thing, I will give plain advice to all who are not yet inside the strait gate. That advice is simply this, to enter in without a day's delay.

Tell me, if you can, of any one who ever reached heaven excepting through the strait gate. I know of none. From Abel, the first who died, down to the end of the list of Bible names, I see none saved by any way but that of faith in Christ.

Tell me, if you can, of any one who ever entered in at the strait gate without striving. I know of none excepting those who die in infancy. He that would win heaven must be content to fight for it.

Tell me, if you can, of anyone who ever strove earnestly to enter, and failed to succeed. I know of none. I believe that however weak and ignorant men may be, they never seek life heartily and conscientiously, at the right door, and are left without an answer of peace.

Tell me, if you can, of any one who ever entered in at the strait gate, and was afterwards sorry. I know of none. I believe the footsteps at that gate are all one way. All have found it a good thing to serve Christ, and have never regretted taking up His cross.

Oh, reader, if these things are so, seek Christ without delay, and enter in at the gate of life while you can. Make a beginning this very day. Go to that merciful and mighty Saviour in prayer, and pour out your heart before Him. Confess to Him your guilt, and wickedness and sin. Unbosom yourself freely to Him. Keep nothing back. Tell Him that you cast yourself and all your soul's affairs wholly on His hands, and ask Him to save you according to His promise, and put His Holy Spirit within you.

There is everything to encourage you to do this. Thousands as bad as you have applied to Christ in this way, and not one of them has been sent away and refused. They have found a peace of conscience they never knew before, and gone on their way rejoicing. They have found strength for all the trials of life, and none of them have been allowed to perish in the wilderness. Reader, why should not you also seek Christ?

There is everything to encourage you to do what I tell you at once. I know no reason why your repentance and conversion should not be as immediate as that of others before you. The Samaritan woman came to the well an ignorant sinner, and returned to her home a new creature. The Philippian jailer turned from darkness to light, and became a professed disciple of Christ in a single day. And why should not others do the same? Reader, why should not you give up your sins, and lay hold on Christ this very day?

Reader, I know that the advice I have given you is good. The grand question is, Will you take it?

3. The last thing I have to say shall be a request to all who have really entered in at the strait gate. That request is, that you will tell others of the blessings which you have found.

I want all converted people to be missionaries. I do not want them all to go out to foreign lands, and preach to the heathen. But I do want all to be of a missionary spirit, and to strive to do good at home. I want them to testify to all around them that the strait gate is the way to happiness, and to persuade them to enter in by it.

When Andrew was converted he found his brother Peter, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:41-42). When Philip was converted he found Nathanael, and said to him, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see" (John 1:45-46) When the Samaritan woman was converted, she "left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:28-29). When Saul the Pharisee was converted, "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20).

Reader, I long to see this kind of spirit among Christians in the present day. I long to see more zeal to commend the strait gate to all who are yet outside, and more desire to persuade them to enter in and be saved. Happy indeed is that Church whose members not only desire to reach heaven themselves, but desire also to take others with them!

The great gate of salvation is yet ready to open, but the hour draws near when it will be closed for ever. Let us work while it is called today, for the night cometh when no man can work. Let us tell our relations and friends, that we have proved the way of life and found it pleasant, that we have tasted the bread of life and found it good.

I have heard it calculated, that if every believer in the world were to bring one soul to Christ each year, the whole human race would be converted in less than twenty years. I make no comment on such a calculation. Whether such a thing might be or not, one thing is sure: that thing is, that many more souls might probably be converted to God, if Christians were more zealous to do good.

This, at least, we may remember, that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He that endeavours to show his neighbour the strait gate, is doing a work which God approves. He is doing a work which angels regard with interest, and with which the building of a pyramid will not compare in importance. For what saith the Scriptures, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

Reader, let us all awaken to a deeper sense of our responsibility in this matter. Let us look round the circle of those among whom we live, and consider their state before God. Are there not many of them yet outside the gate, unforgiven, unsanctified, and unfit to die? Let us watch for opportunities of speaking to them. Let us tell them of the strait gate, and entreat them to strive to enter in.

Who can tell what a word spoken in due season may do? Who can tell what it may do when spoken in faith and prayer? It may be the turning-point in some man's history. It may be the beginning of thought, prayer, and eternal life. Oh, for more love and boldness among believers! Think what a blessing to be allowed to speak one converting word!

Reader, I know not what your feelings may be on this subject. My heart's desire and prayer is that you may daily remember Christ's solemn words,- "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Keep these words in mind, and then be careless about the souls of others, if you can.

Chapter 71

The Sight that stirred St Paul

THE CITY: OR, THE SIGHT WHICH STIRRED ST. PAUL. BY THE LATE

BISHOP J. C. RYLE, D.D.

DRUMMOND'S TRACT DEPOT, STIRLING.

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_____ THE CITY.

Acts 17:16-17.

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

"Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him."

READER,

Perhaps you live in a town, or city, and see more of bricks and mortar than of green fields. Perhaps you have some relative or friend living in a town, about whom you naturally feel a deep interest. In either case, the verses of Scripture which head this page demand your best attention. Give me that attention for a few short minutes while I try to show you the lessons, which the passage contains.

You see face to face in the verses before you no common city and no common man.

The city is the famous city Athens—Athens, renowned to this very day for its statesmen, philosophers, historians, poets, painters, and architects,—Athens, the eye of ancient Greece, as ancient Greece was the eye of the heathen world.

The man is the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul—St. Paul, the most laborious and successful Minister and Missionary the world has ever seen—St. Paul, who by pen and tongue has left a deeper mark on mankind than any born of woman, except his Divine Master.

Athens and St. Paul—the great servant of Christ, and the great stronghold of old heathenism,—are brought before us face to face. The result is told us: the interview is carefully described. The subject, I venture to think, is eminently suited to the times in which we live, and to the circumstances of many a dweller in London, Liverpool, Manchester, and other great English towns in the present day.

Without further preface I ask you to observe three things in this passage:— I. What St. Paul SAW at Athens.

II. What St. Paul FELT at Athens.

III. What St. Paul DID at Athens.

I. First, then, What did St. Paul SEE at Athens?

The answer of the text is clear and unmistakable. He saw a “city wholly given to idolatry.” Idols met his eyes in every street. The temples of idol gods and goddesses occupied every prominent position. The magnificent statue of Minerva, twenty-six cubits high, according to Pliny, towered above the Acropolis, and caught the eye from every point. A vast system of idol-worship overspread the whole place, and thrust itself everywhere on his notice. The ancient writer, Pausanias, expressly says, that “the Athenians surpassed all states in the attention which they paid to the worship of the gods.” In short, the city, as the marginal reading says, was “full of idols.”

And yet this city, I would have you remember, was probably the most favourable specimen of a heathen city which St. Paul could have seen. In proportion to its size it very likely contained the most learned, civilized, philosophical, highly educated, artistic, intellectual population on the face of the globe. But what was it in a religious point of view? The city of wise men like Socrates and Plato—the city of Solon, and Pericles, and Demosthenes,—the city of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Thucydides,—the city of mind, and intellect, and art, and taste,—this city was “wholly given to idolatry.” If the true God was unknown at Athens, what must He have been in the darker places of the earth? If the eye of Greece was so spiritually dim, what must have been the condition of such places as Babylon, Ephesus, Tyre, Alexandria, Corinth, and even of Rome? If men were so far gone from the light in a green tree, what must they have been in the dry?

Reader, what shall we say to these things? What are the conclusions to which they irresistibly draw us?

Ought you not to learn, for one thing, the absolute need of a Divine revelation, and of teaching from heaven? Leave man without a Bible, and he will have a religion of some kind, for human nature, corrupt as it is, must have a God. But it will be a religion without light, or peace, or hope. “The world by wisdom knew not God.” (1 Corinthians 1:21) Old Athens is a standing lesson which we shall do well to observe. It is vain to suppose that nature, unaided by revelation, will ever lead fallen man to nature’s God. Without a Bible, the Athenian bowed down to stocks and stones, and worshipped the work of his own hands. Place a heathen philosopher,—a Stoic or an Epicurean,—by the side of an open grave, and ask him about a world to come, and he could have told you nothing certain, satisfactory, or peace-giving.

Ought you not to learn, for another thing, that the highest intellectual training is no security against utter darkness in religion? We cannot doubt that mind and reason were highly educated at Athens, if anywhere in the heathen world. The students of Greek philosophy were not unlearned and ignorant men. They were well-versed in logic, ethics, rhetoric, history, and poetry. But all this mental discipline did not prevent their city being a “city wholly given to idolatry.” And are we to be told in the nineteenth century, that reading, writing, arithmetic, mathematics, history, languages, and physical science, without a knowledge of the Scriptures, are sufficient to constitute education? God forbid! We have not so learned Christ. It may please some men to idolize intellectual power, and to speak highly of the debt which the world owes to the Greek mind. One thing, at any rate, is abundantly clear. Without the knowledge which the Holy Ghost revealed to the Hebrew nation, old Greece would have left the world buried in dark idolatry. A follower of Socrates or Plato might have

talked well and eloquently on many subjects, but he could have never answered the jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30) He could never have said in his last hour, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Ought you not to learn, for another thing, that the highest excellence in the material arts is no preservative against the grossest superstition? The perfection of Athenian architecture and sculpture is a great and undeniable fact. The eyes of St. Paul at Athens beheld many a "thing of beauty" which is still "a joy for ever" to artistic minds. And yet the men who conceived and executed the splendid buildings of Athens were utterly ignorant of the one true God. The world now-a-days is well-nigh drunk with self-conceit about our so-called progress in arts and sciences. Men talk and write of machinery and manufactures, as if nothing were impossible. But let it never be forgotten that the highest art or mechanical skill is consistent with a state of spiritual death in religion. Athens, the city of Phidias, was a "city wholly given to idolatry." An Athenian sculptor might have designed a matchless tomb, but he could not have wiped a single tear from a mourner's eye.

These things ought not to be forgotten. They ought to be carefully pondered. They suit the times in which we live. We have fallen on a sceptical and an unbelieving age. We meet on every side with doubts and questionings about the truth and value of revelation. "Is not reason alone sufficient?"—"Is the Bible really needful to make men wise unto salvation?"—"Has not man a light within, a verifying power, able to guide him to truth and God?"—Such are the inquiries which fall thick as hail around us. Such are the speculations which disquiet many unstable minds.

One plain answer is an appeal to facts. The remains of heathen Egypt, Greece, and Rome shall speak for us. They are preserved by God's providence to this very day as monuments of what intellect and reason can do without revelation. The minds which designed the temples of Luxor and Carnac, or the Parthenon, or Coliseum were not the minds of fools. The builders who executed their designs did better and more lasting work than any contractor can do in modern times. The men who conceived the sculptured friezes, which we know as the Elgin Marbles, were trained and intellectual to the highest degree. And yet in religion these men were darkness itself. (Ephesians 5:8) The sight which St. Paul saw at Athens is an unanswerable proof that man knows nothing which can do his soul good without a Divine revelation.

II. I ask you to notice, in the second place, what St. Paul FELT at Athens. He saw a "city wholly given to idolatry." How did the sight affect him? What did he feel?

It is instructive to observe how the same sight affects different people. Place two men on the same spot; let them stand side by side; let the same objects be presented to their eyes. The emotions called forth in the one man will often be wholly different from those called forth in the other. The thoughts which will be wakened up and brought to birth will often be as far as the poles asunder.

A mere artist visiting Athens for the first time would doubtless have been absorbed in the beauty of its buildings. A statesman or orator would have called up the memory of Pericles or Demosthenes. A literary man would have thought of Thucydides and Sophocles and Plato. A merchant would have gazed on the Piræus, its harbour, and the sea. But an apostle of Christ had far higher thoughts. One thing, above all others, swallowed up his attention, and made all else look small. That one thing was the spiritual condition of the Athenian people, the state of their souls. The great

Apostle of the Gentiles was eminently a man of one thing, Like his Divine Master, he was always thinking of his “Father’s business.” (Luke 2:49) He stood at Athens, and thought of nothing so much as Athenian souls. Like Moses, Phineas, and Elijah, “his spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.”

Of all sights on earth, I know none so impressive, none so calculated to arouse thought in a reflecting mind, as the sight of a great city. The daily intercourse of man with man, which a city naturally produces, seems to sharpen intellect, and stimulate mental activity to an extent which dwellers in rural parishes, or other solitary places, cannot realize. Rightly or wrongly, the inhabitant of a city thinks twice as much, and twice as quickly, as the inhabitant of a village. It is the city “where Satan’s seat is.” (Revelation 2:13) It is the city where evil of every kind is most rapidly conceived, sown, ripened, and brought to maturity.—It is the city where the young man leaving home, and launching into life, becomes soonest hardened, and conscience-seared by daily familiarity with the sight of sin.—It is the city where sensuality, intemperance, and worldly amusements of the vilest kind, flourish most rankly, and find a congenial atmosphere.—It is the city where ungodliness and irreligion meet with the greatest encouragement, and the unhappy Sabbath breaker, or neglecter of all means of grace, can fortify himself behind the example of others, and enjoy the miserable comfort of feeling that “he does not stand alone!”—It is the city which is the chosen home of every form of superstition, ceremonialism, enthusiasm, and fanaticism in religion—It is the city which is the hot-bed of every kind of false philosophy, of Stoicism, Epicureanism, Agnosticism, Secularism, Scepticism, Positivism, Infidelity, and Atheism.—It is the city where that greatest of modern inventions, the printing-press, that mighty power for good or evil, is ever working with unsleeping activity, and pouring forth new matter for thought.—It is the city where the daily newspapers are continually supplying food for minds, and moulding and guiding public opinion.—It is the city which is the centre of all national business: the banks, the law-courts, the Stock-exchange, the Parliament or Assembly, are all bound up with the city.—It is the city which, by magnetic influence, draws together the rank and fashion of the land, and gives the tone to the tastes and ways of society.—It is the city which practically controls the destiny of a nation. Scattered millions, in rural districts, without habitual concert or contact, are powerless before the thousands who dwell side by side and exchange thought every day. It is the towns which govern a land.—I pity the man who could stand on the top of St. Paul’s Cathedral, and look down on London without some emotion, and not reflect that he sees the heart whose pulsations are felt over the whole civilized globe. And shall I wonder for a moment that the sight of Athens “stirred the spirit” of such a man as the great Apostle of the Gentiles? I cannot wonder at all. It was just the sight which was likely to move the heart of the converted man of Tarsus, the man who wrote the Epistle to the Romans, and had seen Jesus Christ face to face.

He was stirred with holy compassion. It moved his heart to see so many myriads perishing for lack of knowledge, without God, without Christ, having no hope, travelling in the broad road which leadeth to destruction.

He was stirred with holy sorrow. It moved his heart to see so much talent misapplied. Here were hands capable of excellent works, and minds capable of noble conceptions. And yet the God who gave life and breath and power was not glorified.

He was stirred with holy indignation against sin and the devil. He saw the god of this world blinding the eyes of multitudes of his fellow-men, and leading them captive at his will. He saw the natural corruption of man infecting the population of a vast city like one common disease, and an utter absence of any spiritual medicine, antidote, or remedy.

He was stirred with holy zeal for his Master's glory. He saw the "strong man armed" keeping a house which was not lawfully his, and shutting out the rightful possessor. He saw his Divine Master unknown and unrecognised by His own creatures, and idols receiving the homage due to the King of kings.

Reader, these feelings which stirred the Apostle are a leading characteristic of a man born of the Spirit. Do you know anything of them? Where there is true grace there will always be tender concern for the souls of others. Where there is true sonship to God there will always be zeal for the Father's glory. It is written of the ungodly, that they not only commit things worthy of death, but also "have pleasure in them that do them." (Romans 1:32) It may be said with equal truth of the godly, that they not only mourn over sin in their own hearts, but mourn over sin in others.

Hear what is written of Lot in Sodom: "He vexed his soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." (2 Peter 2:8) Hear what is written of David: "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law." (Psalms 119:136) Hear what is written of the godly in Ezekiel's time: "They sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the land." (Ezekiel 9:4) Hear what is written of our Lord and Saviour Himself: "He beheld the city and wept over it." (Luke 19:41) Surely it may be laid down as one of the first principles of Scriptural religion, that he who can behold sin without sorrowful feelings has not the mind of the Spirit. This is one of those things in which the children of God are manifest, and are distinguished from the children of the devil.

I call your special attention to this point. The times demand that we look it fully in the face. The feelings with which we regard sin, heathenism, and irreligion are a subject of vast importance in the present day.

I ask you, first, to look outside our own country, and consider the state of the heathen world. At least six hundred millions of immortal beings are at this moment sunk in ignorance, superstition, and idolatry. They live and die without God, without Christ, and without hope. In sickness and sorrow they have no comfort. In old age and death they have no life beyond the grave. Of the true way of peace through a Redeemer, of God's love in Christ, of free grace, of complete absolution from guilt, of a resurrection to life eternal, they have no knowledge. For long weary centuries they have been waiting for the tardy movements of the Church of Christ, while Christians have been asleep, or wasting their energies on useless controversies, and squabbling and wrangling about forms and ceremonies. Is not this a sight which ought to "stir the spirit"?

I ask you, next, to turn back to our own land, and consider the state of our great cities. There are districts in our great metropolis, in Liverpool, in Manchester, in Birmingham, in the Black Country, where Christianity seems practically unknown. Examine the religious condition of East London, or of Southwark, or Lambeth. Walk through the north end of Liverpool on Saturday evening, or Sunday, or on a Bank Holiday, and see how Sabbath-breaking, intemperance, and general ungodliness appear to rule and reign uncontrolled. "When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." (Luke 11:21) And then remember that this state of things exists in

a professedly Christian country, in a land where there is an Established Church, and within a few hours of Oxford and Cambridge! Once more I say, ought not these things to “stir” our hearts?

Reader, it is a sorrowful fact that there is around us in the present day a generation of men who regard heathenism, infidelity, and irreligion with apathy, coolness, and indifference? They care nothing for Christian Missions either at home or abroad. They see no necessity for them. They take no interest in the Evangelistic work of any Church or society. They treat all alike with undisguised contempt. They despise Exeter Hall. They never give subscriptions. They never attend meetings. They never read a Missionary Report. They seem to think that every man shall be saved by his own law or sect, if he is only sincere; and that one religion is as good as another, if those who profess it are only in earnest. They are fond of decrying and running down all spiritual machinery or Missionary operations. They are constantly asserting that modern Missions at home or abroad do nothing, and that those who support them are little better than weak enthusiasts. Judging by their language, they appear to think that the world receives no benefit from Missions and aggressive Christian movements, and that it would be a better way to leave the world alone!

What shall we say to these men? They meet us on every side. They are to be heard in every society. To sit by, and sneer, and criticise, and do nothing—this is apparently their delight and vocation. What shall we say to them?

Let us tell them plainly, if they will only hear us, that they are utterly opposed to the Apostle St. Paul. Let us show them that mighty model of a Christian Missionary walking the streets of Athens, and “stirred” in spirit at the sight of a “city wholly given to idolatry.” Let us ask them why they do not feel as he felt, about the idolatry of China and Hindustan, of Africa and the South Seas, or about the semi-heathen districts of London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and the Black Country. Let us ask them whether 1900 years have made any difference in the nature of God, the necessities of fallen man, the sinfulness of idol worship, and the duty of Christians. We shall ask in vain for a reasonable answer: we shall get none. Sneers at our weakness are no argument against our principles. Jests at our infirmities and failures are no proof that our aims are wrong. Yes! they may have the wit and wisdom of this world upon their side; but the eternal principles of the New Testament are written clearly, plainly, and unmistakably. So long as the Bible is the Bible, charity to souls is one of the first of Christian graces, and it is a solemn duty to feel for the souls of the heathen, and of all unconverted people. He who knows nothing of this feeling has yet to become a learner in Christ’s school, He who despises this feeling is not a successor of St. Paul, but a follower of him who said, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”—even of Cain.

III. I ask you to observe, in the last place, what St. Paul DID at Athens. What he saw you have heard; what he felt you have been told; but how did he act?

He did something. He was not the man to stand still and “confer with flesh and blood” in the face of a city full of idols. He might have reasoned with himself that he stood alone,—that he was a Jew by birth,—that he was a stranger in a strange land,—that he had to oppose the rooted prejudices and old associations of learned men,—that to attack the old religion of a whole city was to beard a lion in his den,—that the doctrines of the Gospel were little likely to be effective on minds steeped in Greek philosophy. But none of these thoughts seem to have crossed the mind of St. Paul. He saw souls perishing; he felt that life was short, and time passing away; he had confidence in the power of his Master’s message to meet every man’s soul; he had received mercy himself, and knew not

how to hold his peace. He acted at once; and what his hand found to do, he did with his might. Oh! that we had more men of action in these days!

And he did what he did with holy wisdom, as well as holy boldness. He commenced aggressive measures alone, and waited not for companions and helpers. But he commenced them with consummate skill, and in a manner most likely to obtain a footing for the Gospel. First, we are told, he disputed “with the Jews” in the synagogue, and the “devout persons” or proselytes who attended the Jewish worship. Afterwards he went on to “dispute,” or hold discussions, “in the market daily with them that met with him.” He advanced step by step like an experienced general. Here, as elsewhere, St. Paul is a model to us: he combined fiery zeal and boldness with judicious tact and sanctified common sense. Oh! that we had more men of wisdom in these days!

But what did the Apostle teach? What was the grand subject which he argued, and reasoned out, and discussed, both with Jew and Greek, in synagogue and street? That he exposed the folly of idolatry to the ignorant multitudes,—that he showed the true nature of God to the worshippers of images made with hands,—that he asserted the nearness of God to us all,—and the certainty of a solemn reckoning with God at the judgment day, to Epicureans and Stoics, these are facts which we have recorded fully in his address on Mars’ Hill.

But is there nothing more than this to be learnt about the Apostle’s dealings with the idolatrous city? Is there nothing more distinctive and peculiar to Christianity which St. Paul brought forward at Athens? There is indeed more. There is a sentence in the 18th verse of the chapter we are looking at, which ought to be written in letters of gold—a sentence which ought to silence for ever the impudent assertion, which some have dared to make, that the great Apostle of the Gentiles was sometimes content to be a mere teacher of deism or natural theology! We are told in the 18th verse that one thing which arrested the attention of the Athenians was the fact that St. Paul preached “Jesus and the resurrection.”

Jesus and the resurrection! What a mine of matter that sentence contained! What a complete summary of the Christian faith might be drawn from those words! That they are only meant to be a summary, I have no doubt. I pity those who would cramp and pare down their meaning, and interpret them as nothing more than Christ’s prophetical office and example. I think it incredible that the very Apostle who a few days after went to Corinth, “determined to know nothing but Christ crucified,” or the doctrine of the cross, would keep back the cross from Athenian ears. I believe that “Jesus and the resurrection” is a sentence which stands for the whole Gospel. The Founder’s name, and one of the foundation facts of the Gospel, stand before us for the whole of Christianity.

What, then, does this sentence mean? What are we to understand St. Paul preached?

(a) St. Paul at Athens preached the person of the Lord Jesus,—His divinity, His incarnation, His mission into the world to save sinners, His life, and death, and ascension up to heaven, His character, His teaching, His amazing love to the souls of men.

(b) St. Paul at Athens preached the work of the Lord Jesus,—His sacrifice upon the cross, His vicarious satisfaction for sin, His substitution as the just for the unjust, the full redemption He has procured for all, and specially effected for all who believe, the complete victory He has obtained for lost man over sin, death, and hell.

(c) St. Paul at Athens preached the offices of the Lord Jesus,—as the one Mediator between God and all mankind, as the great Physician for all sin-sick souls, as the Rest-giver and Peace-maker for all heavy-laden hearts, as the Friend of the friendless, the High Priest and Advocate of all who commit their souls into His hands, the Ransom-payer of captives, the Light and Guide of all wandering from God.

(d) St. Paul at Athens preached the terms which the Lord Jesus had commanded His servants to proclaim to all the world;—His readiness and willingness to receive at once the chief of sinners; His ability to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him; the full, present, and immediate forgiveness which He offers to all who believe; the complete cleansing in His blood for all manner of sin; faith, or simple trust of heart, the one thing required of all who feel their sins and desire to be saved; entire justification without works, or doing, or deeds of law for all who believe.

(e) Last, but not least, St. Paul preached at Athens the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He preached it as the miraculous fact on which Jesus Himself staked the whole credibility of His mission, and as a fact proved by such abounding evidence that no caviller at miracles has ever yet honestly dared to meet.—He preached it as a fact, which was the very top-stone of the whole work of redemption, proving that what Christ undertook He fully accomplished, that the ransom was accepted, the atonement completed, and the prison doors thrown open forever.—He preached it as a fact, proving beyond doubt the possibility and certainty of our own resurrection in the flesh, and settling forever the great question, “Can God raise the dead?”

These things and many like them I cannot doubt St. Paul preached at Athens. I cannot for one moment suppose that he taught one thing at one place and one at another. The Holy Ghost supplies the substance of his preaching in that rich sentence, “Jesus and the resurrection.” The same Holy Ghost has told us fully how he handled these subjects at Antioch in Pisidia, at Philippi, at Corinth, and Ephesus. The Acts and the Epistles speak out on this point with no uncertain sound. I believe that “Jesus and the resurrection” means—Jesus and the redemption He effected by His death and rising from the grave, His atoning blood, His cross, His substitution, His mediation, His triumphant entrance into heaven, and the consequent full and complete salvation of all sinners who believe in Him. This is the doctrine St. Paul preached. This is the work St. Paul did when he was at Athens.

Reader, have we nothing to learn from these doings of the great Apostle of the Gentiles? There are lessons of deep importance to which I venture briefly to invite your attention. I say briefly. Time forbids me to dwell on them at any length. I only throw them out, as seeds for private thought.

(a) Learn, for one thing, a doctrinal lesson from St. Paul’s doings at Athens. The grand subject of our teaching in every place ought to be Jesus Christ. However learned or however unlearned, however high-born or however humble our audience, Christ crucified—Christ—Christ,—Christ—crucified, rising, interceding, redeeming, pardoning, receiving, saving—Christ must be the grand theme of our teaching. We shall never mend this Gospel. We shall never find any other subject which will do so much good. We must sow as St. Paul sowed, if we would reap as St. Paul reaped.

(b) Learn, for another thing, a practical lesson from St. Paul’s doings at Athens. We must never be afraid to stand alone and be solitary witnesses for Christ, if need be,—alone in a vast ungodly

parish, in our own land,—alone in East London, in Liverpool, in Manchester,—alone in Delhi, or Benares, or Pekin,—it matters not. We need not hold our peace, if God's truth be on our side. One Paul at Athens, one Athanasius against the world, one Wycliffe against a host of Romish prelates, one Luther at Worms,—these, these, are lighthouses before our eyes. God sees not as man sees. We must not stand still to count heads and number the people. One man, with Christ in his heart and the Bible in his hands, is stronger than a myriad of idolaters.

(c) Learn the importance, let me rather say the necessity, of asserting boldly the supernatural element as an essential part of the Christian religion. I need not tell many who read these pages that unbelievers and sceptics abound in these days, who make a dead set at the miracles of the Bible, and are incessantly trying to throw them overboard as useless lumber, or to prove by ingenious explanations that they are fables and no miracles at all. Let us never be afraid to resist such teaching steadily, and to take our stand by the side of St. Paul. Like him, let us point to the resurrection of Christ, and confidently challenge all fair and reasonable men to refute the evidence by which it is supported. The enemies of supernatural religion never have refuted that evidence, and they never will. If Christ was not raised from the dead, the conduct and teaching of the Apostles after He left the world is an unsolved problem and a perfect mystery, which no man in his senses can account for. But if, as we believe, the resurrection of Christ is an undeniable fact which cannot be disproved, the whole fabric of sceptical arguments against supernatural religion is undermined, and must fall to the ground. The stupendous miracle of the resurrection of Christ once admitted, it is sheer nonsense to tell us that any other smaller miracle in the Bible is incredible or impossible.

(d) Learn, for one thing more, a lesson of encouragement to faith from St. Paul's doings at Athens. If we preach the Gospel, we may preach with perfect confidence that it will do good. That solitary Jew of Tarsus who stood up alone on Mars' Hill appeared at the time to do little or nothing. He passed on his way and seemed to have made a failure. The Stoics and Epicureans probably laughed and sneered as if the day was their own. But that solitary Jew was lighting a candle that has never since been put out. The Word that he proclaimed in Athens grew and multiplied and became a great tree. That little leaven ultimately leavened the whole of Greece. The Gospel that Paul preached triumphed over idolatry. The empty Parthenon stands to this day, a proof that Athenian theology is dead and gone. Yes! if we sow good seed, we may sow it in tears, but we shall yet "come again with joy, bringing our sheaves with us." (Psalms 126:6)

I draw towards a conclusion. I pass from the consideration of what St. Paul saw, and felt, and did at Athens to points of practical importance. I ask every reader of this paper to-day what ought we to see, to feel, and to do?

(1) What ought we to see ? It is an age of sight-seeing and excitement. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing." (Ecclesiastes 1:8) The world is mad after running to and fro, and the increase of knowledge. The wealth, the arts, the inventions of man are continually gathering myriads into Great Exhibitions. Thousands and tens of thousands are annually rushing about and gazing at the work of men's hands.

But ought not the Christian to look at the map of the world? Ought not the man who believes the Bible to gaze with solemn thoughts on the vast spaces in that map which are yet spiritually black, dead, and without the Gospel? Ought not our eyes to look at the fact that half the population of the

earth is yet ignorant of God and Christ, and yet sitting still in sin and idolatry, and that myriads of our own fellow-countrymen in our great cities are practically little better than heathen, because Christians do so little for souls?

Reader, the eyes of God see these things, and our eyes ought to see them too.

(2) What ought we to feel? Our hearts, if they are right in the sight of God, ought to be affected by the sight of irreligion and heathenism. Many indeed are the feelings which the aspect of the world ought to call up in our hearts.

Thankfulness we ought to feel for our own countless privileges. Little indeed do the bulk of English people know the amount of their own daily unpaid debt to Christianity. Well would it be for some if they could be compelled to dwell for a few weeks every year in a heathen land.

Shame and humiliation we ought to feel when we reflect how little the Church of England has done for the spread of Christianity hitherto. God has indeed done great things for us since time days when Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer went to the stake,—has preserved us through many trials, and has enriched us with many blessings. But how little return we have made Him! How few of our 15,000 parishes do anything worthy of the cause of Missions at home or abroad! How little zeal some congregations show for the salvation of souls! These things ought not so to be!

Compassion we ought to feel when we think of the wretched state of unconverted souls, and the misery of all men and women who live and die without Christ. No poverty like this poverty! No disease like this disease! No slavery like this slavery! No death like this—death in idolatry, irreligion, and sin! Well may we ask ourselves, Where is the mind of Christ, if we do not feel for the lost? Reader, I lay it down boldly, as a great principle, that the Christianity which does not make a man feel for the state of unconverted people is not the Christianity which came down from heaven 1900 years ago, and is embalmed in the New Testament. It is a mere empty name. It is not the Christianity of St. Paul.

(3) Finally, reader, what ought we to do? This, after all, is the point to which I want to bring your mind. Seeing and feeling are well ; but doing is the life of religion. Passive impressions which do not lend to action have a tendency to harden the conscience, and do us positive harm. What ought we to do? We ought to do much more than we have ever done yet. We might all probably do more. The honour of the Gospel, the state of the Missionary field abroad, the condition of our overgrown cities at home, all call upon us to do more.

Need we stand still and be ashamed of the weapons of our warfare? Is the Gospel, the old Evangelical creed, unequal to the wants of our day? I assert boldly that we have no cause to be ashamed of the Gospel at all. It is not worn out. It is not effete. It is not behind the times. ‘We want nothing new, nothing added to the Gospel, nothing taken away. We want nothing but “the old paths”—the old truths fully, boldly, affectionately proclaimed. Only preach the Gospel fully, the same Gospel which St. Paul preached, and it is still “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,” and nothing else called religion has any real power at all. (Romans 1:16)

Need we stand still and be ashamed of the results of preaching the Gospel? Shall we hang down our heads, and complain that “the faith once delivered to the saints” has lost its power, and does no good? We have no cause to be ashamed at all. I am bold to say that no religious teaching on

earth can point to any results worth mentioning except that which is called doctrinal, dogmatic theology. What deliverance on earth have all the modern schools—which scorn dogmatic teaching—what deliverance have they wrought? What over-grown and semi-heathen parishes in the metropolis, in our great seaports, our manufacturing towns, our colliery districts, have they evangelized and civilized? What New Zealand, what Red River, what Sierra Leone, what Tinnevelly can the high-sounding systems of this latter day point to as a fruit of their system? No! reader, if the question, “What is truth?” is to be solved by reference to results and fruits, the religion of the New Testament, the religion whose principles are summarised, condensed, and embalmed in our Articles, Creeds, and Prayer-book, has no cause to be ashamed.

What can we do now but humble ourselves for the past and endeavour, by God’s help, to do more for time to come? Let us open our eyes more, and see.

Let us open our hearts more, and feel. Let us stir up ourselves to do more work—by self-denying gifts, by zealous co-operation, by bold advocacy, by fervent prayer. Let us do something worthy of our cause. The cause for which Jesus left heaven and came down to earth deserves the best that we can do.

And now, reader, let me close this paper by returning to the thought with which it began. Perhaps your lot is cast in a city or town. The population of our rural districts is annually decreasing. The dwellers in towns are rapidly outnumbering the dwellers in country parishes. If you are a dweller in a town, accept the parting words of advice which I am about to offer. Give me your best attention while I speak to you about your soul.

(1) Remember, for one thing, that you are placed in a position of peculiar spiritual danger. From the days of Babel downwards, wherever Adam’s children have been assembled in large numbers, they have always drawn one another to the utmost extremities of sin and wickedness. The great towns have always been Satan’s seat. It is the town where the young man sees abounding examples of ungodliness; and, if he is determined to live in sin, will always find plenty of companions. It is the town where the theatre and the casino, the dancing room and the drinking bar, are continually crowded. It is the town where the love of money, or the love of amusement, or the love of sensual indulgence, lead captive myriads of slaves. It is the town where a man will always find hundreds to encourage him in breaking the Sabbath, despising the means of grace, neglecting the Bible, leaving off the habit of prayer. Reader, consider these things. If you live in a town, take care. Know your danger. Feel your weakness and sinfulness. Flee to Christ, and commit your soul to His keeping. Ask Him to hold you up, and you will he safe. Stand on your guard. Resist the devil. Watch and pray.

(2) Remember, on the other hand, if you live in a town, you will probably have some special help which you cannot always find in the country. There are few English towns in which you will not find a few faithful servants of Christ., who will gladly assist you and aid you in your journey towards heaven. Few indeed are the English towns in which you will not find some minister who preaches time Gospel, and some pilgrims in the narrow way who are ready to welcome any addition to their number.

Reader, be of good courage, and never give way to the despairing thought that it is impossible to serve Christ in a town. Think rather that with God nothing is impossible. Think of the long list of

witnesses who have carried the cross, and been faithful unto death in the midst of the greatest temptations. Think of Daniel and the three children in Babylon. Think of the saints in Nero's household at Rome. Think of the multitudes of believers at Corinth and Ephesus and Antioch in the days of the apostles. It is not place but grace that makes the Christian. The holiest and most useful servants of God who have ever lived were not hermits in the wilderness, but dwellers in towns.

Reader, remember these things, and be of good cheer. Your lot may be cast in a city like Athens, "wholly given to idolatry." You may have to stand alone in the bank, the counting house, the place of business, or the shop. But you are not really alone, if Christ is with you. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Be bold, thorough, decided, and patient. The day will come when you will find that even in a great city a man may be a happy, useful Christian, respected while he lives, and honoured when he dies.

The World

PRACTICAL RELIGION. BEING PLAIN PAPERS

ON THE DAILY DUTIES, EXPERIENCE, DANGERS, AND

PRIVILEGES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. BY JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

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XII. THE WORLD.

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 6:17. THE text which heads this page touches a subject of vast importance in religion. That subject is the great duty of separation from the world. This is the point which St. Paul had in view when he wrote to the Corinthians, “Come out,-be separate.”

The subject is one which demands the best attention of all who profess and call themselves Christians. In every age of the Church separation from the world has always been one of the grand evidences of a work of grace in the heart. He that has been really born of the Spirit, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, has always endeavoured to “come out from the world,” and live a separate life. They who have only had the name of Christian, without the reality, have always refused to “come out and be separate” from the world.

The subject perhaps was never more important than it is at the present day. There is a widely-spread desire to make things pleasant in religion,-to saw off the corners and edges of the cross, and to avoid, as far as possible, self-denial. On every side we hear professing Christians declaring loudly that we must not be “narrow and exclusive,” and that there is no harm in many things which the holiest saints of old thought bad for their souls. That we may go anywhere, and do anything, and spend our time in anything, and read anything, and keep any company, and plunge into anything, and all the while may be very good Christians,-this, this is the maxim of thousands. In a day like this I think it good to raise a warning voice, and invite attention to the teaching of God's Word. It is written in that Word, “Come out, and be separate.”

There are four points which I shall try to show my readers, in examining this mighty subject.

I. First, I shall try to show that the world is a source of great danger to the soul.

II. Secondly, I shall try to show what is not meant by separation from the world.

III. Thirdly, I shall try to show in what real separation from the world consists.

IV. Fourthly, I shall try to show the secret of victory over the world. And now, before I go a single step further, let me warn every reader of this paper that he will never understand this subject unless he first understands what a true Christian is. If you are one of those unhappy people who think everybody is a Christian who goes to a place of worship, no matter how he lives, or what he believes, I fear you will care little about separation from the world. But if you read your Bible, and are in earnest about your soul, you will know that there are two classes of Christians,-converted and unconverted. You will know that what the Jews were among the nations under the Old Testament, this the true Christian is meant to be under the New. You will understand what I mean when I say that true Christians are meant, in like manner, to be a “peculiar people” under the Gospel, and that there must be a difference between believers and unbelievers. To you, therefore, I make a special appeal this day. While many avoid the subject of separation from the world, and many positively hate it, and many are puzzled by it, give me your attention while I try to show you “the thing as it is.”

I. First of all, let me show that the world is a source of great danger to the soul.

By “the world,” be it remembered, I do not mean the material world on the face of which we are living and moving. He that pretends to say that anything which God has created in the heavens above, or the earth beneath, is in itself harmful to man's soul, says that which is unreasonable and absurd. On the contrary, the sun, moon, and stars,-the mountains, the valleys, and the plains,-the seas, lakes, and rivers,-the animal and vegetable creation,-all are in themselves “very good.” (Genesis 1:31) All are full of lessons of God's wisdom and power, and all proclaim daily, “The hand that made us is Divine.” The idea that “matter” is in itself sinful and corrupt is a foolish heresy.

When I speak of “the world” in this paper, I mean those people who think only, or chiefly, of this world's things, and neglect the world to come,-the people who are always thinking more of earth than of heaven, more of time than of eternity, more of the body than of the soul, more of pleasing man than of pleasing God. It is of them and their ways, habits, customs, opinions, practices, tastes, aims, spirit, and tone, that I am speaking when I speak of “the world.” This is the world from which St. Paul tells us to “Come out and be separate.”

Now that “the world,” in this sense, is an enemy to the soul, the well-known Church Catechism teaches us at its very beginning. It tells us that there are three things which a baptized Christian is bound to renounce and give up, and three enemies which he ought to fight with and resist. These three are the flesh, the devil, and “the world.” All three are terrible foes, and all three must be overcome if we would be saved.

But, whatever men please to think about the Catechism, we shall do well to turn to the testimony of Holy Scripture. If the texts I am about to quote do not prove that the world is a source of danger to the soul, there is no meaning in words.

(a) Let us hear what St. Paul says:

“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2)

“We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:12)

“Christ gave Himself for us, that He might deliver us from this present evil world.” (Galatians 1:4)

“In time past ye walked according to the course of this world.” (Ephesians 2:2)

“Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” (2 Timothy 4:10)

(b) Let us hear what St. James says:-

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27)

“Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” (James 4:4)

(c) Let us hear what St. John says:-

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:15-17)

“The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” (1 John 3:1)

“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.” (1 John 4:5)

“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” (1 John 5:4)

“We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” (1 John 5:19)

(d) Let us hear, lastly, what the Lord Jesus Christ says:-

“The cares of this world choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful.” (Matthew 13:22)

“Ye are of this world: I am not of this world.” (John 8:23)

“The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.” (John 14:17)

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.” (John 15:18)

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:19)

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (John 17:16)

I make no comment on these twenty-one texts. They speak for themselves. If any one can read them carefully, and fail to see that “the world” is an enemy to the Christian's soul, and that there is an utter opposition between the friendship of the world and the friendship of Christ, he is past the reach of argument, and it is a waste of time to reason with him. To my eyes they contain a lesson as clear as the sun at noon day.

I turn from Scripture to matters of fact and experience. I appeal to any old Christian who keeps his eyes open, and knows what is going on in the Churches. I ask him whether it be not true that nothing damages the cause of religion so much as “the world”? It is not open sin, or open unbelief, which robs Christ of His professing servants, so much as the love of the world, the fear of the world, the cares of the world, the business of the world, the money of the world, the pleasures of the world, and the desire to keep in with the world. This is the great rock on which thousands of young people are continually making shipwreck. They do not object to any article of the Christian faith. They do not deliberately choose evil, and openly rebel against God. They hope somehow to get to heaven at last; and they think it proper to have some religion. But they cannot give up their idol: they must have the world. And so after running well and bidding fair for heaven, while boys and girls, they turn aside when they become men and women, and go down the broad way which leads to destruction. They begin with Abraham and Moses, and end with Demas and Lot's wife.

The last day alone will prove how many souls “the world” has slain. Hundreds will be found to have been trained in religious families, and to have known the Gospel from their very childhood, and yet missed heaven. They left the harbour of home with bright prospects, and launched forth on the ocean of life with a father's blessing and a mother's prayers, and then got out of the right course through the seductions of the world, and ended their voyage in shallows and in misery. It is a sorrowful story to tell; but, alas, it is only too common. I cannot wonder that St. Paul says, “Come out and be separate.”

II. Let me now try to show what does not constitute separation from the world.

The point is one which requires clearing up. There are many mistakes made about it. You will sometimes see sincere and well-meaning Christians doing things which God never intended them to do, in the matter of separation from the world, and honestly believing that they are in the path of duty. Their mistakes often do great harm. They give occasion to the wicked to ridicule all religion, and supply them with an excuse for having none. They cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and add to the offence of the cross. I think it a plain duty to make a few remarks on the subject. We must never forget that it is possible to be very much in earnest, and to think we are “doing God service,” when in reality we are making some great mistake. There is such a thing as “zeal not according to knowledge.” (John 16:2, Romans 10:2) There are few things about which it is so important to pray for a right judgment and sanctified common sense, as about separation from the world.

(a) When St. Paul said, “Come out and be separate,” he did not mean that Christians ought to give up all worldly callings, trades, professions, and business. He did not forbid men to be soldiers, sailors, lawyers, doctors, merchants, bankers, shop-keepers, or tradesmen. There is not a word in the New Testament to justify such a line of conduct. Cornelius the centurion, Luke the physician,

Zenas the lawyer, are examples to the contrary. Idleness is in itself a sin. A lawful calling is a remedy against temptation. “If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) To give up any business of life, which is not necessarily sinful, to the wicked and the devil, from fear of getting harm from it, is lazy, cowardly conduct. The right plan is to carry our religion into our business, and not to give up business under the specious pretence that it interferes with our religion.

(b) When St. Paul said, “Come out and be separate,” he did not mean that Christians ought to decline all intercourse with unconverted people, and refuse to go into their society. There is no warrant for such conduct in the New Testament. Our Lord and His disciples did not refuse to go to a marriage feast, or to sit at meat at a Pharisee's table. St. Paul does not say, “If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast,” you must not go, but only tells us how to behave if we do go. (1 Corinthians 10:27) Moreover, it is a dangerous thing to begin judging people too closely, and settling who are converted and who are not, and what society is godly and what ungodly. We are sure to make mistakes. Above all, such a course of life would cut us off from many opportunities of doing good. If we carry our Master with us wherever we go, who can tell but we may “save some,” and get no harm? (1 Corinthians 9:22)

(c) When St. Paul says, “Come out and be separate,” he did not mean that Christians ought to take no interest in anything on earth except religion. To neglect science, art, literature, and politics, to read nothing which is not directly spiritual,-to know nothing about what is going on among mankind, and never to look at a newspaper,-to care nothing about the government of one's country, and to be utterly indifferent as to the persons who guide its counsels and make its laws,-all this may seem very right and proper in the eyes of some people. But I take leave to think that it is an idle, selfish neglect of duty. St. Paul knew the value of good government, as one of the main helps to our “living a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and honesty.” (1 Timothy 2:2) St. Paul was not ashamed to read heathen writers, and to quote their words in his speeches and writings. St. Paul did not think it beneath him to show an acquaintance with the laws and customs and callings of the world, in the illustrations he gave from them. Christians who plume themselves on their ignorance of secular things are precisely the Christians who bring religion into contempt. I knew the case of a blacksmith who would not come to hear his clergyman preach the Gospel, until he found out that he knew the properties of iron. Then he came.

(d) When St. Paul said, “Come out and be separate,” he did not mean that Christians should be singular, eccentric, and peculiar in their dress, manners, demeanour, and voice. Anything which attracts notice in these matters is most objectionable, and ought to be carefully avoided. To wear clothes of such a colour, or made in such a fashion, that when you go into company every eye is fixed on you, and you are the object of general observation, is an enormous mistake. It gives occasion to the wicked to ridicule religion, and looks self-righteous and affected. There is not the slightest proof that our Lord and His apostles, and Priscilla, and Persis, and their companions, did not dress and behave just like others in their own ranks of life. On the other hand, one of the many charges our Lord brings against the Pharisees was that of “making broad their phylacteries, and enlarging the borders of their garments,” so as to be “seen of men.” (Matthew 23:5) True sanctity and sanctimoniousness are entirely different things. Those who try to show their unworldliness by wearing conspicuously ugly clothes, or by speaking in a whining, snuffling voice, or by affecting an unnatural slavishness, humility, and gravity of manner, miss their mark altogether, and only give

occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

(e) When St. Paul said, “Come out and be separate,” he did not mean that Christians ought to retire from the company of mankind, and shut themselves up in solitude. It is one of the crying errors of the Church of Rome to suppose that eminent holiness is to be attained by such practices. It is the unhappy delusion of the whole army of monks, nuns, and hermits. Separation of this kind is not according to the mind of Christ. He says distinctly in His last prayer, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” (John 17:15) There is not a word in the Acts or Epistles to recommend such a separation. True believers are always represented as mixing in the world, doing their duty in it, and glorifying God by patience, meekness, purity, and courage in their several positions, and not by cowardly desertion of them. Moreover, it is foolish to suppose that we can keep the world and the devil out of our hearts by going into holes and corners. True religion and unworldliness are best seen, not in timidly forsaking the post which God has allotted to us, but in manfully standing our ground, and showing the power of grace to overcome evil.

(f) Last, but not least, when St. Paul said, “Come out and be separate,” he did not mean that Christians ought to withdraw from every Church in which there are unconverted members, or to refuse to worship in company with any who are not believers, or to keep away from the Lord's table if any ungodly people go up to it. This is a very common but a very grievous mistake. There is not a text in the New Testament to justify it, and it ought to be condemned as a pure invention of man. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself deliberately allowed Judas Iscariot to be an apostle for three years, and gave him the Lord's Supper. He has taught us, in the parable of the wheat and tares, that converted and unconverted will be “together till the harvest,” and cannot be divided. (Matthew 13:30) In His Epistles to the Seven Churches, and in all St. Paul's Epistles, we often see faults and corruptions mentioned and reproved; but we are never told that they justify desertion of the assembly, or neglect of ordinances. In short, we must not look for a perfect Church, a perfect congregation, and a perfect company of communicants, until the marriage supper of the Lamb. If others are unworthy Churchmen, or unworthy partakers of the Lord's Supper, the sin is theirs and not ours: we are not their judges. But to separate ourselves from Church assemblies, and deprive ourselves of Christian ordinances, because others use them unworthily, is to take up a foolish, unreasonable, and unscriptural position. It is not the mind of Christ, and it certainly is not St. Paul's idea of separation from the world.

I commend these six points to the calm consideration of all who wish to understand the subject of separation from the world. About each and all of them far more might be said than I have space to say in this paper. About each and all of them I have seen so many mistakes made, and so much misery and unhappiness caused by those mistakes, that I want to put Christians on their guard. I want them not to take up positions hastily, in the zeal of their first love, which they will afterwards be obliged to give up.

I leave this part of my subject with two pieces of advice, which I offer especially to young Christians.

I advise them, for one thing, if they really desire to come out from the world, to remember that the shortest path is not always the path of duty. To quarrel with all our unconverted relatives, to “cut” all our old friends, to withdraw entirely from mixed society, to live an exclusive life, to give up every

act of courtesy and civility in order that we may devote ourselves to the direct work of Christ,-all this may seem very right, and may satisfy our consciences and save us trouble. But I venture a doubt whether it is not often a selfish, lazy, self-pleasing line of conduct, and whether the true cross and true line of duty may not be to deny ourselves, and adopt a very different course of action.

I advise them, for another thing, if they want to come out from the world, to watch against a sour, morose, ungenial, gloomy, unpleasant, bearish demeanour, and never to forget that there is such a thing as “winning without the Word.” (1 Peter 3:1) Let them strive to show unconverted people that their principles, whatever may be thought of them, make them cheerful, amiable, good-tempered, unselfish, considerate for others, and ready to take an interest in everything that is innocent and of good report. In short, let there be no needless separation between us and the world. In many things, as I shall soon show, we must be separate; but let us take care that it is separation of the right sort. If the world is offended by such separation we cannot help it. But let us never give the world occasion to say that our separation is foolish, senseless, ridiculous, unreasonable, uncharitable, and unscriptural.

III. In the third place, I shall try to show what true separation from the world really is.

I take up this branch of my subject with a very deep sense of its difficulty. That there is a certain line of conduct which all true Christians ought to pursue with respect to “the world, and the things of the world,” is very evident. The texts already quoted make that plain. The key to the solution of that question lies in the word “separation.” But in what separation consists it is not easy to show. On some points it is not hard to lay down particular rules; on others it is impossible to do more than state general principles, and leave every one to apply them according to his position in life. This is what I shall now attempt to do.

(a) First and foremost, he that desires to “come out from the world, and be separate,” must steadily and habitually refuse to be guided by the world's standard of right and wrong.

The rule of the bulk of mankind is to go with the stream, to do as others, to follow the fashion, to keep in with the common opinion, and to set your watch by the town-clock. The true Christian will never be content with such a rule as that. He will simply ask, What saith the Scripture? What is written in the Word of God? He will maintain firmly that nothing can be right which God says is wrong, and that the customs and opinions of his neighbours can never make that to be a trifle which God calls serious, or that to be no sin which God calls sin. He will never think lightly of such sins as drinking, swearing, gambling, lying, cheating, swindling, or breach of the seventh commandment, because they are common, and many say, “Where is the mighty harm?” That miserable argument,-“Everybody thinks so, everybody says so, everybody does it, everybody will be there,”-goes for nothing with him. Is it condemned or approved by the Bible? That is his only question. If he stands alone in the parish, or town, or congregation, he will not go against the Bible. If he has to come out from the crowd, and take a position by himself, he will not flinch from it rather than disobey the Bible. This is genuine Scriptural separation.

(b) He that desires to “come out from the world and be separate,” must be very careful how he spends his leisure time.

This is a point which at first sight appears of little importance. But the longer I live, the more I am persuaded that it deserves most serious attention. Honourable occupation and lawful business are a great safeguard to the soul, and the time that is spent upon them is comparatively the time of our least danger. The devil finds it hard to get a hearing from a busy man. But when the day's work is over, and the time of leisure arrives, then comes the hour of temptation.

I do not hesitate to warn every man who wants to live a Christian life, to be very careful how he spends his evenings. Evening is the time when we are naturally disposed to unbend after the labours of the day; and evening is the time when the Christian is too often tempted to lay aside his armour, and consequently brings trouble on his soul. “Then cometh the devil,” and with the devil the world. Evening is the time when the poor man is tempted to go to the public-house, and fall into sin. Evening is the time when the tradesman too often goes to the Inn parlour, and sits for hours hearing and seeing things which do him no good. Evening is the time which the higher classes choose for dancing, card playing, and the like; and consequently never get to bed till late at night. If we love our souls, and would not become worldly, let us mind how we spend our evenings. Tell me how a man spends his evenings, and I can generally tell what his character is.

The true Christian will do well to make it a settled rule never to waste his evenings. Whatever others may do, let him resolve always to make time for quiet, calm thought, for Bible-reading and prayer. The rule will prove a hard one to keep. It may bring on him the charge of being unsocial and over strict. Let him not mind this. Anything of this kind is better than habitual late hours in company, hurried prayers, slovenly Bible reading, and a bad conscience. Even if he stands alone in his parish or town, let him not depart from his rule. He will find himself in a minority, and be thought a peculiar man. But this is genuine Scriptural separation.

(c) He that desires to “come out from the world and be separate,” must steadily and habitually determine not to be swallowed up and absorbed in the business of the world.

A true Christian will strive to do his duty in whatever station or position he finds himself, and to do it well. Whether statesman, or merchant, or banker, or lawyer, or doctor, or tradesman, or farmer, he will try to do his work so that no one can find occasion for fault in him. But he will not allow it to get between him and Christ. If he finds his business beginning to eat up his Sundays, his Bible-reading, his private prayer, and to bring clouds between him and heaven, he will say, “Stand back! There is a limit. Hitherto thou mayest go, but no further. I cannot sell my soul for place, fame, or gold.” Like Daniel, he will make time for his communion with God, whatever the cost may be. Like Havelock, he will deny himself anything rather than lose his Bible-reading and his prayers. In all this he will find he stands almost alone. Many will laugh at him, and tell him they get on well enough without being so strict and particular. He will heed it not. He will resolutely hold the world at arm's length, whatever present loss or sacrifice it may seem to entail. He will choose rather to be less rich and prosperous in this world, than not to prosper about his soul. To stand alone in this way, to run counter to the ways of others, requires immense self denial. But this is genuine Scriptural separation.

(d) He that desires to “come out from the world and be separate” must steadily abstain from all amusements and recreations which are inseparably connected with sin.

This is a hard subject to handle, and I approach it with pain. But I do not think I should be faithful to Christ, and faithful to my office as a minister, if I did not speak very plainly about it, in considering such a matter as separation from the world.

Let me, then, say honestly, that I cannot understand how any one who makes any pretence to real vital religion can allow himself to attend races and theatres. Conscience, no doubt, is a strange thing, and every man must judge for himself and use his liberty. One man sees no harm in things which another regards with abhorrence as evil. I can only give my own opinion for what it is worth, and entreat my readers to consider seriously what I say.

That to look at horses running at full speed is in itself perfectly harmless, no sensible man will pretend to deny. That many plays, such as Shakespeare's, are among the finest productions of the human intellect, is equally undeniable. But all this is beside the question. The question is whether horse-racing and theatres, as they are now conducted, in England, are not inseparably bound up with things that are downright wicked. I assert without hesitation that they are so bound up. I assert that the breach of God's commandments so invariably accompanies the race and the play, that you cannot go to the amusement without helping sin.

I entreat all professing Christians to remember this, and to take heed what they do. I warn them plainly that they have no right to shut their eyes to facts which every intelligent person knows, for the mere pleasure of seeing a horse-race, or listening to good actors or actresses. I warn them that they must not talk of separation from the world, if they can lend their sanction to amusements which are invariably connected with gambling, betting, drunkenness, and fornication. These are the things “which God will judge.”-“The end of these things is death.” (Hebrews 13:4; Romans 6:21)

Hard words these, no doubt! But are they not true? It may seem to your relatives and friends very strait-laced, strict, and narrow, if you tell them you cannot go to the races or the theatre with them. But we must fall back on first principles. Is the world a danger to the soul, or is it not? Are we to come out from the world, or are we not? These are questions which can only be answered in one way.

If we love our souls we must have nothing to do with amusements which are bound up with sin. Nothing short of this can be called genuine scriptural separation from the world.*

(e) He that desires to “come out from the world, and be separate,” must be moderate in the use of lawful and innocent recreations.

No sensible Christian will ever think of condemning all recreations. In a world of wear and tear like that we live in, occasional unbending and relaxation are good for all. Body and mind alike require seasons of lighter occupation, and opportunities of letting off high spirits, and especially when they are young. Exercise itself is a positive necessity for the preservation of mental and bodily health. I see no harm in cricket, rowing, running, and other manly athletic recreations. I find no fault with those who play at chess and such-like games of skill. We are all fearfully and wonderfully made. No wonder the poet says,

“Strange that a harp of thousand strings

Should keep in tune so long!”

Anything which strengthens nerves, and brain, and digestion, and lungs, and muscles, and makes us more fit for Christ's work, so long as it is not in itself sinful, is a blessing, and ought to be thankfully used. Anything which will occasionally divert our thoughts from their usual grinding channel, in a healthy manner, is a good and not an evil.

But it is the excess of these innocent things which a true Christian must watch against, if he wants to be separate from the world. He must not devote his whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and time to them, as many do, if he wishes to serve Christ. There are hundreds of lawful things which are good in moderation, but bad when taken in excess: healthful medicine in small quantities,-downright poison when swallowed down in huge doses. In nothing is this so true as it is in the matter of recreations. The use of them is one thing, and the abuse of them is another. The Christian who uses them must know when to stop, and how to say “Hold: enough!”-Do they interfere with his private religion? Do they take up too much of his thoughts and attention? Have they a secularizing effect on his soul? Have they a tendency to pull him down to earth? Then let him hold hard and take care. All this will require courage, self-denial, and firmness. It is a line of conduct which will often bring on us the ridicule and contempt of those who know not what moderation is, and who spend their lives in making trifles serious things and serious things trifles. But if we mean to come out from the world we must not mind this. We must be “temperate” even in lawful things, whatever others may think of us. This is genuine Scriptural separation.

(f) Last, but not least, he that desires to “come out from the world and be separate” must be careful how he allows himself in friendships, intimacies, and close relationships with worldly people.

We cannot help meeting many unconverted people as long as we live. We cannot avoid having intercourse with them, and doing business with them, unless “we go out of the world.” (1 Cor. v. 10.) To treat them with the utmost courtesy, kindness, and charity, whenever we do meet them, is a positive duty. But acquaintance is one thing, and intimate friendship is quite another. To seek their society without cause, to choose their company, to cultivate intimacy with them, is very dangerous to the soul. Human nature is so constituted that we cannot be much with other people without effect on our own character. The old proverb will never fail to prove true: “Tell me with whom a man chooses to live, and I will tell you what he is.” The Scripture says expressly, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” (Proverbs 13:20) If then a Christian, who desires to live consistently, chooses for his friends those who either do not care for their souls, or the Bible, or God, or Christ, or holiness, or regard them as of secondary importance, it seems to me impossible for him to prosper in his religion. He will soon find that their ways are not his ways, nor their thoughts his thoughts, nor their tastes his tastes; and that, unless they change, he must give up intimacy with them. In short, there must be separation. Of course such separation will be painful. But if we have to choose between the loss of a friend and the injury of our souls, there ought to be no doubt in our minds. If friends will not walk in the narrow way with us, we must not walk in the broad way to please them. But let us distinctly understand that to attempt to keep up close intimacy between a converted and an unconverted person, if both are consistent with their natures, is to attempt an impossibility.

The principle here laid down ought to be carefully remembered by all unmarried Christians in the choice of a husband or wife. I fear it is too often entirely forgotten. Too many seem to think of everything except religion in choosing a partner for life, or to suppose that it will come somehow as

a matter of course. Yet when a praying, Bible-reading, God-fearing, Christ-loving, Sabbath-keeping Christian marries a person who takes no interest whatever in serious religion, what can the result be but injury to the Christian, or immense unhappiness? Health is not infectious, but disease is. As a general rule, in such cases, the good go down to the level of the bad, and the bad do not come up to the level of the good. The subject is a delicate one, and I do not care to dwell upon it. But this I say confidently to every unmarried Christian man or woman,-if you love your soul, if you do not want to fall away and backslide, if you do not want to destroy your own peace and comfort for life, resolve never to marry any person who is not a thorough Christian, whatever the resolution may cost you. You had better die than marry an unbeliever. Stand to this resolution, and let no one ever persuade you out of it. Depart from this resolution, and you will find it almost impossible to “come out and be separate.” You will find you have tied a mill-stone round your own neck in running the race towards heaven; and, if saved at last, it will be “so as by fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:15)

I offer these six general hints to all who wish to follow St. Paul's advice, and to come out from the world and be separate. In giving them, I lay no claim to infallibility; but I believe they deserve consideration and attention. I do not forget that the subject is full of difficulties, and that scores of doubtful cases are continually arising in a Christian's course, in which it is very hard to say what is the path of duty, and how to behave. Perhaps the following bits of advice may be found useful.-In all doubtful cases we should first pray for wisdom and sound judgment. If prayer is worth anything, it must be specially valuable when we desire to do right, but do not see our way.-In all doubtful cases let us often try ourselves by recollecting the eye of God. Should I go to such and such a place, or do such and such a thing, if I really thought God was looking at me?-In all doubtful cases let us never forget the second advent of Christ and the day of judgment. Should I like to be found in such and such company, or employed in such and such ways?-Finally, in all doubtful cases let us find out what the conduct of the holiest and best Christians has been under similar circumstances. If we do not clearly see our own way, we need not be ashamed to follow good examples. I throw out these suggestions for the use of all who are in difficulties about disputable points in the matter of separation from the world. I cannot help thinking that they may help to untie many knots, and solve many problems.

IV. I shall now conclude the whole subject by trying to show the secrets of real victory over the world.

To come out from the world of course is not an easy thing. It cannot be easy so long as human nature is what it is, and a busy devil is always near us. It requires a constant struggle and exertion; it entails incessant conflict and self-denial; it often places us in exact opposition to members of our own families, to relations and neighbours; it sometimes obliges us to do things which give great offence, and bring on us ridicule and petty persecution. It is precisely this which makes many hang back and shrink from decided religion. They know they are not right; they know that they are not so “thorough” in Christ's service as they ought to be, and they feel uncomfortable and ill at ease. But the fear of man keeps them back. And so they linger on through life with aching, dissatisfied hearts,-with too much religion to be happy in the world, and too much of the world to be happy in their religion. I fear this is a very common case, if the truth were known.

Yet there are some in every age who seem to get the victory over the world. They come out decidedly from its ways, and are unmistakably separate. They are independent of its opinions, and unshaken by its opposition. They move on like planets in an orbit of their own, and seem to rise equally above the world's smiles and frowns. And what are the secrets of their victory? I will set them down.

(a) The first secret of victory over the world is a right heart. By that I mean a heart renewed, changed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost,-a heart in which Christ dwells, a heart in which old things have passed away, and all things become new. The grand mark of such a heart is the bias of its tastes and affections. The owner of such a heart no longer likes the world, and the things of the world, and therefore finds it no trial or sacrifice to give them up. He has no longer any appetite for the company, the conversation, the amusements, the occupations, the books which he once loved, and to “come out” from them seems natural to him. Great indeed is the expulsive power of a new principle! Just as the new spring-buds in a beech hedge push off the old leaves and make them quietly fall to the ground, so does the new heart of a believer invariably affect his tastes and likings, and make him drop many things which he once loved and lived in, because he now likes them no more. Let him that wants to “come out from the world and be separate,” make sure first and foremost that he has got a new heart. If the heart is really right, everything else will be right in time. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” (Matthew 6:22) If the affections are not right, there never will be right action.

(b) The second secret of victory over the world is a lively practical faith in unseen things. What saith the Scripture? “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” (1 John 5:4) To attain and keep up the habit of looking steadily at invisible things, as if they were visible,-to set before our minds every day, as grand realities, our souls, God, Christ, heaven, hell, judgment, eternity,-to cherish an abiding conviction that what we do not see is just as real as what we do see, and ten thousand times more important,-this, this is one way to be conquerors over the world. This was the faith which made the noble army of saints, described in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, obtain such a glorious testimony from the Holy Ghost. They all acted under a firm persuasion that they had a real God, a real Saviour, and a real home in heaven, though unseen by mortal eyes. Armed with this faith, a man regards this world as a shadow compared to the world to come, and cares little for its praise or blame, its enmity or its rewards. Let him that wants to come out from the world and be separate, but shrinks and hangs back for fear of the things seen, pray and strive to have this faith. “All things are possible to him that believes.” (Mark 9:23) Like Moses, he will find it possible to forsake Egypt, seeing Him that is invisible. Like Moses, he will not care what he loses and who is displeased, because he sees afar off, like one looking through a telescope, a substantial recompense of reward. (Hebrews 11:26)

(c) The third and last secret of victory over the world, is to attain and cultivate the habit of boldly confessing Christ on all proper occasions. In saying this I would not be mistaken. I want no one to blow a trumpet before him, and thrust his religion on others at all seasons. But I do wish to encourage all who strive to come out from the world to show their colours, and to act and speak out like men who are not ashamed to serve Christ. A steady, quiet assertion of our own principles, as Christians,-an habitual readiness to let the children of the world see that we are guided by other rules than they are, and do not mean to swerve from them,-a calm, firm, courteous maintenance of our own standard of things in every company,-all this will insensibly form a habit within us, and

make it comparatively easy to be a separate man. It will be hard at first, no doubt, and cost us many a struggle; but the longer we go on, the easier will it be. Repeated acts of confessing Christ will produce habits. Habits once formed will produce a settled character. Our characters once known, we shall be saved much trouble. Men will know what to expect from us, and will count it no strange thing if they see us living the lives of separate peculiar people. He that grasps the nettle most firmly will always be less hurt than the man who touches it with a trembling hand. It is a great thing to be able to say “No” decidedly, but courteously, when asked to do anything which conscience says is wrong. He that shows his colours boldly from the first, and is never ashamed to let men see “whose he is and whom he serves,” will soon find that he has overcome the world, and will be let alone. Bold confession is a long step towards victory.

It only remains for me now to conclude the whole subject with a few short words of application. The danger of the world ruining the soul, the nature of true separation from the world, the secrets of victory over the world, are all before the reader of this paper. I now ask him to give me his attention for the last time, while I try to say something directly for his personal benefit.

(1) My first word shall be a question. Are you overcoming the world, or are you overcome by it? Do you know what it is to come out from the world and be separate, or are you yet entangled by it, and conformed to it? If you have any desire to be saved, I entreat you to answer this question.

If you know nothing of “separation,” I warn you affectionately that your soul is in great danger. The world passeth away; and they who cling to the world, and think only of the world, will pass away with it to everlasting ruin. Awake to know your peril before it be too late. Awake and flee from the wrath to come. The time is short. The end of all things is at hand. The shadow are lengthening. The sun is going down. The night cometh when no man can work. The great white throne will soon be set. The judgment will begin. The books will be opened. Awake, and come out from the world while it is called today.

Yet a little while, and there will be no more worldly occupations and worldly amusements,-no more getting money and spending money,-no more eating, and drinking, and feasting, and dressing, and ball-going, and theatres, and races, and cards, and gambling. What will you do when all these things have passed away for ever? How can you possibly be happy in an eternal heaven, where holiness is all in all, and worldliness has no place? Oh consider these things, and be wise! Awake, and break the chains which the world has thrown around you. Awake, and flee from the wrath to come.

My second word shall be a counsel. If you want to come out from the world, but know not what to do, take the advice which I give you this day. Begin by applying direct, as a penitent sinner, to our Lord Jesus Christ, and put your case in His hands. Pour out your heart before Him. Tell Him your whole story, and keep nothing back. Tell Him that you are a sinner wanting to be saved from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and entreat Him to save you.

That blessed Saviour “gave Himself for us that He might deliver us from this present evil world.” (Galatians 1:2) He knows what the world is, for He lived in it thirty and three years. He knows what the difficulties of a man are, for He was made man for our sakes, and dwelt among men. High in heaven, at the right hand of God, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him,-able to keep us from the evil of the world while we are still living in it,-able to give us power to

become the sons of God,-able to keep us from falling,-able to make us more than conquerors. Once more I say, Go direct to Christ with the prayer of faith, and put yourself wholly and unreservedly in His hands. Hard as it may seem to you now to come out from the world and be separate, you shall find that with Jesus nothing is impossible. You, even you, shall overcome the world.

My third and last word shall be encouragement. If you have learned by experience what it is to come out from the world, I can only say to you, Take comfort, and persevere. You are in the right road; you have no cause to be afraid. The everlasting hills are in sight. Your salvation is nearer than when you believed. Take comfort and press on.

No doubt you have had many a battle, and made many a false step. You have sometimes felt ready to faint, and been half disposed to go back to Egypt. But your Master has never entirely left you, and He will never suffer you to be tempted above that you are able to bear. Then persevere steadily in your separation from the world, and never be ashamed of standing alone. Settle it firmly in your mind that the most decided Christians are always the happiest, and remember that no one ever said at the end of his course that he had been too holy, and lived too near to God.

Hear, last of all, what is written in the Scriptures of truth:-

“Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.” (Luke 12:8)

“There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

“But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.” (Mark 10:29-30)

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

“For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (Hebrews 10:35-37)

Those words were written and spoken for our sakes. Let us lay hold on them, and never forget them. Let us persevere to the end, and never be ashamed of coming out from the world, and being separate. We may be sure it brings its own reward.

NOTE.

* THOUGHTFUL and intelligent readers will probably observe that, under the head of worldly amusements, I have said nothing about ball-going and card-playing. They are delicate and difficult subjects, and many classes of society are not touched by them. But I am quite willing to give my opinion, and the more so because I do not speak of them without experience in the clays of my youth.

Concerning ball-going, I only ask Christians to judge the amusement by its tendencies and accompaniments. To say there is anything morally wrong in the mere bodily act of dancing would be absurd. David danced before the ark. Solomon said, “There is a time to dance.” (Ecclesiastes 3:4) Just as it is natural to lambs and kittens to frisk about, so it seems natural to young people, all over the world, to jump about to a lively tune of music. If dancing were taken up for mere exercise, if dancing took place at morning hours, and men only danced with men, and women with women, it would be needless and absurd to object to it. But everybody knows that this is not what is meant by modern ball-going. This is an amusement which involves very late hours, extravagant dressing, and an immense amount of frivolity, vanity, jealousy, unhealthy excitement, and vain conversation. Who would like to be found in a modern ball-room when the Lord Jesus Christ comes the second time? Who that has taken much part in balls, as I myself once did, before I knew better, can deny that they have a most dissipating effect on the mind, like opium-eating and dram-drinking on the body? I cannot withhold my opinion that ball-going is one of those worldly amusements which “war against the soul,” and which it is wisest and best to give up. And as for those parents who urge their sons and daughters, against their wills and inclinations, to go to balls, I can only say that they are taking on themselves a most dangerous responsibility, and risking great injury to their children's souls.

Concerning card playing, my judgment is much the same. I ask Christian people to try it by its tendencies and consequences. Of course it would be nonsense to say there is positive wickedness in an innocent game of cards, for diversion, and not for money. I have known instances of old people of lethargic and infirm habit of body, unable to work or read, to whom cards in an evening were really useful, to keep them from drowsiness, and preserve their health. But it is vain to shut our eyes to facts. If masters and mistresses once begin to play cards in the parlour, servants are likely to play cards in the kitchen; and then comes in a whole train of evils. Moreover, from simple card-playing to desperate gambling there is but a chain of steps. If parents teach young people that there is no harm in the first step, they must never be surprised if they go on to the last.

I give this opinion with much diffidence. I lay no claim to infallibility. Let every one be persuaded in his own mind. But, considering all things, it is my deliberate judgment that the Christian who wishes to keep his soul right, and to “come out from the world,” will do wisely to have nothing to do with card-playing. It is a habit which seems to grow on some people so much that it becomes at last a necessity, and they cannot live without it. “Madam,” said Romaine to an old lady at Bath, who declared she could not do without her cards,-“Madam, if this is the case, cards are your god, and your god is a very poor one.” Surely in doubtful matters like these it is well to give our souls the benefit of the doubt, and to refrain.

Concerning field-sports, I admit that it is not easy to lay down a strict rule. I cannot go the length of some, and say that galloping across country, or shooting grouse, partridges, or pheasants, or catching salmon or trout, are in themselves positively sinful occupations, and distinct marks of an unconverted heart. There are many persons, I know, to whom violent out-door exercise and complete diversion of mind are absolute necessities, for the preservation of their bodily and mental health. But in all these matters the chief question is one of degree. Much depends on the company men are thrown into, and the extent to which the thing is carried. The great danger lies in excess. It is possible to be intemperate about hunting and shooting as well as about drinking. We are

commanded in Scripture to be “temperate in all things,” if we would so run as to obtain; and those who are addicted to field-sports should not forget this rule.

The question, however, is one about which Christians must be careful in expressing an opinion, and moderate in their judgments. The man who can neither ride, nor shoot, nor throw a fly, is hardly qualified to speak dispassionately about such matters. It is cheap and easy work to condemn others for doing things which you cannot do yourself, and are utterly unable to enjoy! One thing only is perfectly certain,-all intemperance or excess is sin. The man who is wholly absorbed in field-sports, and spends all his years in such a manner that he seems to think God only created him to be a “hunting, shooting, and fishing animal,” is a man who at present knows very little of Scriptural Christianity. It is written, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:21)

Three Pictures

THREE PICTURES!

And Which is Mine?

BEING THOUGHTS ON ACTS XXVI. 24-29. BY THE RIGHT REV.

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL.

DRUMMOND'S TRACT DEPOT, STIRLING.

THREE PICTURES.

Acts 26:24-29.

"And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

"But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

"For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

"And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

READER,

There is a collection of pictures in London called the National Portrait Gallery. It contains the likenesses of nearly all the great men who have made a mark in English history. It is well worth seeing. But I doubt whether it contains three portraits which deserve a more attentive study than the three which I am going to show you in this paper.

One striking feature of the Bible is the rich variety of its contents. That grand old Book, which for eighteen centuries has baffled the attacks of unfriendly ethics, is not only a storehouse of doctrine, precept, history, poetry, and prophecy. The Holy Ghost has also given us a series of life-like portraits of human nature, in all its various aspects, which deserve our attentive study. 'Who does not know that we often learn more from patterns and examples than from abstract statements?

Reader, the well-known piece of Scripture before you supplies an admirable illustration of my meaning. It forms the conclusion of the chapter in which the Apostle St. Paul makes a defence of himself before the Roman governor Festus and the Jewish king Agrippa. Three pictures of three

very different men hang before us. They are types of three classes of men who are to be seen among us at this very day. Their succession has never ceased. In spite of changing fashions, scientific discoveries, and political reforms, the inward heart of man in every age is always the same. Come and let us stand before these three pictures, as we would stand before the painting of a Gainsborough, a Reynolds, or a Romney, and see what we may learn.

I. Let us look, first, at Festus, the Roman governor.

This is the man who abruptly broke in upon St. Paul's address, exclaiming, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."

Festus, no doubt, was a heathen, ignorant of any religion except the idolatrous temple-worship, which in the time of the apostles overspread the civilized world. From the language he addressed to Agrippa in a preceding chapter, he seems to have been profoundly ignorant both of Judaism and Christianity. He spoke of "questions of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." (Acts 25:19) Most probably, like many a proud Roman, in the declining age of the Roman Empire, he regarded all religions with secret contempt, as all equally false, or equally true, and all alike unworthy of the notice of a great man. As for a Jew talking of showing "light to the Gentiles," the very idea was ridiculous! To keep in with the world, to have the favour of man, to care nothing for anything but the things seen, to please "my lord" Augustus,-this was probably the whole religion of Porcius Festus.

Now, reader, are there many among us like Festus? Yes! I fear there are tens of thousands. They are to be found in every rank and class of society. They walk in our streets. They travel with us in railway carriages. They meet us in the daily intercourse of the world. They fill the various relations of life respectably. They are often good men of business and eminent in the professions they have chosen. They discharge the various duties of their positions with credit, and leave a good name behind them, when their place is empty. But, like Festus, they have no religion!

These are they who seem to live as if they had no souls. From January to December, they appear neither to think, nor feel, nor see, nor know anything about a life to come. It forms no part of their schemes, and plans, and calculations. They live as if they had nothing to attend to but the body, nothing to do but to eat, and drink, and sleep, and dress, and get money, and spend money, and no world to provide for except the world which we see with our eyes.

These are they who seldom, if ever, use any means of grace, whether public or private. Praying, and Bible-reading, and secret communion with God are things which they despise and let alone. They may be very well for the aged, the sick, and the dying; for the clergy, the monk, and the nun; hut not for them! If they ever attend a place of worship, it is only as a matter of form, to appear respectable; and too often they never attend except on the occasion of some great public ceremony, or at a wedding, or a funeral.

These are they who profess their inability to understand anything like zeal or earnestness about religion. They regard the Societies, the Institutions, the literature, the Evangelistic efforts of Christians, at home or abroad, with sublime contempt. Their maxim is to let everybody alone. The comparative claims of Church and Dissent, the strife of parties within our pale, the debates of Convocations, Congresses, and Diocesan Conferences, are all alike matters of indifference to them. They look coldly at them from a distance, like the philosopher described by the Latin poet

Lucretius, and regard them as the childish struggles of weak folks, unworthy of the notice of a cultivated mind. And if such subjects are ever brought up in their company, they brush them away with some satirical remark, or some oft-repeated old smart saying of scepticism.

Will any one deny that there are multitudes of people around us such as I have tried to describe,-kind people, perhaps, moral people, good-natured people, easy to get on with, unless you get on the subject of religion? It is impossible to deny it. Their name is “legion,” for they are many. The tendency of these latter days to make an idol of intellect,-the desire to be independent and to think for yourself,-the disposition to worship private judgment, to exalt your own isolated opinion, and to deem it finer and cleverer to go wrong with a few than right with a crowd,-all this helps to swell the ranks of the followers of Festus. I fear he is the type of a large class.

Such people are a melancholy sight. They often remind me of some grand old ruin, like Melrose or Bolton Abbey, where enough remains of beauteous arches, and columns, and towers, and traceried windows to show what the building once was, and what it might have been now if God had not left it. But now all is cold, and silent, and gloomy, and suggestive of decay, because the Master of the house, the Lord of life, is not there. Just so it is with many of the followers of Festus. You often feel, when you observe their intellectual power, their gifts of speech, their taste, their energy of character, “what men these might be if God had His rightful place in their souls!” But without God all is wrong. Alas, for the crushing power of unbelief and pride, when they get complete mastery of a man, and reign over him uncontrolled! No wonder that Scripture describes unconverted man as “blind,-sleeping,-beside himself,-and dead.”

Is Festus reading this paper to-day? I am afraid not! Religious tracts and books, like Sunday services and sermons, are not in his line. On Sundays Festus probably reads the newspaper, or looks over his worldly accounts, or visits his friends, or goes a journey, and secretly wishes an English Sunday was more like a Continental one, and the theatres and museums were open. On week-days Festus is constantly employed in business, or politics, or recreations, or killing time in the trifling pursuits of modern society ; and he lives like a butterfly, as thoughtless as if there were no such thing as death, or judgment, or eternity. Oh, no: Festus is not the man to read this paper

But is a man like Festus in a hopeless condition, and beyond the reach of mercy? No: indeed! I thank God he is not, he has yet got a conscience at the bottom of his character, which, however much seared, is not quite dead,-a conscience, which, like the great bell of St. Paul’s at midnight, when the roar of city business is over, will sometimes make itself heard. Like Felix, and Herod, and Ahab, and Pharaoh, the followers of Festus have their times of visitation and, unlike them, they sometimes awake before it is too late, and become different men. There are seasons in their lives when they are driven in upon themselves, and feel “the powers of the world to come,” and find that mortal man cannot get on without God. Sickness, and solitude, and disappointments, and losses of money, and deaths of loved ones, can sometimes make the proudest hearts bow down, and confess that “the grasshopper is a burden.” Manasseh is not the only one who “in time of affliction” turned to God, and began to play. Yes, reader, I have long felt that we must never despair of any one. The age of spiritual miracles is not past. With Christ and the Holy Ghost, nothing is impossible. The last day will show that there were some who began with Festus and were like him, but at last turned round, repented, and ended with St. Paul. While there is life we must hope, and pray for others.

II. Let us now turn to a very different picture Let us look at King Agrippa. This is the man who was so much struck by St. Paul's address that he said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.",

"Almost." Let me dwell for moment on that expression. I am well aware that many think our authorized English Version of the Bible is in fault here, and fails to give the true meaning of the original Greek. They assert that the phrase would be more correctly rendered, "In a short time," or "with weak and feeble argument thou art persuading me." I am bold to say that I cannot accept the view of these critics, though I admit that the phrase is rather obscure. But in questions like these I dare not call any man master. 1 hold with several excellent commentators, both ancient and modern,* that the translation given in our authorized version is right and correct. I am fortified in my belief by the fact that this is the view of one who thought, and spoke, and wrote in the language of the New Testament, I mean the famous Greek Father Chrysostom. And last, but not least, no other view appears to me to harmonize with the exclamation of the Apostle St. Paul in the verse which follows. "Almost!" he seems to say, taking up Agrippa's words. "I want thee to be not almost, but altogether a Christian." On these grounds I stand by our old version.

Agrippa, whose picture now demands our attention, was in many respects very unlike Festus. Of Jewish extraction, and brought up among Jews, if not of pure Jewish blood, he was thoroughly familiar with many things of which the Roman governor was utterly ignorant. He knew and "believed the prophets." He must have understood many things in St. Paul's address, which were mere "wards and names" and raving fancies to his companion in the place of hearing. He had a secret inward conviction that the man before him had truth on his side. He saw, and felt, and was moved, and affected, and conscience-stricken, and had inward wishes and longing desires. But he could get no further. He saw; but he had not courage to act. He felt; but he had not the will to move. He was not far from the kingdom of God; but he halted outside. He neither condemned nor ridiculed Christianity; but, like a man who is paralyzed. He could only look at it and examine it, and had not strength of mind to lay hold on it and receive it into his heart.

Now, reader, are there many professing Christians like Agrippa? I fear there is only one answer to that question. They are an exceeding great army, a multitude which it is difficult to number. They are to be found in our churches, and are pretty regular attendants on all means of grace. They have no doubt of the truth of the Bible. They have not the slightest objection to the doctrine of the Gospel. They know the difference between sound and unsound teaching. They admire the lives of holy people. They read good books, and give money to good objects. But, unhappily, they never seem to get beyond a certain point in their religion. They never come out boldly on Christ's side, never take up the cross; never confess Christ before men, never give up petty inconsistencies. They often tell you that they "mean, and intend, and hope, and purpose some day to be more decided Christians. They know they are not quite what they ought to be at present, and they hope one day to be different. But the "convenient season" never seems to come. Meaning and intending they go on, and meaning and intending they go off the stage. Meaning and intending they live, and meaning and intending, too oft, they die,-kind, good-natured, respectable people; not enemies, but friends to St. Paul, but, like Agrippa, "almost Christians."

How is it, you may well ask, that men can go so far in religion, and yet go no further? How is it that they can see so much, and know so much, and yet not follow the light they have to the "perfect day?" How is it that intellect and reason and conscience can make such progress towards

Christianity, and yet heart and will can lag behind?

The answers to these questions are soon given. The fear of man keeps back some. They have a cowardly dread of being laughed at, mocked, and despised, if they become decided Christians. They dare not risk the loss of man's good opinion. Like many of the Jewish rulers in our Lord's time, they "love the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:43) The love of the world keeps back others. They know that decided religion entails separation from some of the fashionable amusements and modes of spending time which are common in the world. They cannot make up their minds to this separation. They shrink from their baptismal vow to "renounce the pomps and vanities of this world." Like Lot's wife, they would like to be delivered from the wrath of God; but, like her, they must "look back." (Genesis 19:26) A certain subtle form of self-righteousness keeps back many. They take comfort in the secret thought that., at any rate, they are not so bad as Festus. They are not like some people they know: they do not despise religion. They go to church. They admire earnest men like St. Paul. Surely they will not be lost on account of a few inconsistencies! The morbid dread of being party-spirited keeps back many, and especially young men. They are oppressed with the idea that they cannot take a decided line in religion without committing themselves to some particular "school of thought." This is what they do not want to do. They forget that the case of Agrippa is not one of doctrine, but of conduct, and that decided action about duty is the surest way to obtain light about doctrinal truth. "If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine." (John 7:17) Some secret sin, I fear, keeps back not a few. They know in their own hearts that they are clinging to something which is wrong in God's sight. There is an Achan's wedge of gold somewhere, or an Herodias, or a Drusilla, or a Bernice in their private history, which will not bear the light of day. They cannot part with this darling. They cannot cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye, and so they cannot become disciples-Alas! for these excuses. Weighed in the balance, they are worthless and vain. Alas! for those who rest in them. Except they awake and cast off their chains, they will make shipwreck for ever.

Is Agrippa reading this paper to-day? Are there any like him whose eyes are on this page? Take a kindly warning from a minister of Christ, and try to realize that you are in a very dangerous position. Wishing, and feeling, and meaning, and intending, do not make up saving religion. They are but painted corks, which may enable you to float on the surface for a time, and keep your head above water, but they will not prevent you being carried down the stream, and being at last swept over a worse fall than that of Niagara. And, after all, you are not happy. You know too much of religion to be happy in the world: you are too much mixed up with the world to get any comfort from your religion. In short, you are neither happy in the world nor out of the world. Awake to a sense of your danger and your folly. Resolve by God's help to become decided. Draw the sword, and cast away the scabbard. "If you have no sword, sell your garment and buy one." (Luke 22:36) Burn your ships, and march straight forward. Do not merely look at the ark, and admire it; but enter in, before the door is shut and the flood begins. One thing, at any rate, may be laid down as an axiom in the elements of religion. An "almost" Christian is neither a safe nor a happy man.

III. Let us turn now to the last picture of the three. Let us look at the man whom Festus thought "beside himself," and by whom Agrippa was "almost persuaded to be a Christian." Let us look at St. Paul. This is the man who boldly said, "I would to God, that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." He wished his hearers no chains or imprisonment, such as he was suffering when he spoke. But he did wish

them to be of one mind with him about the one thing needful; and to share his peace, his hope, his solid comfort, his expectations.

“Altogether such as I am.” A weighty and memorable saying! It is the language of one who is thoroughly convinced and persuaded that he is in the right. He has cast overboard all doubts and hesitations. He holds the truth with the firm grasp of both hands, and not with finger and thumb. It is the language of the man who wrote in one place, “I know whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”-And in another place, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (2 Timothy 1:12; Romans 8:38-39)

(a) St. Paul was altogether convinced of the truth of the facts of Christianity. That the Lord Jesus Christ was actually “God manifest in the flesh,”-that he had proved His divinity by doing miracles which could not be denied,-that he had, finally, risen from the grave and ascended up into heaven, and was sitting at God’s right hand as man’s Saviour,-on all these points he had thoroughly made up his mind, and had not the slightest doubt of their credibility. On behalf of them he was willing to die.

(b) St. Paul was altogether convinced of the truth of the doctrines of Christianity. That we are all guilty sinners, and in danger of eternal ruin,-that the grand object of Christ coming into the world was to make atonement for our sins, and to purchase redemption by suffering in our stead on the cross,-that all who repent and believe on Christ crucified are completely forgiven all sins,-and that there is no other way to peace with God and heaven after death, but faith in Christ,-all this he most steadfastly believed. To teach these doctrines was his one object from his conversion till his martyrdom.

(c) St. Paul was altogether convinced that he himself had been changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and taught to live a new life,-that a holy life, devoted and consecrated to Christ, was the wisest, happiest life a man could live,-that the favour of God was a thousand times better than the favour of man,-and that nothing was too much to do for Him who had loved him and given Himself for him. He ran his race ever “looking unto Jesus,” and spending and being spent for Him. (Hebrews 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Corinthians 12:15)

(d) Last, but not least, St. Paul was altogether convinced of the reality of a world to come. The praise or favour of man, the rewards or punishments of this present world, were all as dross to him. He had before his eyes continually an inheritance incorruptible, and a crown of glory that would never fade away. (Php_3:8; 2 Timothy 4:8) Of that crown he knew that nothing could deprive him. Festus might despise him and think him “mad.” The Roman emperor, to whom he was going, might order him to be beheaded or thrown to the lions. What matter? He was firmly persuaded that he had treasure laid up in heaven which neither Festus nor Cæsar could touch, and which would be his to all eternity.

This is what St. Paul meant when he said “altogether such as I am.” About the facts, doctrines, practice, and rewards to come of Christianity, he had a rooted, settled, firm conviction-a conviction which he longed to see all men sharing. He was confident he wanted others to enjoy the same

confidence. He had no doubt or fear about the future state of his soul. He would fain have seen Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, and all around them, in the same happy condition.

Now, reader, are there many in the present day like St. Paul? I do not, of course, mean, are there many inspired Apostles? But I do mean, is it common to meet Christians who are as thorough, as unhesitating, as full of assurance as he was? I fear there can be only one answer to this question. “Not many,” whether rich or poor, high or low, “are called.”-“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (1 Corinthians 1:26; Matthew 7:14). Look where you please, search where you like, in town or in country, there are few “altogether” Christians. Festus and Agrippa are everywhere: they meet us at every turn. But there are few thorough, whole hearted followers of St. Paul. Yet one thing is very certain. These few are the “salt of the earth,” and the “light of the world.” (Matthew 5:13-14) These few are the glory of the Church, and serve to keep it alive. Without them the Church would be little better than a decaying carcase, a white-washed light house without light, a steam engine without fire, a golden candlestick without a candle, a joy to the devil, and an offence to God.

These are the kind of men who shake the world, and leave an indelible mark behind them. Martin Luther, and John Wesley, and William Wilberforce were hated and lightly esteemed while they lived; but the work they did for Christ will never be forgotten. They were “altogether” Christians.

These are the kind of men who enjoy true happiness in their religion. Like Paul and Silas, they can sing in prison, and, like Peter, they can sleep quietly on the very edge of the grave. (Acts 12:6; Acts 16:5) Strong faith gives them an inward peace, which makes them independent of earthly troubles, and compels even their enemies to wonder. Your lukewarm Laodicean Christians have little comfort in their religion. It is the “thorough” men who have great peace. The first Marian martyr, John Rogers, when he was going to be burned alive for Protestantism, is said to have walked to the stake in Smithfield as cheerfully as if he were going to his wedding. The outspoken, courageous words of old Latimer, before the faggots were lighted, in the day of his martyrdom, in Broad Street, Oxford, are not forgotten to this very day. “Courage! Brother Ridley,” he cried to his fellow-sufferer. “We shall light a candle in England to-day, by God’s grace, which shall never be put out.” These men were “altogether” Christians.

He that would be safe and prepared to meet his God at a moment’s notice, at evening, at cock-crowing, or in the morning,-he that would enjoy felt peace in his religion, peace unaffected by sicknesses, bereavements, bankruptcies, revolutions, and the last trumpet’s sound,-he that would do good in his day and generation, and be a fountain of Christian influence to all around him, influence known and recognised long after he has been laid in his grave,-let that man remember what I tell him to-day, and never forget it. You must not be content to be an “almost” Christian, like Agrippa. You must strive, and labour, and agonize, and pray to be an “altogether” Christian, like St. Paul.

And now, reader, let us leave these three pictures with self-inquiry and self-examination. The time is short. Our years are quickly passing away. The world is growing old. The great assize will soon begin. The Judge will soon appear. What are we? To whom are we like? Whose is this image and superscription upon us? Is it that of Festus, or of Agrippa, or of St. Paul?

Where are Festus and Agrippa now? We do not know. A veil is drawn over their subsequent history, and whether they died as they lived we cannot tell. But where is St. Paul, the “altogether” Christian? That question we can answer. He is “with Christ, which is far better.” (Php_1:23) He is waiting for the resurrection of the just, in that paradise of rest where sin and Satan and sorrow can trouble him no more. He has fought the good fight. He has finished his course, he has kept the faith. A crown is laid up for him which he will receive in the great review day of the Lord’s appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

And, reader, let us thank God, though St. Paul is dead and gone, the Saviour who made St. Paul what he was, and kept him to the end, still lives and never changes,-always able to save, always willing to receive. Let the time past suffice us if we have trifled with our souls hitherto. Let us turn over a new leaf at the beginning of 1882. Let us arise and begin with Christ, if we never began before. Let us go on with Christ to the end, if we have begun with Him already. With the grace of God, nothing is impossible. Who would have thought that Saul the Pharisee, the persecutor of Christians, would ever become the “altogether Christian” himself, would become the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and would turn the world upside down? While there is life there is hope. The follower of Festus and Agrippa may yet be converted, and live for years, and he down in the grave at last an “altogether” Christian like St. Paul.

NOTE.-This paper contains the substance of a Sermon preached in April, 1881, at St. Mary’s, Oxford, before the University, and at the Chapel Royal, St. James’s, London.

HYMN.

TIMES are changing, days are flying,

Years are quickly past and gone,

While the wildly mingled murmur

Of life’s busy mart goes on;

Sounds of tumult, sounds of triumph,

Marriage chimes and passing-bell,

Yet through all one key-note sounding,

Angels’ watchword,-“It is well.”

We may hear it through the rushing

Of the midnight tempest’s wave;

We may hear it through the weeping

Round the newly-covered grave;

In the dreary house of mourning,

In the darkened room of pain,

If we listen meekly, rightly,

We may catch that soothing strain. For Thine arm Thou hast not shortened,

Nor hast turned away Thine ear,

Gentle Saviour, ever ready

Thy poor suppliant’s prayer to hear:

Show us light, still surely resting

Upon all Thy darkest ways;

Give us faith, still surely trusting

Through the sad and evil days. So ‘twill be, while years are fleeting,

Though our joys are with them gone,

In Thy changeless love rejoicing,

We shall journey calmly on;

Till at last, life’s sorrows over,

All the tale of grace we tell,

In the heavenly chorus joining,

“Lord, Thou hast done all things well.”

FOOTNOTE * Luther, Beza, Grotius, Poole Bengel, Stier, and Dean Howson.

Toplady

[extract taken from]

THE

CHRISTIAN LEADERS

OR,

The Last Century;

OR,

ENGLAND A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

By the

REV. J. C. R Y L E, B. A .,

Christ Church, Oxford;

AUTHOR OF "EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS," &c.

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“Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of

their fathers.”- Job 8:8.

_____ LONDON:

T, NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;

EDINBURGH ; AND NEW YORK.

1878.

XII.

Toplady and his Ministry.

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Born at Farnham, 1740-Ordained, 1762-Vicar of Broad Hembury, Devonshire, 1768-Removes to London, 1775-Dies, 1778-Conversion, 1756-His Preaching-His writings as a Controversialist-His Hymns. A

PERFECT orchestra contains many various instruments of music. Each of these instruments has its own merit and value; but some of them are curiously unlike others. Some of them are

dependent on a player's breath, and some on his skill of hand. Some of them are large, and some of them are small. Some of them produce very gentle sounds, and some of them very loud. But all of them are useful in their place and way. Composers like Handel, and Mozart, and Mendelssohn, find work for all. There is work for the flageolet as well as for the trumpet, and work for the violoncello as well as for the organ. Separately and alone, some of the instruments may appear harsh and unpleasant. Combined together and properly played, they fill the ear with one mighty volume of harmonious sounds.

Thoughts such as these come across my mind when I survey the spiritual champions of England a hundred years ago. I see among the leaders of religious revival in that day men of singularly varied characteristics. They were each in their way eminent instruments for good in the hands of the Holy Ghost. From each of them sounded forth the word of God throughout the land with no uncertain sound. Yet some of these good men were strangely compounded, peculiarly constituted, and oddly framed. And to none, perhaps, does the remark apply more thoroughly than to the subject of these remarks, the wellknown hymn-writer, Augustus Toplady.

I should think no account of English religion in the last century complete which did not supply some information about this remarkable man. In some respects, I am bold to say, not one of his contemporaries surpassed him, and hardly any equalled him. He was a man of rare grace and gifts, and one who left his mark very deeply on his own generation. For soundness in the faith, singleness of eye, and devotedness of life, he deserves to be ranked with Whitefield, or Grimshaw, or Romaine. Yet with all this, he was a man in whom there was a most extraordinary mixture of grace and infirmity. Hundreds, unhappily, know much of his infirmities who know little of his graces. I shall endeavour in the following pages to-supply a few materials for forming a just estimate of his character.

Augustus Montague Toplady was born at Farnham, in Surrey, on the 4th of November 1740. He was the only son of Major Richard Toplady, who died at the siege of Carthagena shortly after his birth, so that he never saw his father. His mother's maiden name was Catherine Bates, of whom nothing is known except that she had a brother who was rector of St. Paul's, Deptford. About the history of his family I can discover nothing. I only conjecture that some of them must have been natives of Ireland. Who his parents were, and what they were doing at Farnham, when he was born, and what kind of people they were, are all matters about which no record seems to exist.

Few spiritual heroes of the last century, I must freely confess, have suffered more from the want of a good biographer than Toplady. Be the cause what it may, a real life of the man was never written. The only memoir of him is as meagre a production as can possibly be conceived. It is perhaps only fair to remember that he was an only child, and that he died unmarried; so that he had neither brother, sister, son nor daughter, to gather up his remains. Moreover, he was one who lived much in his study and among his books, spent much time in private communion with God, and went very little into society. Like Romaine, he was not what the world would call a genial man-had very few intimate friends-and was, probably, more feared and admired than loved. But be the reasons what they may, the fact is undeniable that there is no good biography of Toplady. The result is, that there is hardly any man of his calibre in the last century of whom so very little is known.

The principal facts of Toplady's life are few, and soon told. He was brought up by his widowed mother with the utmost, care and tenderness, and retained throughout life a deep and grateful sense of his obligations to her. For some reason, which we do not know now, she appears to have settled at Exeter after her husband's death; and to this circumstance we may probably trace her son's subsequent appointment to cures of souls in Devonshire. Young Toplady was sent at an early age to Westminster School, and showed considerable ability there. After passing through Westminster, he was entered as a student of Trinity College, Dublin, and took his degree there as Bachelor of Arts. He was ordained a clergyman in the year 1762; but I am unable to ascertain where, or by what bishop he was ordained. Shortly after his ordination he was appointed to the living of Blagdon, in Somersetshire, but did not hold it long. He was then appointed to Venn Ottery, with Harpford, in Devonshire, a small parish near Sidmouth. This post he finally exchanged, in 1768, for the rural parish of Broad Hembury, near Honiton, in Devonshire, a cure which he retained until his death. In the year 1775 he was compelled, by the state of his health, to remove from Devonshire to London, and became for a short time preacher at a Chapel in Orange Street, Leicester Square. He seems, however, to have derived no material benefit from the change of climate; and at last died of decline, like Walker and Hervey, in the year 1778, at the early age of thirty-eight.

The story of Toplady's inner life and religious history is, simple and short; but it presents some features of great interest. The work of God seems to have begun in his heart, when he was only sixteen years old, under the following circumstances. He was staying at a place called Codymain, in Ireland, and was there led by God's providence to hear a layman named Morris preach in a barn. The text-Ephesians ii. 13, “Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ”-and the address founded on it, came home to young Toplady's conscience with such power, that from that time he became a new man, and a thorough-going professor of vital Christianity. This was in August 1756.

He himself in after-life referred frequently to the circumstance of his conversion with special thankfulness. He says in 1768: “Strange that I, who had so long sat under the means of grace in England, should be brought nigh to God in an obscure part of Ireland, amidst a handful of God's people met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one who could hardly spell his name ! Surely it was the Lord's doing, and is marvellous ! The excellency of such power must be of God, and cannot be of man. The regenerating Spirit breathes not only on whom, but likewise when, where, and as he listeth.”

Although converted and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, Toplady does not seem to have come to a full know ledge of the gospel in all its perfection for at least two years. Like most of God's children, he had to fight his way into full light through many defective opinions, and was only by slow degrees brought to complete establishment in the faith. His experience in this matter, be it remembered, is only that of the vast majority of true Christians. Like infants, when they are born into the world, God's children are not born again in the full possession of all their spiritual faculties; and it is well and wisely ordered that it is so. What we win easily, we seldom value sufficiently. The very fact that believers have to struggle and fight hard before they get hold of real soundness in the faith, helps to make them prize it more when they have attained it. The truths that cost us a battle are precisely those which we grasp most firmly, and never let go.

Toplady's own account of his early experience on this point is distinct and explicit. He says: “Though awakened in 1756, I was not led into a clear and full view of all the doctrines of grace till the year 1758, when, through the great goodness of God, my Arminian prejudices received an effectual shock in reading Dr. Manton's sermons on the seventeenth chapter of St. John. I shall remember the years 1756 and 1758 with gratitude and joy in the heaven of heavens to all eternity.”

In the year 1774, Toplady gave the following curious account of his experience at this period of his life:-“It pleased God to deliver me from the Arminian snare before I was quite eighteen. Up to that period there was not (I confess it with abasement) a more haughty and violent free-wilier within the compass of the four seas. One instance of my warm and ignorant zeal occurs now to my memory. About a year before divine goodness gave me eyes to discern and a heart to embrace the truth, I was haranguing one day in company on the universality of grace and the power of free agency. A good old gentleman, now with God, rose from his chair, and coming to me, held me by one of my coat-buttons, while he mildly said:-, My dear sir, there are marks of spirituality in your conversation, though tinged with an unhappy mixture of pride and self-righteousness. You have been speaking largely in favour of free-will; but from arguments let us come to experience. Do let me ask you one question, How was it with you when the Lord laid hold on you in effectual calling? Had you any hand in obtaining that grace? Nay, would you not have resisted and baffled it, if God's Spirit had left you alone in the hand of your own counsel?' I felt the conclusiveness of these simple but forcible interrogations more strongly than I was then willing to acknowledge. But, blessed be God, I have since been enabled to acknowledge the freeness of his grace, and to sing, what I trust will be my everlasting song, 'Not unto me, Lord, not unto me; but unto thy name give the glory.'”

From this time to the end of his life, a period of twenty years, Toplady held right onward in his Christian course, and never seems to have swerved or turned aside for a single day. His attachment to Calvinistic views of theology grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, and undoubtedly made him think too hardly of all who favoured Arminianism. It is more than probable, too, that it gave him the reputation of being a narrow-minded and sour divine, and made many keep aloof from him, and depreciate him. But no one ever pretended to doubt his extraordinary devotedness and singleness of eye, or to question his purity and holiness of life. From one cause or another, however, he appears always to have stood alone, and to have had little intercourse with his fellow-men. The result was, that throughout life he appears to have been little known and little understood, but most loved where he was most known.

One would like much to hear what young Toplady was doing between the date of his conversion in 1756, and his ordination in 1762. We can only guess, from the fact that he studied Manton on the seventeenth of John before he was eighteen, that he was probably reading hard, and storing his mind with know ledge, which he turned to good account in after-life. But there is an utter dearth of all information about our hero at this period of his life. We only know that he took upon himself the office of a minister, not only as scholar, and as an outward professor of religion, but as an honest man. He says himself, that “he subscribed the articles and liturgy from principle; and that he did not believe them merely because he subscribed them, but subscribed them because he believed them.”

One would like, furthermore, to know exactly where he began his ministry, and in what parish he was first heard as a preacher of the gospel. But I can find out nothing about these points. One interesting fact about his early preaching I gather from a curious letter which he wrote to Lady Huntingdon in 1774. In that letter he says: “As to the doctrines of special and discriminating grace, I have thus much to observe. For the first four years after I was in orders, I dwelt chiefly on the general outlines of the gospel in this remote corner of my public ministry. I preached of little else but of justification by faith only, in the righteousness and atonement of Christ, and of that personal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. My reasons for thus narrowing the truths of God were these two (I speak it with humiliation and repentance):-1. I thought these points were sufficient to convey as clear an idea as was absolutely necessary of salvation; 2. And secondly, I was partly afraid to go any further.

“God himself (for none but he could do it) gradually freed me from that fear. And as he never at any time permitted me to deliver, or even to insinuate anything contradictory to his truth, so has he been graciously pleased, for seven or eight years past, to open my mouth to make known the entire mystery of the gospel, as far as his Spirit has enlightened me into it. The consequence of my first plan of operations was, that the generality of my hearers were pleased, but only few were converted. The result of my latter deliverance from worldly wisdom and worldly fear is, that multitudes have been very angry; but the conversions which God has given me reason to hope he has wrought, have been at least three for one before. Thus I can testify, so far as I have been concerned, the usefulness of preaching predestination; or, in other words, of tracing salvation and redemption to their first source.”

An anecdote related by Toplady himself deserves repetition, as a curious illustration of the habits of clergymen at the time when he was ordained, and his superiority to the habits of his contemporaries. He says: “I was buying some books in the spring of 1762, a month or two before I was ordained, from a very respectable London bookseller. After the business was over, he took me to the furthest end of his long shop, and said in a low voice, 'Sir, you will soon be ordained, and I suppose you have not laid in a very great stock of sermons. I can supply you with as many sets as you please, all original, very excellent ones, and they will come for a trifle.' My answer was: 'I certainly shall never be a customer to you in that way; for I am of opinion that the man who cannot, or will not make his own sermons, is quite unfit to wear the gown. How could you think of my buying ready-made sermons? I would much sooner buy ready-made clothes.” His answer shocked me. 'Nay, young gentleman, do not be surprised at my offering you ready-made sermons, for I assure you I have sold ready made sermons to many a bishop in my time.' My reply was 'My good sir, if you have any concern for the credit of the Church of England, never tell that news to anybody else hence forward for ever.'"

The manner of Toplady's life, during the fifteen or sixteen years of his short ministry may be gathered from a diary which he wrote in 1768, and kept up for about a year. This diary is a far more interesting record of a good man's life than such documents ordinarily are, and gives a very favourable impression of the writer's character and habits. It leaves the impression that he was eminently a man of one thing, and entirely engrossed with his Master's business-much alone, keeping little company, and always either preaching, visiting his people, reading, writing, or praying. If it had been kept up for a few years longer, it would have thrown immense light on many things in Toplady's ministerial history. But even in its present state it is the most valuable record

we possess about him, and there seems no reason to doubt that it is a tolerably accurate picture of his mode of living from the time of his ordination to his death.

So little is known of the particular events of the last fifteen years of Toplady's life, that it is impossible to do more than give a general sketch of his proceedings. He seems to have attained a high reputation at a very early date as a thoroughgoing supporter of Calvinistic opinions, and a leading opponent of Arminianism. His correspondence shows that he was on intimate terms with Lady Huntingdon, Sir R. Hill, Whitefield, Romaine, Berridge, Dr. Gill, Ambrose Serle, and other eminent Christians of those times. But how and when he formed acquaintance with them, we have no information. His pen was constantly employed in defence of evangelical religion from the time of his removal to Broad Hembury in 1768. His early habits of study were kept up with unabated diligence. No man among the spiritual heroes of last century seems to have read more than he did, or to have had a more extensive knowledge of divinity. His bitterest adversaries in controversy could never deny that he was a scholar, and a ripe one. Indeed, it admits of grave question whether he did not shorten his life by his habits of constant study. He says himself, in a letter to a relative, dated March 19,1775:-“Though I cannot entirely agree with you in supposing that extreme study has been the cause of my late indisposition, I must yet confess that the hill of science, like that of virtue, is in some instances climbed with labour. But when we get a little way up, the lovely prospects which open to the eye make infinite amends for the steepness of the ascent. In short, I am wedded to these pursuits, as a man stipulates to take his wife; viz., for better, for worse, until death us do part. My thirst for knowledge is literally inextinguishable. And if I thus drink myself into a superior world, I cannot help it.”

One feature in Toplady's character, I may here remark. can hardly fail to strike an attentive reader of his remains. That feature is the eminent spirituality of the tone of his religion. There can be no greater mistake than to regard him as a mere student and deep reader, or as a hard and dry controversial divine. Such an estimate of him is thoroughly unjust. His letters and remains supply abundant evidence that he was one who lived in very close communion with God, and had very deep experience of divine things. Living much alone, seldom going into society, and possessing few friends, he was a man little understood by many, who only knew him by his controversial writings, and specially by his unflinching advocacy of Calvinism. Yet really, if the truth be spoken, I hardly find any man of the last century who seems to have soared so high and aimed so loftily, in his personal dealings with his Saviour, as Toplady. There is an unction and savour about some of his remains which few of his contemporaries equalled, and none surpassed. I grant freely that he left behind him many things which cannot be much commended. But lie left behind him some things which will live, as long as English is spoken, in the hearts of all true Christians. His writings contain “thoughts that breathe and words that burn,” if any writings of his age. And it never ought to be forgotten, that the man who penned them was lying in his grave before he was thirty-nine !

The last three years of Toplady's life were spent in London. He removed there by medical advice in the year 1775, under the idea that the moist air of Broad Hembury was injurious to his health. Whether the advice was sound or not may now, perhaps, admit of question. At any rate, the change of climate did him no good. Little by little the insidious disease of the chest, under which he laboured, made progress, and wasted his strength. He was certainly able to preach at Orange Street Chapel in the years 1776 and 1777; but it is equally certain that throughout this period he was gradually drawing near to his end. He was never, perhaps, more thoroughly appreciated than

he was during these last three years of his ministry. A picked London congregation, such as he had, was able to value gifts and powers which were completely thrown away on a rural parish in Devonshire. His stores of theological reading and distinct doctrinal statement were rightly appraised by his metropolitan hearers. In short, if he had lived longer he might, humanly speaking, have done a mighty work in London. But He who holds the stars in his right hand, and knows best what is good for his Church, saw fit to withdraw him soon from his new sphere of usefulness. He seemed as if he came to London only to be known and highly valued, and then to die.

The closing scene of the good man's life was singularly beautiful, and at the same time singularly characteristic. He died as he had lived, in the full hope and peace of the gospel, and with an unwavering confidence in the truth of the doctrines which he had for fifteen years advocated both with his tongue and with his pen. About two months before his death he was greatly pained by hearing that he was reported to have receded from his Calvinistic opinions, and to have expressed a desire to recant them in the presence of Mr. John Wesley. So much was he moved by this rumour, that he resolved to appear before his congregation once more, and to give a public denial to it before he died. His physician in vain remonstrated with him. He was told that it would be dangerous to make the attempt, and that he might probably die in the pulpit. But the vicar of Broad Hembury was not a man to be influenced by such considerations. He replied that “he would rather die in the harness than die in the stall.” He actually carried his resolution into effect. On Sunday, June the 14th, in the last stage of consumption, and only two months before he died, he ascended his pulpit in Orange Street Chapel, after his assistant had preached, to the astonishment of his people, and gave a short but affecting exhortation founded on 2 Peter 1:13-14 : “I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.” He then closed his address with the following remarkable declaration:

“It having been industriously circulated by some malicious and unprincipled persons that during my present long and severe illness I expressed a strong desire of seeing Mr. John Wesley before I die, and revoking some particulars relative to him which occur in my writings,-Now I do publicly and most solemnly aver that I have not nor ever had any such intention or desire; and that I most sincerely hope my last hours will be much better employed than in communing with such a man. So certain and so satisfied am I of the truth of all that I have ever written, that were I now sitting up in my dying bed with a pen and ink in my hand, and all the religious and controversial writings I ever published, especially those relating to Mr. John Wesley and the Arminian controversy, whether respecting fact or doctrine, could be at once displayed to my view, I should not strike out a single line relative to him or them.”

The last days of Toplady's life were spent in great peace. He went down the valley of the shadow of death with abounding consolations, and was enabled to say many edifying things to all around him. The following recollections, jotted down by friends who ministered to him, and communicated to his biographer, can hardly fail to be interesting to a Christian reader.

One friend observes:-“A remarkable jealousy was apparent in his whole conduct as he drew near his end, for fear of receiving any part of that honour which is due to Christ alone. He desired to be nothing, and that Jesus might be all and in all. His feelings were so very tender upon this subject, that I once undesignedly put him almost in an agony by remarking the great loss which the Church of Christ would sustain by his death at this particular juncture. The utmost distress was

immediately visible in his countenance, and he exclaimed, 'What! by my death? No, no! Jesus Christ is able, and will, by proper instruments, defend his own truths. And with regard to what little I have been enabled to do in this way, not to me, not to me, but to his own name, and to that only, be the glory.'

“The more his bodily strength was impaired the more vigorous, lively, and rejoicing his mind seemed to be. From the whole turn of his conversation during our interview, he appeared not merely placid and serene, but he evidently possessed the fullest assurance of the most triumphant faith. He repeatedly told me that he had not had the least shadow of a doubt respecting his eternal salvation for near two years past. It is no wonder, therefore, that he so earnestly longed to be dissolved and to be with Christ. His soul seemed to be constantly panting heavenward, and his desire increased the nearer his dissolution approached. A short time before his death, at his request, I felt his pulse, and he desired to know what I thought of it. I told him that his heart and arteries evidently beat almost every day weaker and weaker. He replied immediately, with the sweetest smile on his countenance, 'Why, that is a good sign that my death is fast approaching; and, blessed be God, I can add that my heart beats every day stronger and stronger for glory.'

“A few days before his dissolution I found him sitting up in his arm-chair, but scarcely able to move or speak. I addressed him very softly, and asked if his consolations continued to abound as they had hitherto done. He quickly replied, 'O my dear sir, it is impossible to describe how good God is to me. Since I have been sitting in this chair this afternoon I have enjoyed such a season, such sweet communion with God, and such delightful manifestation of his presence with and love to my soul, that it is impossible for words or any language to express them. I have had peace and joy unutterable, and I fear not but that God's consolation and support will continue.' But he immediately recollected himself, and added, 'What have I said? God may, to be sure, as a sovereign, hide his face and his smiles from me; however, I believe he will not; and if he should, yet will I trust him. I know I am safe and secure, for his love and his covenant are everlasting ! “'

To another friend, speaking about his dying avowal in the pulpit of his church in Orange Street, he said: “My dear friend, these great and glorious truths which the Lord in rich mercy has given me to believe, and which he has enabled me (though very feebly) to defend, are not, as those who oppose them say, dry doctrines or mere speculative points. No ! being brought into practical and heartfelt experience, they are the very joy and support of my soul; and the consolations flowing from them carry me far above the things of time and sense. So far as I know my own heart, I have no desire but to be entirely passive, to live, to die, to be, to do, to suffer whatever is God's blessed will concerning me, being perfectly satisfied that as he ever has, so he ever will do that which is best concerning me, and that he deals out in number, weight, and measure, whatever will conduce most to his own glory and to the good of his people.”

Another of his friends mentioning the report that was spread abroad of his recanting his former principles, he said with some vehemence and emotion, “I recant my former principles ! God forbid that I should be so vile an apostate!” To which he presently added, with great apparent humility, “And yet that apostate I should soon be, if I were left to myself.”

Within an hour of his death, he called his friends and his servant to him, and asked them if they could give him up. Upon their answering that they could, since it pleased the Lord to be so gracious to him, he replied: “Oh, what a blessing it is that you are made willing to give me up into

the hands of my dear Redeemer, and to part with me ! It will not be long before God takes me; for no mortal man can live, after the glories which God has manifested to my soul.” Soon after this he closed his eyes, and quietly fell asleep in Christ on Tuesday, August 11, 1778, in the thirty-eighth year of his age.

He was buried in Tottenham Court Chapel, under the gallery, opposite the pulpit, in the presence of thousands of people, who came together from all parts of London to do him honour. His high reputation as a champion of truth, the unjust misrepresentations circulated about his change of opinion, his effectiveness as a preacher, and his comparative youthfulness, combined to draw forth a more than ordinary expression of sympathy. “Devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.” Foremost among the mourners was one at that time young in the ministry, who lived long enough to be a connecting link between the last century and the present-the well-known and eccentric Rowland Hill. Before the burial-service commenced, he could not refrain from transgressing one of Toplady's last requests, that no funeral-sermon should be preached for him, and affectionately declared to the vast assembly the love and veneration he felt for the deceased, and the high sense he entertained of his graces, gifts, and usefulness. And thus, amidst the tears and thanksgivings of true-hearted mourners, the much-abused vicar of Broad Hembury was gathered to his people.*

The following passage from Toplady's last will, made and signed six months before his decease, is so remarkable and characteristic, that I cannot refrain from giving it to my readers: “I most humbly commit my soul to Almighty God, whom I honour, and have long experienced to be my ever gracious and infinitely merciful Father. Nor have I the least doubt of my election, justification, and eternal happiness, through the riches of his everlasting and unchangeable kindness to me in Christ Jesus, his co-equal Son, my only, my assured, and my all-sufficient Saviour; washed in whose propitiatory blood, and clothed with whose imputed righteousness, I trust to stand perfect, sinless, and complete; and do verily believe that I most certainly shall so stand, in the hour of death, and in the kingdom of heaven, and at the last judgment, and in the ultimate state of endless glory. Neither can I write this my last will without rendering the deepest, the most solemn, and the most ardent thanks to the adorable Trinity in Unity, for their eternal, unmerited, irreversible, and inexhaustible love to me a sinner. I bless God the Father for having written from everlasting my unworthy name in the book of life-even for appointing me to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ my Lord. I adore God the Son for having vouchsafed to redeem me by his own most precious death, and for having obeyed the whole law for my justification. I admire and revere the gracious benignity of God the Holy Ghost, who converted me to the saving knowledge !of Christ more than twenty-two years ago, and whose enlightening, supporting, comforting, and sanctifying agency is, and (I doubt not) will be my strength and song in the hours of my earthly pilgrimage.”

Having now traced Toplady's history from his cradle to his grave, it only remains for me to offer some general estimate of his worth and attainments. To do this, I frankly confess, is no easy task. Not only is his biography a miserably deficient one -this alone is bad enough-but his literary remains have been edited in such a slovenly, careless, ignorant manner, without order or arrangement, that they do not fairly represent the author's merits. Certainly the reputation of great writers and ministers may suffer sadly from the treatment of injudicious friends. If ever there was a man who fell into the hands of the Philistines after his death, that man, so far as I can judge, was Augustus Toplady. I shall do the best I can with the materials at my disposal; but I trust my readers

will remember that they are exceedingly scanty.

1. As a preacher, I should be disposed to assign to Toplady a very high place among the second-class men of the last century. His constitutional delicacy and weakness of lungs, in all probability, made it impossible for him to do the things that Whitefield and Berridge did. Constant open-air addresses, impassioned extempore appeals to thousands of hearers, were a style of thing entirely out of his line. Yet there is pretty good evidence that he had no mean reputation as a pulpit orator, and possessed no mean powers. The mere fact that Lady Huntingdon occasionally selected him to preach in her chapels at Bath and Brighton, of itself speaks volumes. The additional fact that at one of the great Methodist gatherings at Trevecca he was put forward as one of the leading preachers, is enough to show that his sermons possessed high merit. The following notes about preaching, which he records in his diary, as having received them from an old friend, will probably throw much light on the general turn of his ministrations:-(r.) Preach Christ crucified, and dwell chiefly on the blessings resulting from his righteousness, atonement, and intercession. (2.) Avoid all needless controversies in the pulpit; except it be when your subject necessarily requires it, or when the truths of God are likely to suffer by your silence. (3.) When you ascend the pulpit, leave your learning behind you: endeavour to preach more to the hearts of your people than to their heads. (4.) Do not affect much oratory. Seek rather to profit than to be admired.

Specimens of Toplady's ordinary preaching are unfortunately very rare. There are but ten sermons in the collection of his works, and out of these the great majority were preached on special occasions, and cannot, therefore, be regarded as fair samples of his pulpit work. In all of them there is a certain absence of fire, animation, and directness. But in all there is abundance of excellent matter, and a quiet, decided, knockdown, sledge-hammer style of putting things which, I can well believe, would be extremely effective, and especially with educated congregations. The three following extracts may perhaps give some idea of what Toplady was in the pulpit of Orange Street Chapel. Of his ministry in Broad Hembury, I suspect we know next to nothing at all.

The first extract forms the conclusion of a sermon preached in 1774 at the Lock Chapel, entitled “Good News from Heaven:”-” I perceive the elements are upon the sacramental table. And I doubt not many of you mean to present yourselves at that throne of grace which God has mercifully erected through the righteousness and sufferings of his co-equal Son. Oh, beware of coming with one sentiment on your lips and another in your hearts ! Take heed of saying with your mouths, 'We do not come to this thy table, O Lord, trusting in our own righteousness,' while perhaps you have in reality some secret reserves in favour of that very self-righteousness which you profess to renounce, and are thinking that Christ's merits alone will not save you unless you add something or other to make it effectual. Oh, be not so deceived ! God will not thus be mocked, nor will Christ thus be insulted with impunity. Call your works what you will-whether terms, causes, conditions, or supplements-the matter comes to the same point, and Christ is equally thrust out of his mediatorial throne by these or any similar views of human obedience. If you do not wholly depend on Jesus as the Lord your righteousness-if you mix your faith in him with anything else-if the finished work of the crucified God be not alone your acknowledged anchor and foundation of acceptance with the Father, both here and ever-come to his table and receive the symbols of his body and blood at your peril ! Leave your own righteousness behind you, or you have no business here. You are without the wedding garment, and God will say to you, 'Friend, how camest thou here?' If you go on, moreover, to live and die in this state of unbelief, you will be found speechless and excuseless

in the day of judgment; and the slighted Saviour will say to his angels concerning you, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, ... for many are called, but few are chosen."

My second extract is from a sermon on "Free Will," preached at St. Anne's, Blackfriars, in 1774:-"I know it is growing very fashionable to talk against spiritual feelings. But I dare not join the cry. On the contrary, I adopt the apostle's prayer that our love to God and the manifestation of his love to us may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all feeling. And it is no enthusiastic wish in behalf of you and myself, that we may be of the number of those godly persons who, as our Church justly expresses it, 'feel in themselves the workings of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things.' Indeed, the great business of God's Spirit is to draw up and to bring down-to draw up our affections to Christ, and to bring down the unsearchable riches of grace into our hearts. The knowledge of this, and earnest desire for it, are all the feelings I plead for; and for these feelings I wish ever to plead, satisfied as I am that without some experience and enjoyment of them we cannot be happy living or dying.

"Let me ask you, as it were one by one, has the Holy Spirit begun to reveal these deep things of God in your soul? If so, give him the glory of it. And as you prize communion with him, as ever you value the comforts of the Holy Ghost, endeavour to be found in God's way, even the highway of humble faith and obedient love, sitting at the feet of Christ, and imbibing those sweet sanctifying communications of grace which are at once an earnest of and a preparation for complete heaven when you die. God forbid that we should ever think lightly of religious feelings. If we do not in some measure feel ourselves sinners, and feel that Christ is precious, I doubt the Spirit of God has never been savingly at work upon our souls."

My last extract shall be from a sermon preached at St. Anne's, Blackfriars (Romaine's church, be it remembered), in 1770, entitled, "A Caveat against Unsound Doctrine:"-"Faith is the eye of the soul, and the eye is said to see almost every object but itself; so that you may have real faith without being able to discern it. God will not despise the day of small things. Little faith goes to heaven no less than great faith; though not so comfortably, yet altogether as surely. If you come merely as a sinner to Jesus, and throw yourself, at all events, for salvation on his alone blood and righteousness, and the grace and promise of God in him, thou art as truly a believer as the most triumphant saint that ever lived. Amidst all your weakness, distresses, and temptations, remember that God will not cast out nor cast off the meanest and unworthiest soul that seeks salvation only in the name of Jesus Christ the righteous. When you cannot follow the Rock, the Rock shall follow you, nor ever leave you for a single moment on this side the heavenly Canaan. If you feel your absolute want of Christ, you may on all occasions and in every exigence betake yourself to the covenant-love and faithfulness of God for pardon, sanctification, and safety, and with the same fulness of right and title as a traveller leans upon his own staff, or as a weary labourer throws himself upon his own bed, or as an opulent nobleman draws upon his own banker for whatsoever sum he wants."

I make no comment on these extracts. They speak for themselves. Most Christians, I suspect, will agree with me, that the man who could speak to congregations in this fashion was no ordinary preacher. The hearers of such sermons could never say, "The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed." I am bold to say that the Church of the nineteenth century would be in a far more healthy condition if it had more preaching like Toplady's.

2. As a writer of miscellaneous payers on religious subjects, I do not think Toplady has ever been duly appreciated. His pen seems to have been never idle, and his collected works contain a large number of short useful essays on a great variety of subjects. Any one who takes the trouble to look at them will be surprised to find that the worthy vicar of Broad Hembury was conversant with many things beside the Calvinistic controversy, and could write about them in a very interesting manner. He will find short and well-written biographies of Bishop Jewell, Bishop Carleton, Bishop Wilson, John Knox, Fox the Martyrologist, Lord Harrington, Witsius, Allsop, and Dr. Watts. He will find a very valuable collection of extracts from the works of eminent Christians, and of anecdotes, incidents, and historical passages, gathered by Toplady himself. He will find a sketch of natural history, and some curious observations on birds, meteors, animal sagacity, and the solar system. These papers, no doubt, are of various merit; but they all show the singular activity and fertility of the author's mind, and are certainly far more deserving of republication than many of the reprints of modern days. Of Toplady's “Family Prayers” I shall say nothing. They are probably so well known that I need not commend them. Of his seventy-eight letters to friends, I will only say that they are excellent specimens of the correspondence of the last century-sensible, well composed, full of thought and matter, and supplying abundant proof that their writer was a Christian, a scholar, and a gentleman. I cannot, however, do more than refer to all these productions of Toplady's pen. Those who wish to know more must examine his works for themselves. If they do, I venture to predict that they will agree with me that his miscellaneous writings are neither sufficiently known nor valued.

3. As a controversialist, I find it rather difficult to give a right estimate of Toplady. In fact, the subject is a painful one, and one which I would gladly avoid. But I feel that I should not be dealing fairly and honestly with my readers, if I did not say something about it. In fact, the vicar of Broad Hembury took such a very prominent part in the doctrinal controversies of last century, and was so thoroughly recognized as the champion and standard-bearer of Calvinistic theology, that no memoir of him could be regarded as complete, which did not take up this part of his character.

I begin by saying that, on the whole, Toplady's controversial writings appear to me to be in principle scriptural, sound, and true. I do not, for a moment, mean that I can endorse all he says. I consider that his statements are often extreme, and that he is frequently more systematic and narrow than the Bible. He often seems to me, in fact, to go further than Scripture, and to draw conclusions which Scripture has not drawn, and to settle points which for some wise reason Scripture has not settled. Still, for all this, I will never shrink from saying that the cause for which Toplady contended all his life was decidedly the cause of God's truth. He was a bold defender of Calvinistic views about election, predestination, perseverance, human impotency, and irresistible grace. On all these subjects I hold firmly that Calvin's theology is much more scriptural than the theology of Arminius. In a word, I believe that Calvinistic divinity is the divinity of the Bible, of Augustine, and of the Thirty-nine Articles of my own Church, and of the Scotch Confession of Faith. While, therefore, I repeat that I cannot endorse all the sentiments of Toplady's controversial writings, I do claim for them the merit of being in principle scriptural, sound, and true. Well would it be for the Churches, if we had a good deal more of clear, distinct, sharply-cut doctrine in the present day ! Vagueness and indistinctness are marks of our degenerate condition.

But I go further than this. I do not hesitate to say that Toplady's controversial works display extraordinary ability. For example, his “Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of

England” is a treatise that displays a prodigious amount of research and reading. It is a book that no one could have written who had not studied much, thought much, and thoroughly investigated an enormous mass of then logical literature. You see at once that the author has completely digested what he has read, and is able to concentrate all his reading on every point which he handles. The best proof of the book's ability is the simple fact that down to the present day it has never been really answered. It has been reviled, sneered at, abused, and held up to scorn. But abuse is not argument. The book remains to this hour unanswered, and that for the simplest of all reasons, that it is unanswerable. It proves irrefragably, whether men like it or not, that Calvinism is the doctrine of the Church of England, and that all her leading divines, until Laud's time, were Calvinists. All this is done logically, clearly, and powerfully. No one, I venture to think, could read the book through, and not feel obliged to admit that, the author was an able man.

While, however, I claim for Toplady's controversial writings the merit of soundness and ability, I must with sorrow admit that I cannot praise his spirit and language when speaking of his opponents. I am obliged to confess that he often uses expressions about them so violent and so bitter, that one feels perfectly ashamed. Never, I regret to say, did an advocate of truth appear to me so entirely to forget the text, “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves,” as the vicar of Broad Hembury. Arminianism seems to have precisely the same effect on him that a scarlet cloak has on a bull. He appears to think it impossible that an Arminian can be saved, and never shrinks with classing Arminians with Pelagians, Socinians, Papists, and heretics. He says things about Wesley and Sellon which never ought to have been said. All this is melancholy work indeed ! But those who are familiar with Toplady's controversial writings know well that I am stating simple truths.

I will not stain my paper nor waste my readers' time by supplying proofs of Toplady's controversial bitterness. It would be very unprofitable to do so. The epithets he applies to his adversaries are perfectly amazing and astonishing. It must in fairness be remembered that the language of his opponents was exceedingly violent, and was enough to provoke any man. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that a hundred years ago men said things in controversy that were not considered so bad as they are now, from the different standard of taste that prevailed. Men were perhaps more honest and outspoken than they are now, and their bark was worse than their bite. But all these considerations only palliate the case. The fact remains, that as a controversialist Toplady was extremely bitter and intemperate, and caused his good to be evil spoken of. He carried the principle, “Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,” to an absurd extreme. He forgot the example of his Master, who “when he was reviled, reviled not again;” and he entirely marred the value of his arguments by the violence and uncharitableness with which he maintained them. Thousands who neither cared nor understood anything about his favourite cause, could understand that no cause ought to be defended in such a spirit and temper.

I leave this painful subject with the general remark, that Toplady is a standing beacon to the Church, to show us the evils of controversy. “The beginning of strife is like letting out water.” “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.” We must never shrink from controversy, if need be, in defence of Christ's gospel, but we must never take it up without jealous watchfulness over our own hearts, and over the manner in which we carry it on. Above all, we must strive to think as charitably as possible of our opponent. It was Calvin himself who said of Luther, “He may call me a devil if he will; but I shall always call him a good servant of Jesus Christ.” Well would it have been

for Toplady's reputation, if he had been more like Calvin ! Perhaps when we open our eyes in heaven we shall be amazed to find how many things there were which both Calvinists and Arminians did not thoroughly understand.

4. There is only one point about Toplady on which I wish to say something, and that is his character as a hymn-writer. This is a point, I am thankful to say, on which I find no difficulty at all. I give it as my decided opinion that he was one of the best hymn-writers in the English language. I am quite aware that this may seem extravagant praise; but I speak deliberately. I hold that there are no hymns better than his.

Good hymns are an immense blessing to the Church of Christ. I believe the last day alone will show the world the real amount of good they have done. They suit all, both rich and poor. There is an elevating, stirring, soothing, spiritualizing, effect about a thoroughly good hymn, which nothing else can produce. It sticks in men's memories when texts are forgotten. It trains men for heaven, where praise is one of the principal occupations. Preaching and praying shall one day cease for ever; but praise shall never die. The makers of good ballads are said to sway national opinion. The writers of good hymns, in like manner, are those who leave the deepest marks on the face of the Church. Thousands of Christians rejoice in the “Te Deum,” and “Just as I am,” who neither prize the Thirtynine Articles, nor know anything about the first four councils, nor understand the Athanasian Creed.

But really good hymns are exceedingly rare. There are only a few men in any age who can write them. You may name hundreds of first-rate preachers for one first-rate writer of hymns. Hundreds of so-called hymns fill up our collections of congregational psalmody, which are really not hymns at all. They are very sound, very scriptural, very proper, very correct, very tolerably rhymed; but they are not real, live, genuine hymns. There is no life about them. At best they are tame, pointless, weak, and milk-and-watery. In many cases, if written out straight, without respect of lines, they would make excellent prose. But poetry they are not. It may be a startling assertion to some ears to say that there are not more than two hundred first-rate hymns in the English language; but startling as it may sound, I believe it is true.

Of all English hymn-writers, none, perhaps, have succeeded so thoroughly in combining truth, poetry, life, warmth, fire, depth, solemnity, and unction, as Toplady has. I pity the man who does not know, or, knowing, does not admire those glorious hymns of his beginning, “Rock of Ages, cleft for me;” or, “Holy Ghost, dispel our sadness;” or, “A debtor to mercy alone;” or, “Your harps, ye trembling saints;” or, “Christ, whose glory fills the skies;” or, “When languor and disease invade;” or, “Deathless principle, arise.” The writer of these seven hymns alone has laid the Church under perpetual obligations to him. Heretics have been heard in absent moments whispering over “Rock of Ages,” as if they clung to it when they had let slip all things beside. Great statesmen have been known to turn it into Latin, as if to perpetuate its fame. The only matter of regret is, that the writer of such excellent hymns should have written so few. If he had lived longer, written more hymns, and handled fewer controversies, his memory would have been had in greater honour, and men would have been better pleased.

That hymns of such singular beauty and pathos should have come from the same pen which indicted such bitter controversial writings, is certainly a strange anomaly. I do not pretend to explain it, or to offer any solution. I only lay it before my readers as a naked fact. To say the least,

it should teach us not to be hasty in censuring a man before we know all sides of his character. The best saints of God are neither so very good, nor the faultiest so very faulty, as they appear. He that only reads Toplady's hymns will find it hard to believe that he could compose his controversial writings. He that only reads his controversial writings will hardly believe that he composed his hymns. Yet the fact remains, that the same man composed both.

Alas! the holiest among us all is a very poor mixed creature I now leave the subject of this chapter here. I ask my readers to put a favourable construction on Toplady's life, and to judge him with righteous judgment. I fear he is a man who has never been fairly estimated, and has never had many friends. Ministers of his decided, sharply-cut, doctrinal opinions are never very popular. But I plead strongly that Toplady's undeniable faults should never make us forget his equally undeniable excellencies. With all his infirmities, I firmly believe that he was a good man and a great man, and did a work for Christ a hundred years ago, which will never be overthrown. He will stand in his lot at the last day in a high place, when many, perhaps, whom the world liked better shall be put to shame.

FOOTNOTE

1 It is a curious fact that Toplady expressly desired that he might be buried at least nine feet, and, if possible, twelve feet, under ground! He assigned no reason. Perhaps it was because he wished to be buried inside his church.

Chapter 75

Tried by its fruits

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are “pure gold.” Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

TRIED BY ITS FRUITS.

“Every tree is known by his own fruit.”-(Luke 6:44). OUR lot is cast in times when there is a tendency to try all ancient institutions by their results. Schools, colleges, universities, corporations, old endowed charities, all are successively put into the crucible, and placed in the furnace. “Will an institution stand the fire? Is the result of the operation dross or good metal?” These are the only questions which men require to be answered.

Now, I wish to apply this great principle to the religion which our Lord Jesus Christ brought into the world nineteen hundred years ago. Some men tell us that it is an effete and worn-out thing, utterly unsuited to the twentieth century. Christianity, in short, is regarded with contempt by many who call themselves leaders of thought in modern times. Like an old almanac, its work is done, and it may be thrown aside! Its Bible and its Sundays, its ministers and its worship, its prayers and its sacraments, all are unworthy of the notice of intellectual men, and may be safely neglected, smiled at, and handed over to the ignorant and the poor! Such is the line of thinking, writing, and talking in too many quarters.

Now, my simple object in this paper is to point out the unreasonableness, not to say dishonesty, of ignoring the enormous results and effects which Christianity has produced in the world. I ask the sceptic and the agnostic to try Christianity by its fruits. I defy them to deny the existence of those fruits. I say that mankind owes a huge debt to Christianity, whether mankind knows it or not, of which the amount can never be calculated. In short, the fruits of Christianity are an unanswerable proof to my own mind of its Divine origin, and a stupendous difficulty in the way of infidelity, which has never been fairly grappled with or explained away. They demand attention. They court investigation.

There are only two points to which I shall invite the attention of my readers.

I. For one thing, let us consider briefly some of the fruits which Christianity has produced in the world.

II. For another, let us consider the leading doctrines by whose agency these fruits have been produced.

I do not for a moment pretend to bring forward anything new or deep. I am going to speak of ancient, familiar things, which anyone of average intelligence can understand. But it is precisely

the simplicity of my argument which makes many overlook it. We have so many great swelling words in this day from the enemies of Christianity, about “laws of nature, development, matter, germs, force,” and the like, that we are apt to forget the immense mass of evidence in favour of revealed religion which is lying close by our side.

I. In the first place, what fruits has Christianity produced in the world?

We are not fit to consider this question, unless we realize the actual condition of the world when Christianity was introduced. We must remember that the Augustan age, when the Lord Jesus Christ was born and His Church founded, was the era when heathenism had carried art and literature to the highest pitch of excellence. Even at this day the temples of Luxor and Carnac, the Parthenon at Athens, and the Coliseum at Rome, are among the most remarkable buildings in the world. The works of Homer, and Herodotus, and Thucydides, and Eschylus, and Sophocles, and Euripides, and Plato, among the Greeks,-of Cicero, and Tacitus, and Virgil, and Horace, among the Romans,-are admired and read by almost all educated men, and in their way are unsurpassed after nineteen centuries have passed away. In short, if the education of mind, and reason, and intellect, and the cultivation of art and literature, could make men holy and happy in this life, and give them a good hope for the life to come, the world, before Christ, did not need the introduction of Christianity.

But what was the world before Christ, even the most polished and refined portion of it, in the matter of religion and morality? That is the question. The answer may be given in the words of St. Paul, “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1 Corinthians 1:21). Darkness, thick darkness, covered the earth. Athens and Rome were full of magnificent temples, in which men worshipped images of gold, and silver, and wood, and stone, the work of their own hands. The greatest philosophers, such as Socrates, groped, as in the night. The doctrine of the Being of the true God seems to have been completely lost, and in its place the most debasing idolatry and grovelling superstition universally prevailed.

The following passage from Bishop Wilson admirable Lectures on Christian Evidences (vol. 1, p. 47, 2nd edition), contains a picture which I believe is not one bit over-coloured:-“Whether you consider the barbarian nations, or those which were most polished,-whether you look back to the earliest times of which we have any authentic history, or those nearer the birth of our Lord,-all was one thick, impenetrable mass of moral disorder and ruin. The most abject and disgusting idolatry, the worship of the beasts and birds, of stocks and stones, the deification of kings and warriors, of human virtues and vices, of insects and creeping things, and even of that most disgusting of all reptiles, the serpent, prevailed. Practices the most flagitious were interwoven with the histories and ceremonies of these wretched deities. From this source, aided by the corrupt heart of man, flowed out a torrent of vices and abominations in public and private life. Fraud, theft, rapine, revenge, suicide, fornication, adultery, murder of infants, unnatural crimes, the atrocious cruelties of war, the slavery and oppression of captives, gladiatorial shows, not only abounded, but were patronized, countenanced by the great body of men, connived at, if not practised, by statesmen and philosophers-publicly reprobated by none.”

Hear what the worthy Bishop says in another passage,-“The heathen were impure and abominable even in their religion. Their gods and goddesses were profligate, impure, revengeful, odious. 'The very light that was in them was darkness.' For what could the histories of Jupiter,

Juno, and Bacchus, and Mercury, and Venus teach, but vice and drunkenness, and lewdness, and theft, and fraud? What were the Floralia, and Bacchanalia, and Saturnalia? 'It is a shame,' observes the great Apostle, 'even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret' (Ephesians 5:12). Christians, as individuals, may be wicked and unjust, and, alas! often are so. But this is notwithstanding their religion, and in spite of it, as Bishop Warburton has fairly remarked, and therefore cases of the grossest iniquity are rare. The heathen, on the contrary, were impure and abominable in consequence of their religion, and because of it; and therefore a depravity of which we have scarcely a conception prevailed, and cases of virtue and comparative purity were rare and uncommon."

Now I believe this terrible picture of the world before Christ is not one bit overdrawn. I believe it would be easy to confirm its accuracy by reference to Greek and Latin authors. But it would be impossible to do so without bringing forward things of which "it is a shame even to speak." I only ask Christians to remember that the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which is often not read through in public, contains a plain, unvarnished description of heathenism as it really was in the days of St. Paul.

But what was the agency by which this awful state of things in the heathen world was altered, amended, and gradually swept away throughout all the Roman empire? That it has been swept away is a simple historical fact. But what wrought the change? What was it that emptied the heathen temples, destroyed the vocation of the idolatrous priesthood, raised the whole standard of morality, and, to use the words of Scripture, "turned the world upside down?" (Acts 17:6). I answer, unhesitatingly, the introduction and progress of Christianity. How vast, and wide, and deep the change was we can hardly realize at this present day. What is before our eyes in Europe we know. What was, when heathenism reigned supreme, we cannot grasp and take in.

I ask your attention to the following eloquent passage from the pen of a writer.

"The argument which meets us first in surveying the history of Christianity, and in estimating the outstanding and singular features of its success, is its early, wide, and within certain limits absolutely irresistible diffusion. Other facts attest this: but I select one as to which there can be no controversy, the extirpation by it of idolatry such as existed in the old Roman world. That system, from the Euphrates to the furthest shore of Britain, from the Nile to the forest of Germany, has utterly passed away. The whole regions around the Mediterranean, to the limits of civilization, and beyond them, 'have changed their gods;' and, though something, as time advanced, may be claimed for Mohammedanism, the great decisive, all-prevailing impulses have come from Christianity. The classic Paganism, Greek and Roman, the Assyrian, the Egyptian and North African, the Druidic, and ultimately the Teutonic, have all fallen to rise no more; and at this moment there is not on the face of the earth a single worshipper of the 'great goddess Diana,' or, 'the image that fell down from Jupiter,' of Baal or Dagon, of Isis or Serapis, of Thor or Odin. They are preserved in imperishable literature, and in equally imperishable art. Homer and the great tragedians have enshrined them. Virgil and Ovid record them, and even Milton in his Paradise Lost; to say nothing of that wonderful Book, which, in revealing their abominations, will be found to have carried furthest and widest their memory. But not a single shrine remains to them in the proper sense of the word, not even where the Apollo, or Venus, the Minerva, or Hercules, enchain universal admiration. They are abolished as idols, while immortalized as relics; and not even the

exquisite beauty lavished upon them can hide the moral deformity to which they owe their downfall. It is long centuries since one simple soul regarded them with anything of the feeling with which the African trembles before the rudest fetish, or the Hindoo before the most unsightly of his divinities. Another conquest so complete and absolute does not mark the history of the world. All ranks and classes passed through the revolution. The husbandman had to give up his offerings to Liber and Ceres, the sailor his votive tablets to Neptune, the soldier his chaplets to Mars. The youth had to forget his place in the procession, the virgin her part in the dance, or secular games. The senator had to forego his libation on entering the senate, the general his search after the omens before battle, the very emperor the honour of his own coins and titles of divinity. What but an immense and boundless power could have wrought this change, and wrought it, not by constraint, but willingly, through the force of persuasion?" (The Success of Christianity, by Principal Cairns, pp. 5, 6).

Will any of those who profess to deny the truth of Christianity deny the facts which this passage contains? It is impossible. He will find all history against him. But if he cannot deny the facts, he ought to tell us how they can on his principles be accounted for. We say they are irrefragable and unanswerable proofs that Christianity came down from God.

Great, however, as the fruits of Christianity have been in the overthrow and destruction of idolatry, they are fully equalled, if not surpassed, by the enormous practical results which Christianity has produced on the moral standard and social conduct of mankind. About human life and property,-about women, children, servants, and the poor,-about justice and equity between man and man,-about decency, purity, and charity,-about all these subjects the standard of public opinion has been entirely changed since the Gospel leavened the Roman world.

Once more I ask attention to a passage in which another writer has ably summed up the practical results of Christianity.

"We fear no challenge when we affirm that in its purest form Christianity has fostered the ideas, and encouraged the habits out of which all true civilization springs. It has fostered regard for man as essentially a noble being, having an immortal soul made in God's image, with boundless capacities of expansion and improvement; regard for woman as the helpmeet and companion of man-not his drudge, or slave, or concubine; regard for marriage as a holy contract entered into before God, not to be lightly set aside; regard for children as the heritage of the Lord-not burdens or encumbrances, but lent by the Lord to be brought up for Him; regard for the family as a divine institution, intended to be a fountain of holy joys, and a nursery of all estimable habits, and all kindly affections: regard for the sick, the infirm, and the aged, whose sorrows we are ever to pity, and whose privations we are to make up in some measure from our more ample stores. The very word Christian, in its true spirit, has been identified with all these ideas and habits; in that sense it has a glory all its own, and no more damaging criticism can be passed on persons outraging truth and rectitude, than that they are a disgrace to the Christian name." (Christianity and Secularism, by Dr. Blaikie, p. 5).

It would be perfectly easy to add to the statements contained in this passage if time and space permitted. The difficulty in the matter is not so much the discovery of evidence as the selection of it. The mass of facts which might be adduced to show the rich and blessed fruits of Christianity is simply enormous, and I pity the sceptic who refuses to look at it. To those who care to investigate

the subject more fully I strongly recommend two volumes which have recently been published. One is called “Gesta Christi,” by an American writer named Brace. The other is called Modern Missions and Culture, by Dr. Werneck, a German. Each of these volumes contains a vast quantity of valuable information which is accessible to few English readers, and will richly repay perusal.

I admit, most fully, that there have been periods during the last nineteen centuries, when the fruits of Christianity have been miserably scanty and poor, and the tree which bore them has seemed rotten and only fit to be cut down. I do not forget the corruption of faith and practice in the dark ages,-the hideous immorality of many bishops of Rome,-the vile doings of many monasteries and nunneries,-the ignorance and superstition of priests,-the grovelling superstition of laymen. These are things I do not pretend to deny. I grant that the tide of truth sometimes ebbed so low that it was almost out of sight, and the light was so dim that it was well-nigh extinguished. But it must be remembered that in the worst times there were always some men who protested loudly against the wickedness around them, such as Bradwardine, and Grostête, and Wycliffe, and John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and Savonarola. And there were always some scattered bodies of Christians who, by life and doctrine, witnessed faithfully against corruption, such as the Valenses and Albigenses, the Waldensian Churches, and the Lollards. And, after all, if the state of the Roman world in the days of the Apostle, and the state of the world at this day could be fairly compared, there is not the slightest doubt what the verdict would be. The change for the better would be found so vast that no words could describe it. The fruits of Christianity are such, in spite of all failures and defects, that the moral difference between the world before Christ and the world after Christ is the difference between gold and dross, sweet and bitter, white and black, darkness and light.

The plain truth is, that we are all so familiar with the public blessings Christianity has insensibly conferred on the world, that we cannot realize the condition of things from which it has delivered us. Few men take the trouble to read or think about anything except eating, drinking, dressing, business, politics, recreation, money, and temporalities. The many never reflect on the enormous debt which they daily owe to the effects of Bible religion, and the very Christianity which so many pretend to despise. Does the infidel, who lies in some hospital for weeks, tenderly nursed and cared for, reflect that without Christianity there would have been no hospital at all? I doubt it. Does the British workman, who never goes to a place of worship, and never reads his Bible, and often sneers at parsons, reflect that without Christianity he would never have been sure of his wages, and would have often been treated as a bond-slave and a serf? I doubt it. Does the high-born woman of fashion, who makes a god of dress and amusement, and regards “religious people” with ill-disguised contempt, ever reflect that without Christianity she would have enjoyed little liberty of action, little independence of thought or choice, and her very honour would have been little respected. I doubt it. Does the scientific agnostic, who sits at home at ease, or travels about on Sundays, and despises churches, clergymen, and Bibles, and ignores his soul,-does he ever fairly and honestly reflect that without Christianity he would have had little safety for property, home, or person, little liberty of thought, and little chance of justice if he came in collision with the ruling power? Does he, I say, think of all this? Once more, I say, I doubt it. In short, I am firmly convinced that of all the debts which have been repudiated since creation, there never was one so shamefully ignored and repudiated as the debt which the world owes to Christianity. If revealed religion could only be fairly tried by its fruits, there is no doubt what the verdict would be.

Secularism, agnosticism, scepticism, and infidelity would be confounded and silenced for ever.

II. I will now turn to the other point which I undertook to consider. Let us inquire what were the leading doctrines of Christianity by the agency of which its fruits have been produced.

I regard this point as one of great importance. It is certain that not everything called Christianity is the Christianity which was taught by Christ and His Apostles. It is equally certain that nothing but “the tree” that they planted will ever bear good fruit. To expect good fruit from the grossly unscriptural religion of pre-Reformation days, or from the vague, hazy, broad, boneless, jelly-fish teaching, which many call religion in the twentieth century, is unreasonable and absurd. Such religions never yet bore good fruit: they never can and they never will.

Fruit-bearing Christianity has never been a mere vicarious religion. By that I mean a religion which teaches men to put their souls in the hands of a priest, and to leave him to settle matters between them and God. Nor yet has it been a mere formal and ceremonial religion. By that I mean a religion which teaches men to rest in the observation of times and seasons, and gestures and postures, and bodily acts, in which the heart and soul have nothing to do.-Nor yet has it been a religion of mere asceticism. By that I mean a religion which teaches men and women that the way to please God is to shut ourselves up in monasteries and nunneries, and leave the world to itself. Nor yet has it been a mind-cramping religion. By that I mean a religion which teaches men that they must not think and read for themselves, but must shut their eyes, and hear the Church, and believe whatever they are told. Christianity of these kinds, I repeat emphatically, has never borne good fruit. Whenever and wherever it has prevailed, in any country or at any era, such religion has done little or no good to the world. It has made no mark on lives or characters. It has been no better than a refined and polished heathenism, a stuffed carcase, a whitened sepulchre, a body without life. It has certainly supplied no evidence to silence the sceptic, or to prove the truth of Divine revelation.

The Christianity which I call fruit-bearing,-which shows its Divine origin by its blessed effects on mankind,-the Christianity which you may safely defy infidels to explain away,-that Christianity is a very different thing. Let me show you some of its leading marks and features.

(a) For one thing, fruit-bearing Christianity has always taught the inspiration, sufficiency, and supremacy of Holy Scripture. It has told men that “God's Word written” is the only trustworthy rule of faith and practice in religion, that God requires nothing to be believed that is not in this Word, and that nothing is right which contradicts it. It has never allowed reason, the verifying faculty, or the voice of the Church, to be placed above, or on a level with Scripture. It has steadily maintained that, however imperfectly we may understand it, the Old Book is meant to be the only standard of life and doctrine.

(b) For another thing, fruit-bearing Christianity has always taught fully the sinfulness, guilt and corruption of human nature. It has told men that they are born in sin, deserve God's wrath and condemnation, and are naturally inclined to do evil. It has never allowed that men and women are only weak and pitiable creatures, who can become good when they please, and make their own peace with God. On the contrary, it has steadily declared man's danger and vileness, and his pressing need of a Divine forgiveness and satisfaction for his sins, a new birth or conversion, and an entire change of heart.

(c) For another thing, fruit-bearing Christianity has always set before men the Lord Jesus Christ as the chief object of faith and hope in religion, as the Divine Mediator between God and men, the only source of peace of conscience, and the root of all spiritual life. It has never been content to teach that He is merely our Prophet, our Example, and our Judge. The main things it has ever insisted on about Christ are the atonement for sin He made by His death, His sacrifice on the cross, the complete redemption from guilt and condemnation by His blood, His victory over the grave by His resurrection, His active life of intercession at God's right hand, and the absolute necessity of simple faith in Him. In short, it has made Christ the Alpha and the Omega in Christian theology.

(d) Last, but not least, fruit-bearing Christianity has always honoured the Person of God the Holy Ghost, and magnified His work. It has never taught that all professing Christians have the grace of the Spirit in their hearts, as a matter of course, because they are baptized, or because they belong to the Church, or because they are communicants. It has steadily maintained that the fruits of the Spirit are the only evidence of having the Spirit, and that those fruits must be seen,-that we must be born of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, and feel the operations of the Spirit,-and that a close walk with God in the path of His commandments, a life of holiness, charity, self-denial, purity, and zeal to do good, are the only satisfactory marks of the Holy Ghost.

Such is true fruit-bearing Christianity. Well would it have been for the world if there had been more of it during the last nineteen centuries! Too often, and in too many parts of Christendom, there has been so little of it, that Christ's religion has seemed extinct, and has fallen into utter contempt. But just in proportion as such Christianity as I have described has prevailed, the world has benefited, the infidel been silenced, and the truth of Divine revelation been acknowledged. The tree has been known by its fruit.

This is the Christianity which, in the days of the Primitive Church, “turned the world upside down.” It was this that emptied the idol temples of their worshippers, routed the Greek and Roman philosophers, and obliged even heathen writers to confess that the followers of the “new superstition,” as they called it, were people who loved one another, and lived very pure and holy lives.

This is the Christianity which, after dreary centuries of ignorance, priestcraft, and superstition, produced the Protestant Reformation, and changed the history of Europe. The leading doctrines which were preached by Luther and Zwingli on the Continent, and by Latimer and his companions in England, were precisely those which I have briefly described. That they bore rich fruit, in an immense increase of general morality and holiness, is a simple fact which no historian has ever denied.

This is the Christianity which, in the middle of last century, delivered our own Church from the state of deadness and darkness into which she had fallen. The main truths on which Whitfield, and Wesley, and Romaine, and Venn, and their companions, continually insisted, were the truth about sin, Christ, the Holy Ghost, and holiness. And the results were the same as they were in the primitive days, and at the era the Reformation. Men persecuted and hated all who taught these truths. But no one could say that they did not make men live and die well.

This is the Christianity which is doing good at this day, wherever good is done. Search the missionary stations in Africa, India, or China. Visit the great over-grown, semi-heathen parishes in colliery districts or manufacturing towns in our own land. In every case you will find the same report must be made. The only religious teaching which can show solid, positive results, is that which gives prominence to the doctrines which I have endeavoured to describe. Wherever they are rightly taught, Christianity can point to fruits which are an unanswerable proof of its Divine origin.

So much for fruit-bearing Christianity. I leave the subject with one remark about it. Let it never be forgotten that its leading principles are those which are least likely to please the natural man. On the contrary, they are precisely those which are calculated to be unpopular and to give offence. Proud man does not like to be told that he is a weak, guilty sinner,-that he cannot save his own soul, and must trust in the work of another,-that he must be converted and have a new heart,-that he must live a holy, self-denying life, and come out from the world. Surely the mere fact that this kind of unpopular teaching characterizes successful Christianity, and bears fruit in the world, is a strong evidence that Christianity is a Divine revelation, and really comes from God.

And now I will conclude this paper with four words of practical application, which I shall address to four different classes of people.

1. In the first place, I have a word for those who are tempted to give way to scepticism and unbelief, and are half disposed to throw overboard Christianity altogether. What shall I say to you? Listen, and I will tell you.

I entreat you, before you go any further, to deal honestly with the religion of faith and those who profess it, and try it by its fruits. That there is such a religion in the midst of us, and that there are thousands who profess it, are simple facts which nobody can deny. These thousands believe without doubting certain great truths of Christianity, and live and die in their belief. Let it be admitted that, in some points, these men of faith do not agree,-such as the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments. But after every deduction, there remains an immense amount of common theology, about which their faith is one. On such points as sin, and God, and Christ, and the atonement, and the authority of the Bible, and the importance of holiness, and the necessity of prayer, and self-denial, and the value of the soul, and the reality of heaven and hell, and judgment, and eternity,-on such points as these, I say, these men of faith are very much of one mind.

Now, I ask all sceptics and agnostics, is it honest to turn away from these men of faith and their religion with contempt, because they have many weaknesses and infirmities? Is it fair to despise their religion, and wrap yourself up in unbelief, because of their controversies and strifes, their feeble literature and their party spirit? Is it fair to ignore the fruits of peace, and hope and comfort, which they enjoy? Mark the solid work which, with all their faults, they do in the world, in lessening sorrow and sin, and increasing happiness, and improving their fellow-men. What fruits and work can unbelief show which will bear comparison with the fruits of faith? What good has secularism, or agnosticism, or deism, done to mankind? What missions have they sent forth to the world? What cities or countries on earth have they civilized, purified, and made more holy and happy? What have the gods which some despisers of revelation seem to worship,-evolution, development, matter, force, destiny,-what have they done to enable men to meet the many ills to which all flesh is heir? What aching consciences have they relieved? What broken hearts have they bound up?

What sick-beds have they cheered? What bereaved parents and widows have they comforted? We ask in vain. We shall get no answer. Look these facts in the face and deal honestly with them. Systems ought to be judged by their “fruits” and results. When the so-called systems of modern unbelief and scepticism, and free thought, can point to as much good done in the world by their adherents as simple faith has done by the hand of its friends, we may give them some attention. But till they do that, I boldly say that the simple, old-fashioned religion of faith has a just claim on our respect, esteem, and obedience, and ought not to be lightly esteemed, ridiculed, or despised.

2. In the second place, I have a word for those professing Christians who have no life or reality about their religion, and are only nominal members of Christ's Church. I need hardly say there are myriads of people in this condition. They are not sceptics, and would be justly offended if you called them infidels or agnostics. Yet, if truth must be spoken, except going to church or chapel on Sundays, they give no sign of Christianity. If you mark their daily life, they seem neither to think, nor feel, nor care for their souls, or God, or eternity.

Now, I warn any readers of this paper who are in this state, and I say it with pain, that you are the true cause of a vast proportion of infidelity. I remember a careless sceptic saying,-“Do you think I am going to believe your Christianity when I see so many of your church-goers behaving as they do? Do you mean to tell me that they think their creed is true, and that they really believe in a resurrection and a judgment to come? It will be time enough for me to believe when I see your people really believing. At present your Christianity seems a great sham and a mere form.” Alas! such talk as this is only too much justified by facts. Nothing, nothing, I am convinced, does so much to help the progress of modern infidelity as the utter absence of reality and earnestness among professing Christians. Men and women who crowd churches on Sundays, and then live worldly selfish lives all the week, are the best and most efficient allies of scepticism. “If you believed what you repeat under the pulpit,” the sceptic says, “you would never live as you live at home.” Oh! that people would think of the mischief done by inconsistency. “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.” It is bad enough to ruin your own soul. But do not add to your sin by ruining others.

3. In the third place, I have a word for those sincere but weak-minded Christians who are surprised and frightened at the unbelief of these latter days, and live in a constant state of panic and alarm. What shall I say to you? Listen, and I will tell you.

I ask you, then, to look to your Bibles, and lay aside your fears. There is nothing in unbelief which ought to surprise you. Search the Scriptures, and you will find that the unbelief of the twentieth century is only an old enemy in a new dress, an old disease in a new form. Since the day when Adam and Eve fell, the devil has never ceased to tempt men not to believe God, and has said, directly or indirectly, “Ye shall not die even if you do not believe.” In the latter days especially we have warrant of Scripture for expecting an abundant crop of unbelief:-“When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”-“Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.”-“There shall come in the last days scoffers.” (Luke 18:5; 2 Timothy 3:13; 2 Peter 3:3). Here in England scepticism is that natural rebound from semi-popery and superstition, which many wise men have long predicted and expected. It is precisely that swing of the pendulum which far-sighted students of human nature looked for; and it has come.

But as I tell you not to be surprised at the widespread scepticism of the times, so also I must urge you not to be shaken in mind by it, or moved from your steadfastness. There is no real cause for alarm. The ark of God is not in danger, though the oxen seem to shake it. Christianity has survived the attacks of Hume and Hobbes and Tindal,-of Collins and Woolston and Bolingbroke and Chubb,-of Voltaire and Payne and Holyoake. These men made a great noise in their day, and frightened weak people: but they produced no more effect than idle travellers produce by scratching their names on the pyramid of Egypt. Depend on it, Christianity in like manner will survive the attacks of the clever writers of these times. The startling novelty of many modern objections to Revelation, no doubt, makes them seem more weighty than they really are. It does not follow, however, that hard knots cannot be untied because our fingers cannot untie them, or that formidable difficulties cannot be explained because our eyes cannot see through or explain them. When you cannot answer a sceptic, be content to wait for more light; but never forsake a great principle. In religion, as in many scientific questions, said Faraday, “the highest philosophy is often a judicious suspense.” We can afford to wait.

4. In the last place, I have a word for all true believers who lament the spread of unbelief, though their own faith is unshaken. What shall I say to them? What advice shall I offer? Listen, and I will tell you.

I must plainly say, and I say it with sorrow, that we who profess faith, and are never troubled with unbelief, are not altogether free from blame. Too often our faith is little better than a mere “otiose assent” to certain theological propositions, but not a living, burning, active principle, which works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and brings forth much fruit of holiness and good works. It is not the faith which made primitive Christians rejoice under Roman persecution, and made Luther stand up boldly before the Diet of Worms, and made Ridley and Latimer “love not their lives to the death,” and made Wesley give up his position at Oxford to become an evangelist of England. We are verily guilty in this matter. If there was more real living faith on earth, I suspect there would be less unbelief. Scepticism, in many a case, would shrink, and dwindle, and melt away, if it saw faith more awake, and alive, and active, and stirring. Let us, for Christ's sake, and the sake of souls, amend our ways in this matter. Let us pray daily, “Lord, increase our faith.” Let us live, and move, and have our being, and deal with men, as if we really believed every jot and tittle of our creeds, and as if a dying, risen, interceding, and coming Christ were continually before our eyes. We may depend on it the old saying is true,-“the inconsistency of believers is the infidel's best argument.”

This, I am firmly convinced, is the surest way to oppose and diminish unbelief. Let the time past suffice us to have lived content with a cold, tame assent to creeds. Let the time to come find us living, active believers. It was a solemn saying which fell from the lips of an eminent minister of Christ on his death-bed,” We are none of us more than half awake.” If believers were more thorough, and real, and whole-hearted in their belief, there would be far less unbelief in the world.

The words at the head of this paper contain a mine of truth,-“Every tree is known by his own fruit.” If the tree of Christianity bore more fruit, the axe of infidelity would never harm it, and would be laid to its root in vain.

Two Thieves

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

"CHRIST AND THE TWO THIEVES"

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

"And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds but this man hath done nothing amiss.

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

"And Jesus said unto him, Verify I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Luke 23:39-43.

READER, you know these verses, I suppose. It would be strange indeed if you did not. Few passages in the New Testament are more familiar to men's ears.

And it is right and good that these verses should be well known. They have comforted many troubled minds. They have brought peace to many uneasy consciences. They have been a healing balm to many wounded hearts. They have been a medicine to many sin-sick souls. They have smoothed down not a few dying pillows. Wherever the Gospel of Christ is preached, they will always be honoured, loved, and had in remembrance.

Reader, I wish to speak to you about these verses. Listen to me while I try to unfold the leading lessons which they are meant to teach. I cannot see the state of your heart before God, but I can see truths in this passage which no man can ever know too well.

I. First of all, you are meant to learn from these verses, Christ's power and willingness to save sinners.

This is the main doctrine to be gathered from the history of the penitent thief. It teaches you that which ought to be music in the ears of all who hear it,-it teaches you that Jesus Christ is mighty to save.

I ask you if any man's case could look more hopeless and desperate, than that of this penitent thief once did?

He was a wicked man,-a malefactor,-a thief, if not a murderer. We know this, for such only were crucified. He was suffering a just punishment for breaking the laws. And as he had lived wicked, so he seemed determined to die wicked,-for when he first was crucified, he railed on our Lord.

And he was a dying man. He hung there, nailed to a cross, from which he was never to come down alive. He had no longer power to stir hand or foot. His hours were numbered. The grave was ready for him. There was but a step between him and death.

If ever there was a soul hovering on the brink of hell, it was the soul of this thief. If ever there was a case that seemed lost, gone, and past recovery, it was his. If ever there was a child of Adam whom the devil made sure of as his own, it was this man.

But see now what happened. He ceased to rail and blaspheme, as he had done at the first. He began to speak in another manner altogether. He turned to our blessed Lord in prayer. He prayed Jesus to "remember him when He came into His kingdom." He asked that his soul might be cared for, his sins pardoned, and himself thought of in another world. Truly this was a wonderful change.

And then mark what kind of answer he received. Some would have said he was too wicked a man to be saved. But it was not so. Some would have fancied it was too late: the door was shut, and there was no room for mercy. But it proved not too late at all. The Lord Jesus returned him an immediate answer,-spoke kindly to him,-assured him he should be with Him that day in Paradise: pardoned him completely,-cleansed him thoroughly from his sins,-received him graciously,-justified him freely,-raised him from the gates of hell,-gave him a title to glory. Of all the multitude of saved souls, none ever received so glorious an assurance of his own salvation, as did this penitent thief. Go over the whole list, from Genesis to Revelation, and you will find none who had such words spoken to them as these: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

Reader, the Lord Jesus never gave so complete a proof of His power and will to save, as He did upon this occasion. In the day when He seemed most weak, He showed that He was a strong deliverer. In the hour when His body was racked with pain, He showed that he could feel tenderly for others. At the time when He Himself was dying, He conferred on a sinner eternal life.

Now, have I not a right to say, Christ is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him? Behold the proof of it. If ever sinner was too far gone to be saved, it was this thief. Yet he was plucked as a brand from the fire.

Have I not a right to say, Christ will receive any poor sinner who comes to Him with the prayer of faith, and cast out none? Behold the proof of it. If ever there was one that seemed too bad to be received, this was the man. Yet the door of mercy was wide open even for him.

Have I not a right to say, by grace ye may be saved through faith, not of works: fear not, only believe? Behold the proof of it. This thief was never baptized. He belonged to no visible Church. He never received the Lord's Supper. He never did any work for Christ. He never gave money to Christ's cause. But he had faith, and so he was saved.

Have I not a right to say, the youngest faith will save a man's soul, if it only be true? Behold the proof of it. This man's faith was only one day old, but it led him to Christ, and preserved him from hell.

Why then should any man or woman despair with such a passage as this in the Bible? Jesus is a physician who can cure hopeless cases. He can quicken dead souls, and call the things which be not as though they were.

Never should any man or woman despair! Jesus is still the same now that He was eighteen hundred years ago. The keys of death and hell are in His hand. When He opens none can shut.1

What though your sins be more in number than the hairs of your head? What though your evil habits have grown with your growth, and strengthened with your strength? What though you have hitherto hated good, and loved evil, all the days of your life? These things are sad indeed; but there is hope, even for you. Christ can heal you. Christ can raise you from your low estate. Heaven is not shut against you. Christ is able to admit you, if you will humbly commit your soul into His hands.

Reader, are your sins forgiven? If not, I set before you this day a full and free salvation. I invite you to follow the steps of the penitent thief: come to Christ, and live. I tell you that Jesus is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. I tell you He can do everything that your soul requires. Though your sins be as scarlet, He will make them white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Why should you not be saved as well as another? Come unto Christ, and live.

Reader, are you a true believer? If you are, you ought to glory in Christ. Glory not in your own faith, your own feelings, your own knowledge, your own prayers, your own amendment, your own diligence. Glory in nothing but Christ. Alas, the best of us knows but little of that merciful and mighty Saviour! We do not exalt Him and glory in Him enough. Let us pray that we may see more of the fulness there is in Him.

Reader, do you ever try to do good to others? If you do, remember to tell them about Christ. Tell the young, tell the poor, tell the aged, tell the ignorant, tell the sick, tell the dying,-tell them all about Christ. Tell them of His power, and tell them of His love. Tell them of His doings, and tell them of His feelings. Tell them what lie has done for the chief of sinners. Tell them what He is willing to do to the last day of time. Tell it them over and over again. Never be tired of speaking of Christ. Say to them, broadly and fully, freely and unconditionally, unreservedly and undoubtingly, "Come unto Christ as the penitent thief did: come unto Christ, and you shall be saved."

II. The second lesson you are meant to learn from this passage is this,-if some are saved in the very hour of death, others are not.

This is a truth that never ought to he passed over, and I dare not leave it unnoticed. It is a truth that stands out plainly in the sad end of the other malefactor, and is only too often forgotten.

What became of the other thief who was crucified? Why did he not turn from his sin, and call upon the Lord? Why did he remain hardened and impenitent? Why was he not saved? It is useless to try to answer such questions. Let us be content to take the fact as we find it, and see what it is meant to teach us.

We have no right whatever to say this thief was a worse man than his companion. There is nothing to prove it. Both plainly were wicked men. Both were receiving the due reward of their deeds. Both hung by the side of our Lord Jesus Christ. Both heard Him pray for His murderers. Both saw Rim suffer patiently. But while one repented, the other remained hardened. While one began to pray,

the other went on railing. While one was converted in his last hours, the other died a bad man as he had lived. While one was taken to paradise, the other went to his own place, the place of the devil and his angels.

Now these things are written for our warning.

There is warning, as well as comfort in these verses, and that very solemn warning too.

They tell me loudly, that though some may repent and be converted on their death-beds, it does not at all follow that all will A death-bed is not always a saving time.

They tell me loudly that two men may have the same opportunities of getting good for their souls,-may be placed in the same position, see the same things, and hear the same things; and yet only one shall take advantage of them, repent, believe, and be saved.

They tell me, above all, that repentance and faith are the gifts of God, and are not in a man's own power; and that if any one flatters himself he can repent at his own time, choose his own season, seek the Lord when he pleases, and, like the penitent thief, be saved at the very last,-he may find at length he is greatly deceived.

And it is good and profitable to bear this in mind. There is an immense amount of delusion in the world on this very subject. I see many allowing life to slip away, all unprepared to die. I see many allowing that they ought to repent, but always putting off their own repentance. And I believe one grand reason is, that most men suppose they can turn to God just when they like. They wrest the parable of the labourer in the vineyard, which speaks of the eleventh hour, and use it as it never was meant to be used. They dwell on the pleasant part of the verses I am now considering, and forget the rest. They talk of the thief that went to paradise, and was saved, and forget the one who died as he had lived, and was lost.2

Reader, take heed that you do not fall into this mistake. Look at the history of men in the Bible, and see how often these notions I have been speaking of are contradicted. Mark well how many proofs there are that two men may have the same light offered them, and only one use it; and that no one has a right to take liberties with God's mercy, and presume he will be able to repent just when he likes.

Look at Saul and David. They lived about the same time. They rose from the same rank in life. They were called to the same position in the world. They enjoyed the ministry of the same prophet, Samuel. They reigned the same number of years.-Yet one was saved and the other lost.

Look at Sergius Paulus and Gallio. They were both Roman Governors. They were both wise and prudent men in their generation. They both heard the apostle Paul preach. But one believed and was baptized,-the other "cared for none of these things."

Look at the world around you. See what is going on continually under your eyes. Two sisters will often attend the same ministry, listen to the same truths, hear the same sermons; and yet only one shall be converted unto God, while the other remains totally unmoved. Two friends often read the same religious book. One is so moved by it, that he gives up all for Christ; the other sees nothing at all in it, and continues the same as before. Hundreds have read Doddridge's "Rise and Progress" without profit: with Wilberforce it was one of the beginnings of spiritual life. Thousands

have read Wilberforce's "Practical View of Christianity," and laid it down again unaltered;-from the time Legh Richmond read it he became another man. No man has any warrant for saying, Salvation is in my own power.

Reader, I do not pretend to explain these things. I only put them before you as great facts. And I ask you to consider them well.

You must not misunderstand me. I do not want to discourage you. I say these things in all affection, to give you warning of danger. I do not say them to drive you back from heaven;-I say them rather to draw you on, and bring you to Christ while He can be found.

I want you to beware of presumption. Do not abuse God's mercy and compassion. Do not continue in sin, I beseech you, and think you can repent, and believe, and be saved, just when you like, when you please, when you will, and when you choose. I would always set before you an open door. I would always say, "While there is life there is hope." But if you would be wise, put nothing off that concerns your soul.

I want you to beware of letting slip good thoughts and godly convictions, if you have them. Cherish them and nourish them, lest you lose them for ever. Make the most of them, lest they take to themselves wings and flee away. Have you an inclination to begin praying? Put it in practice at once. Have you an idea of beginning really to serve Christ? Set about it at once. Are you enjoying any spiritual light? See that you live up to your light. Trifle not with opportunities, lest the day come when you will want to use them, and not be able. Linger not, lest you become wise too late.

You may say, perhaps, "it is never too late to repent." I answer, That is right enough, but late repentance is seldom true. And I say further, You cannot be certain if you put off repenting, you will repent at all.

You may say, "Why should I be afraid?-the penitent thief was saved." I answer, That is true, but look again at the passage which tells you that the other thief was lost.

III. The third lesson you are meant to learn from these verses is this,-the Spirit always leads saved souls in one way.

This is a point that deserves particular attention, and is often overlooked. Men look at the broad fact that the penitent thief was saved when he was dying, and they look no further.

They do not consider the evidences this thief left behind him. They do not observe the abundant proof he gave of the work of the Spirit in his heart. And these proofs I wish to trace out. I wish to show you that the Spirit always works in one way, and that whether He converts a man in an hour, as He did the penitent thief,-or whether by slow degrees, as he does others, the steps by which He leads souls to heaven are always the same.

Listen to me, reader, and I will try to make this clear to you. I want you to shake off the common notion that there is some easy royal road to heaven from a dying bed. I want you thoroughly to understand that every saved soul goes through the same experience, and that the leading principles of the penitent thief's religion were just the same as those of the oldest saint that ever lived.

See then, for one thing, how strong was the faith of this man.

He called Jesus, "Lord." He declared his belief that He would have a kingdom. He believed that He was able to give him eternal life and glory, and in this belief prayed to Him. He maintained His innocence of all the charges brought against Him. "This man," said he, "hath done nothing amiss." Others perhaps may have thought the Lord innocent,-none said so openly but this poor dying man.

And when did all this happen? It happened when the whole nation had denied Christ,-shouting, "Crucify Him: crucify Him. We have no king but Cæsar!"-when the chief priests and Pharisees had condemned and found Him guilty of death,-when even His own disciples had forsaken Him and fled,-when He was hanging, faint, bleeding and dying on the cross, numbered with transgressors, and accounted accursed. This was the hour when the thief believed in Christ, and prayed to Him. Surely such faith was never seen since the world began.3

The disciples had seen mighty signs and miracles. They had seen the dead raised with a word,-and lepers healed with a touch,-the blind receiving sight,-the dumb made to speak,-the lame made to walk. They had seen thousands fed with a few loaves and fishes. They had seen their Master walking on the water as on dry land. They had all of them heard Him speak as no man ever spake, and hold out promises of good things yet to come. They had some of them had a foretaste of His glory in the mount of transfiguration. Doubtless their faith was the gift of God, but still they had much to help it.

The dying thief saw none of the things I have mentioned. He only saw our Lord in agony, and in weakness, in suffering, and in pain. He saw Him undergoing. a dishonourable punishment; deserted, mocked, despised, blasphemed. He saw Him rejected by all the great, and wise, and noble of His own people,-His strength dried up like a potsherd, His life drawing nigh to the grave. (Psalms 22:15; Psalms 88:3) He saw no sceptre, no royal crown, no outward dominion, no glory, no majesty, no power, no signs of might. And yet the dying thief believed, and looked forward to Christ's kingdom.

Reader, would you know if you have the Spirit? Then mark the question I put to you this day.-Where is your faith in Christ?

See, for another thing, what a right sense of sin the thief had. He says to his companion, "We receive the due reward of our deeds." He acknowledges his own ungodliness, and the justice of his punishment. He makes no attempt to justify himself, or excuse his wickedness. He speaks like a man humbled and self-abased by the remembrance of past iniquities. This is what all God's children feel. They are ready to allow they are poor hell-deserving sinners. They can say with their hearts, as well as with their lips, "We have left undone the things that we ought to have done, and we have done those things that we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us."

Reader, would you know if you have the Spirit? Then mark my question.-Do you feel your sin?

See, for another thing, what brotherly love the thief showed to his companion. He tried to stop his railing and blaspheming, and bring him to a better mind. "Dost not thou fear God," he says, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" There is no surer mark of grace than this. Grace shakes a man out of his selfishness, and makes him feel for the souls of others. When the Samaritan woman was converted, she left her water-pot and ran to the city, saying, "Come, see a man that

told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" When Saul was converted, immediately he went to the synagogue at Damascus, and testified to his brethren of Israel, that Jesus was the Christ.

Reader, would you know if you have the Spirit? Then where is your charity and love to souls?

In one word, you see in the penitent thief a finished work of the Holy Ghost. Every part of the believer's character may be traced in him. Short as his life was after conversion, he found time to leave abundant evidence that he was a child of God. His faith, his prayer, his humility, his brotherly love, are unmistakable witnesses of the reality of his repentance. He was not a penitent in name only, but in deed and in truth.

Let no man therefore think, because the penitent thief was saved, that men can be saved without leaving any evidence of the Spirit's work.. Let such an one consider well what evidence this man left behind, and take care.

It is mournful to hear what people sometimes say about what they call death-bed evidences. It is perfectly fearful to observe how little satisfies some persons, and how easily they can persuade themselves that their friends are gone to heaven. They will tell you when their relation is dead and gone, that "he made such a beautiful prayer one day,-or that he talked so well,-or that he was so sorry for his old ways, and intended to live so differently if he got better,-or that he craved nothing in this world,-or that he liked people to read to him, and pray with him." And because they have this to go upon, they seem to have a comfortable hope that he is saved. Christ may never have been named,-the way of salvation may never have been in the least mentioned. But it matters not; there was a little talk of religion, and so they are content.

Now I have no desire to hurt the feelings of any one who reads this paper, but I must and will speak plainly upon this subject.

Once for all, let me say, that as a general rule, nothing is so unsatisfactory as death-bed evidences. The things that men say, and the feelings they express when sick and frightened, are little to be depended on. Often, too often, they are the result of fear, and do not spring from the ground of the heart. Often, too often, they are things said by rote; caught from the lips of ministers and anxious friends, but evidently not felt. And nothing can prove all this more clearly, than the well-known fact, that the great majority of persons who make promises of amendment on a sick-bed, if they recover, go back to sin and the world.

When a man has lived a life of thoughtlessness and folly, I want something more than a few fair words and good wishes to satisfy me about his soul, when he comes to his death-bed. It is not enough for me that he will let me read the Bible to him, and pray by his bedside; that he says, "he has not thought so much as he ought of religion, and he thinks he should be a different man if he got better." All this does not content me,-it does not make me feel happy about his state. It is very well as far as it goes, but it is not conversion. It is very well in its way, but it is not faith in Christ. Until I see conversion, and faith in Christ, I can not and dare not feel satisfied. Others may feel satisfied if they please, and after their friend's death say, they hope he is gone to heaven. For my part I would rather hold my tongue, and say nothing. I would be content with the least measure of repentance and faith in a dying man, even though it be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed; but to be content with anything less than repentance and faith, seems to me next door to infidelity.

Reader, what kind of evidence do you mean to leave behind as to the state of your soul? Take example by the penitent thief, and you will do well.

When we have carried you to your narrow bed, let us not have to hunt up stray words, and scraps of religion, in order to make out that you were a true believer. Let us not have to say in a hesitating way one to another, "I trust he is happy: he talked so nicely one day, and he seemed so pleased with a chapter in the Bible on another occasion, and he liked such a person, who is a good man." Let us be able to speak decidedly as to your condition. Let us have some standing proof of your penitence, your faith, and your holiness, that none shall be able for a moment to question your state. Depend on it, without this, those you leave behind can feel no solid comfort about your soul. We may use the form of religion at your burial, and express charitable hopes. We may meet you at the church-yard gate, and say, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." But this will not alter your condition. If you die without conversion to God,-without repentance,-and without faith, your funeral will only be the funeral of a lost soul.

IV. You are meant, in the next place, to learn from these verses, that believers in Christ when they die, are with the Lord.

This you may gather from our Lord's words to the penitent thief: "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." And you have an expression very like it in the Epistle to the Philippians, where Paul says he has a desire to "depart and be with Christ." (Php_1:23)

I shall say but little on this subject. I would simply lay it before you, for your own private meditations. To my own mind it is very full of comfort and peace.

Believers after death are "with Christ." That answers many a difficult question, which otherwise might puzzle man's busy, restless mind. The abode of dead saints, their joys, their feelings, their happiness, all seems met by this simple expression,-they are with Christ.

I cannot enter into full explanations about the state of departed believers. It is a high and deep subject, such as man's mind can neither grasp nor fathom. I know their happiness falls short of what it will be when their bodies are raised again, and Jesus returns to earth. Yet I know also they enjoy a blessed rest,-a rest from labour,-a rest from sorrow,-a rest from pain,-and a rest from sin. But it does not follow because I cannot explain these things, that I am not persuaded they are far happier than they ever were on earth. I see their happiness in this very passage, "They are with Christ," and when I see that I see enough.

If the sheep are with the Shepherd,-if the members are with the Head,-if the children of Christ's family are with Him who loved them and carried them all the days of their pilgrimage on earth, all must be well, all must be right.

I cannot describe what kind of place paradise is, but I ask no brighter view of it than this,-that Christ is there.4 All other things in the picture which imagination draws of paradise, are nothing in comparison of this. How He is there, and in what way He is there, I know not. Let me only see Christ in paradise when my eyes close in death, and that suffices me. Well does the Psalmist say, "In Thy presence is fulness of joy." It was a true saying of a dying girl, when her mother tried to comfort her by describing what paradise would be: "There," she said to the child, "there you will have no pains, and no sickness; there you will see your brothers and sisters, who have gone

before you, and will be always happy." "Ah, mother," was the reply, "but there is one thing better than all, and that is, Christ will be there!"

Reader, it may be you do not think much about your soul. It may be you know little of Christ as your Saviour, and have never tasted by experience that He is precious. And yet perhaps you hope to go to paradise when you die. Surely this passage is one that should make you think. Paradise is a place where Christ is. Then can it be a place that you would enjoy?

Reader, it may be you are a believer, and yet tremble at the thought of the grave. It seems cold and dreary. You feel as if all before you was dark, and gloomy, and comfortless. Fear not, but be encouraged by this text. You are going to paradise, and Christ will be there.

V. The last thing you are meant to learn from these verses is this,-the eternal portion of every man's soul is close to him.

"To-day," says our Lord to the penitent thief, "to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." He names no distant period,-He does not talk of his entering into a state of happiness as a thing "far away." He speaks of to-day: "this very day, in which thou art hanging on the cross."

Reader, how near that seems! How awfully near that word brings our everlasting dwelling-place. Happiness or misery,-sorrow or joy,-the presence of Christ, or the company of devils,-all are close to us. "There is but a step," says David, "between me and death." There is but a step, we may say, between ourselves and either paradise or hell.

We none of us realize this as we ought to do. It is high time to shake off the dreamy state of mind in which we live on this matter. We are apt to talk and think, even about believers, as if death was a long journey,-as if the dying saint had embarked on a long voyage. It is all wrong, very wrong. Their harbour and their home is close by, and they have entered it.

Some of us know by bitter experience, what a long and weary time it is between the death of those we love, and the hour when we bury them out of our sight. Such weeks are the slowest, saddest, heaviest weeks in all our lives. But, blessed be God, the souls of departed saints are free from the very moment their last breath is drawn. While we are weeping, and the coffin preparing, and the mourning being provided, and the last painful arrangement being made, the spirits of our beloved ones are enjoying the presence of Christ. They are freed for ever from the burden of the flesh. They are "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Reader, the day that believers die they are in paradise. Their battle is fought;-their strife is over. They have passed through that gloomy valley we must one day tread;-they have gone over that dark river we must one day cross. They have drank that last bitter cup which sin has mingled for man. They have reached that place where sorrow and sighing are no more. Surely we should not wish them back again. We should not weep for them, but for ourselves.

We are warring still, but they are at peace. We are labouring, but they are at rest. We are watching, but they are sleeping. We are wearing our spiritual armour, but they have for ever put it off. We are still at sea, but they are safe in harbour. We have tears, but they have joys. We are strangers and pilgrims, but as for them they are at home. Surely, better are the dead in Christ than the living. Surely, the very hour the poor saint dies, he is at once higher and happier than the highest upon earth.5

I fear there is a vast amount of delusion on this point. I fear that many, who are not Roman Catholics, and profess not to believe purgatory, have, notwithstanding, some strange ideas in their minds about the immediate consequences of death. I fear that many have a sort of vague notion that there is some interval or space of time between death and their eternal state. They fancy they shall go through a kind of purifying change, and that though they die unfit for heaven, they shall yet be found meet for it after all.

But it will not stand. There is no change after death. There is no conversion in the grave. There is no new heart given after the last breath is drawn. The very day we go, we launch for ever. The day we go from this world, we begin an eternal condition. From that day there is no spiritual alteration,-no spiritual change. As we die, so we shall receive after death. As the tree falls so it must lie.

Reader, if you are an unconverted man, this ought to make you think. Do you know you are close to hell? This very day you might die, and if you died out of Christ, you would open your eyes in hell, and in torment.

Reader, if you are a true Christian, you are far nearer heaven than you think. This very day, if the Lord should take you, you would find yourself in paradise. The good land of promise is near to you. The eyes that you closed in weakness and pain, would open at once on a glorious rest, such as my tongue cannot describe.

And now let me say a few words in conclusion, and I have done.

This tract may fall into the hands of some humble-hearted and contrite sinner.-Are you that man? Then here is encouragement for you. Sec what the penitent thief did, and do likewise. See how he prayed,-see how he called on the Lord Jesus Christ,-see what an answer of peace he obtained. Brother or sister, why should not you do the same? Why should not you also be saved?

This tract may fall into the hands of some proud and presumptuous man of the world,-Are you that man? Then take warning. See how the impenitent thief died as he had lived, and beware lest you come to a like end. Oh, erring brother or sister, be not too confident, lest you die in your sins! Seek the Lord while He may be found. Turn you, turn: why will you die?

This tract may fall into the hands of some professing believer in Christ.-Are you such an one? Then take the penitent thief's religion as a measure by which to prove your own. See that you know something of true repentance and saving faith, of real humility and fervent charity. Brother or sister, do not be satisfied with the world's standard of Christianity. Be of one mind with the penitent thief, and you will be wise.

This tract may fall into the hands of some one who is mourning over departed believers.-Are you such an one? Then take comfort from this Scripture. See how your beloved ones are in the best of hands. They cannot be better off. They never were so well in their lives as they are now. They are with Jesus, whom their souls loved on earth. Oh, cease from your selfish mourning! Rejoice rather that they are freed from trouble, and have entered into rest.

And this tract may fall into the hands of some aged servant of Christ.-Are you such an one? Then see from these verses how near you are to home. A few more days of labour and sorrow, and the King of kings shall send for you; and in a moment your warfare shall be at end, and all shall be

peace.

FOOTNOTES

1 "O Saviour, what a precedent is this of Thy free and powerful grace! Where Thou wilt give, what unworthiness can bar us from Thy mercy? When Thou wilt give, what time can prejudice our vocation? Who can despair of Thy goodness, when he, that in the morning was posting to hell, is in the evening with Thee in paradise? "-BISHOP HALL.

2 "He that puts off his repentance and seeking for pardon to the very last, in reliance upon this example, does but tempt God, and turn that to his own poison, which God intended for better ends.

"The mercies of God are never recorded in Scripture for man's presumption, and the failings of men never for imitation."-LIGHTFOOT. Sermon. 1684.

"Most ungrateful and foolish is the conduct of those who take encouragement from the penitent thief to put off repentance to a dying moment;-most ungrateful in perverting the grace of their Redeemer into an occasion of renewing their provocations against Him;-and most foolish to imagine that what our Lord did in so singular circumstances, is to be drawn into an ordinary precedent.'-DODDRIDGE.

3 "I know not that since the creation of the world there ever was a more remarkable and striking example of faith."-CALVIN'S COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPELS.

"A great faith that can see the sun under so thick a cloud; that can discover a Christ, a Saviour, under such a poor, scorned, despised, crucified Jesus, and call Him Lord.

"A great faith that could see Christ's kingdom through His cross, and grave, and death, and when there was so little sign of a kingdom, and pray to be remembered in that kingdom."

LIGHTFOOT Sermon. 1684.

"The penitent thief was the first confessor of Christ's heavenly kingdom,-the first martyr who bore testimony to the holiness of His sufferings,-and the first apologist for His oppressed innocence."-QUESNEL ON THE GOSPELS.

"Probably there are few saints in glory who ever honoured Christ more illustriously than this dying sinner."-DODDRIDGE.

"Is this the voice of a thief or a disciple? Give me leave, O Saviour, to borrow Thine own words, 'Verily I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.' He saw Thee hanging miserably by him, and yet styles Thee Lord. He saw Thee dying, and yet talks of Thy kingdom. He felt himself dying, yet talks of a future remembrance. O faith, stronger than death, which can look beyond the cross at a crown;-beyond dissolution at a remembrance of life and glory! Which of Thine eleven were heard to speak so gracious a word to Thee in these Thy last pangs? "-BISHOP HALL.

4 "We ought not to enter into curious and subtle arguments about the place of paradise. Let us rest satisfied with knowing that those who are engrafted by faith into the body of Christ are partakers of life, and there enjoy after death a blessed and joyful rest, until the perfect glory of the heavenly life

is fully manifested by the coming of Christ."-CALVIN'S COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPELS.

5 "We give Thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world."-CHURCH OF ENGLAND BURIAL SERVICE.

"I have some of the best news to impart. One beloved by you has accomplished her warfare; has received an answer to her prayers, and everlasting joy rests upon her head. My dear wife, the source of my best earthly comfort for twenty years, departed on Tuesday."-VENN'S TO LETTER STILLINGFLEET, announcing the death of his wife.

Chapter 77

Unbelief a Marvel

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are “pure gold.” I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland in the 19th century.

UNBELIEF A MARVEL ----------

“He marvelled because of their unbelief.” Mark 6:6.

---------- The text which heads this page is a very remarkable one. Of all the expressions in the four Gospels which show that the Lord Jesus Christ was very Man, none perhaps is more startling than this. That He who was born of the Virgin Mary, and had a body like our own, should hunger and thirst, and weep and rejoice, and be weary and suffer pain,-all this we can, in some degree, understand. But that He who was very God as well as very Man, He “in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” He in whom were, “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” He who “knew what was in man,”-that He should “marvel” at anything here below, may well fill us with astonishment. But what saith the Scripture? There it is written in plain words, which no critical ingenuity can explain away,- “He marvelled because of their unbelief.”

In handling this subject, I do not propose for a moment to discuss those deep and mysterious articles of the faith which lie at the foundation of Christianity, I mean the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, and the union of the Divine and human natures in the Person of Christ. If I attempted this, I could add nothing to what masters of theology have already said and should probably leave the subject where I found it, if I did not “darken counsel by words without knowledge.”

What I wish to do is to say something practical about the general subject of unbelief. It must be a wonderful thing if even our Lord Jesus Christ marvelled at it. It must be an important thing, when we hear and read so much about it in the present day. And I shall try to make a few plain remarks upon it.

I. Let us consider the nature of unbelief. “What is it?”

II. Let us inquire why unbelief is so wonderful. “Why did the Lord Jesus marvel at it?”

I. What then is unbelief?

The word so translated will be found twelve times in the New Testament and always, so far as I can see, in one signification. In its fullest sense, of course, it only exists in lands where men enjoy the light of revelation. In heathen lands, where there is little known, there can be comparatively little unbelief. It consists in not believing something or other that God has said,-some warning that He gave,-some promise that He held out,-some advice that He offers,-some judgment that He threatens,-some message that He sends. In short, to refuse to admit the truth of God's revealed

Word, and to live as if we did not think that Word was to be depended on, is the essence of unbelief.

Unbelief is the oldest of the many spiritual diseases by which fallen human nature is afflicted. It began in the day when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and brought sin into the world. They did not believe what God had told them would be the consequence of disobedience, and they did believe the Tempter, saying, “Ye shall not surely die.”-It ruined millions in the day of Noah's flood: they would not listen to the great “preacher of righteousness,” when he warned them for a hundred and twenty years to flee from the wrath to come.-It slew myriads in the day when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire from heaven. When righteous Lot called on his sons-in-law to escape for their lives, “he seemed as one that mocked.”(Genesis 19:14) It kept Israel wandering forty years in the wilderness, till a whole generation was dead. We are expressly told, “They could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19) It brought, finally, destruction on the Church and State of the Jews some fifty years after Christ left the world. They would not believe nor receive Him as the Messiah, but crucified and killed Him. The primary cause why Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple burned, and God's ancient people cast off and scattered over the face of the world, was unbelief.

Unbelief, we are taught everywhere in the New Testament, is the grand reason why multitudes of professing Christian men and women in every age are not saved, and die unprepared to meet God. It bars the way to heaven, and makes God's glorious promises of mercy useless and unavailing. “He that believeth not is condemned already.” “He that believeth not shall be damned.” “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.” (John 3:18, John 3:36; Mark 16:16; John 8:24) Remember, every one into whose hands this paper may fall,-remember and never forget it,-it is not so much sin as unbelief that ruins souls.- “All manner of sins shall be forgiven to the sons of men:”- “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow.” (Matthew 12:31; 1 John 1:7; Isaiah 1:18) But if a man will not put faith in Christ, he places himself out of the reach of mercy. I am bold to say that even Judas Iscariot might have found absolution, if, after his denial, he had repented and believed. The true cause of eternal ruin is contained in those solemn words which our Master spoke before the Jewish “Sanhedrin,” “Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.” (John 5:40)

But the saddest fact remains behind. Unbelief is one of the commonest spiritual diseases in these latter days. It meets us at every turn, and in every company. Like the Egyptian plague of frogs, it makes its way into every family and home, and there seems no keeping it out. Among high and low, and rich and poor, in town and in country, in universities and manufacturing towns, in castles and in cottages, you will continually find some form of unbelief. It is no longer a pestilence that walketh in darkness, but a destruction that wasteth at noonday. It is even thought clever and intellectual, and a mark of a thoughtful mind. Society seems leavened with it. He that avows his belief of everything contained in the Bible must make up his mind in many companies to be smiled at contemptuously, and thought an ignorant and weak man.

(a) With some the seat of unbelief appears to be the head. They refuse to accept anything which they cannot understand. Inspiration, Miracles, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection, the Future State, all these mighty verities are viewed with cold indifference

as disputable points, if not absolutely rejected. Can we entirely explain them? Can we satisfy their reasoning faculties about them? If not, they must be excused if they stand in doubt. What they cannot fully understand, they tell us they cannot fully believe.

(b) With some the seat of unbelief is the heart. They love the sins and habits of life, which the Bible condemns, and are determined not to give them up. They take refuge from an uneasy conscience by trying to persuade themselves that the old Book is not true. The measure of their creed is their affection. Whatever condemns their natural inclinations they refuse to believe. The famous Lord Rochester, once a profligate and an infidel, but at last a true penitent is recorded to have said to Bishop Burnet, as he drew near his end, " It is not reason, but a bad life which is the great argument against the Bible." A true and weighty saying! Many, I am persuaded, profess that they do not believe, because they know, if they did believe, they must give up their favourite sins.

(c) With far the greater number of people the seat of unbelief is a lazy, indolent will. They dislike all kind of trouble. Why should they deny themselves and take pains about Bible-reading and praying, and Sabbath observance, and diligent watchfulness over thought and word and deed, when after all it is not quite certain that the Bible is true? This I have little doubt, is the form of unbelief which prevails most frequently among young people. They are not agitated by intellectual difficulties. They are often not the slaves of any special lusts or passions, and live tolerably decent lives. But deep down in their hearts there is a disinclination to make up their minds, and to be decided about anything in religion. And so they drift down the stream of life like dead fish, and float helplessly on, and are tossed to and fro, hardly knowing what they believe. And while they would shrink from telling you they are not Christians, they are without any backbone in their Christianity.

In days like these we must count it no strange thing if we meet with a vast amount of unbelief in the world. Rather let us make up our minds to expect it, and to see it under the most specious and plausible aspects. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. No doubt it is startling, when a young man leaves some quiet secluded country home, and launches on the waves of this troublesome world in some busy town, to hear doctrines and principles denied, or sneered at, which he never dreamed of anyone questioning when he lived at home. But surely this is no more than his old Bible might have taught him to expect. Is it not written there, "There shall come in the last days scoffers?" "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (2 Peter 3:3; Luke 18:8) Such a young man should say to himself calmly and quietly, "This unbelief is precisely what my father's Bible told me to expect. If I met with no unbelief, the old Book would not be true."

After all it is some comfort to remember that there is probably less of real, downright, reasoning unbelief than there appears to be, Thousands, we may be sure, do not in their heart of hearts believe all that they say with their lips. Many a sceptical saying is nothing more than a borrowed article, picked up and retailed by him who says it, because it sounds clever, while in reality it is not the language of his inner man. Sorrow, and sickness, and affliction, often bring out the strange fact that so-called sceptics are no sceptics at all, and that many talk scepticism merely from a desire to seem clever, and to win the temporary applause of clever men. That there is an immense amount of unbelief in the present day I make no question; but that much of it is mere show and pretence is to my mind as clear as noonday. No man, I think, can do pastoral work, and come to close quarters with souls, visit the sick, and attend the dying, without coming to that conclusion.

II. Let us now inquire why and wherefore unbelief is so wonderful. What is there in it that made even the Lord Jesus the Son of God marvel?

No doubt there was something peculiar and extraordinary in the unbelief of the Jews. That the children of Israel, brought up from their infancy in the knowledge of the law and the prophets, trained from their earliest years to look for the Messiah, and to expect a mighty “prophet like unto Moses,” taught to believe in the possibility of miracles, and familiar with the story of miracle-working men,-that they should reject Jesus of Nazareth, and not be moved by the mighty works which He did among them, all this was truly wonderful and surprising. Wonderful that they should have such privileges, and yet make such a bad use of them! Wonderful that the door of life should be open, and heaven so near, and they should refuse to enter in!

But, I suspect, the Holy Ghost would have us look deeper than this. He would have us know that if we sit down and calmly consider unbelief, we cannot avoid the conclusion that there is something singularly marvellous about it and never so much so as in these latter days of the world. Let me try to show what I mean.

(1) For one thing, unbelief is a spiritual disease peculiar to Adam's children. It is a habit of soul entirely confined to man. Angels in heaven above and fallen spirits in hell beneath, saints waiting for the resurrection in paradise, lost sinners waiting for the last judgment in that awful place where the worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched,-all these have one point in common, they all believe. The rich man in the parable, when he lifted up his eyes in torment, and asked for a drop of water to cool his tongue, and pleaded hard for his five brethren, had bid an eternal farewell to unbelief. “The very devils,” says St. James, “ believe and tremble.” (James 2:19) Hateful, and hating, and malicious, and murderous, and lying as Satan is called in Scripture, we read that his agents cried, “We know Thee who Thou art the Holy One of God.” “Art Thou come to torment us before the time” (Matthew 8:29) But man, living man, is the only intelligent creature who is unbelieving! I say “living man” advisedly. Alas! What a waking up remains for many the moment the last breath is drawn. There is no unbelief in the grave. Voltaire now knows whether there is a sin-hating God; and David Hume now knows whether there is an endless hell. The infant of days, by merely dying, acquires a knowledge which the subtlest philosophers, while on earth, profess their inability to attain. The dead Hottentot knows more than the living Socrates. Surely a habit of soul so absolutely and entirely confined to “living man,” may well be called marvellous.

(2) For another thing, unbelief is marvellous when you consider its arrogance and presumption. For, after all how little the wisest of men know; and none are more ready to confess it than themselves. How enormously ignorant the greater part of mankind are, if you come to examine the measure of their knowledge. The education of the vast majority of people is wretchedly meagre and superficial. Most of us cease learning at twenty-one, and then plunge into some profession in which we have little time for thought and reading, and are annually more absorbed in family cares and troubles, and add little to our stock of knowledge. Fifty or sixty years after this our part is played out, and we retire from the stage, rarely leaving the world a wiser world than it was when we were born! And does unbelief become a creature like this? Is it seemly for him to talk in a sceptical and sneering tone about the revelation which the Eternal God has been pleased to make of Himself, and the unseen future, in that marvellous Book the Bible? I appeal to common sense for a reply. “Honest doubt” is a fine thing to talk about, and men are fond of saying it is “better than

half the creeds.” But when a man tells you he is troubled with sceptical and unbelieving feeling about Christianity, while he has probably never studied a dozen pages of Butler, or Paley, or Chalmers, or McIlvaine, or Bishop Daniel Wilson, and never thought deeply about religion at all, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that one of the most curious things in much unbelief is its wonderful self-conceit.

(3) For another thing, unbelief is marvellous when you consider its unfairness and one-sidedness. Who has not known that some of the minor facts and miracles of the Bible are the ostensible reasons which many assign why they cannot receive the Book as true, and make it their rule of faith and practice. They point to the ark, and the passage of the Red Sea, and Balaam's ass, and Jonah in the whale's belly, and ask you sarcastically if you really believe such things to be credible and historically true. And all this time they refuse to look at three great facts which never can be denied, and which no higher criticism can possibly explain away.

(a) One of those facts is the historical Person Jesus Christ Himself. How He can have been what He was on earth, lived as He lived, taught as He taught, and made the mark He has certainly made on the world, if He was not very God, and One miraculously sent down from heaven, is a question which those who sneer at Balaam's ass find it convenient to evade.

(b) Another fact is the Bible itself. How this Book, with all its alleged difficulties, written by a few Jews in a corner of the earth, who wrote nothing else worth reading, can be the Book that it is, so immeasurably and incomparably superior to anything else penned by man, and hold the position it holds after 1900 years' use,-how all this can be, if the Book was not miraculously given by inspiration of God, is a knot which cannot be untied.

(c) The third and last fact is the effect which Christianity has had on mankind,-the amazing change which has taken place in the state of the world before Christianity, and since Christianity,-and the difference at this day between those parts of the globe where the Bible is read, and those where it is not known. Nothing can account for this but the Divine origin of Scriptural religion. No other explanation will stand.

Now these three great facts are coolly ignored by many professing unbelievers! They will talk by the hour about minor difficulties in the way of faith, while they refuse to touch the weighty, patent facts which I have just been naming. The difficulties of infidelity are a wide and interesting subject, which deserves more attention from the defenders of Revelation than it receives. But the unfair and unreasonable extent to which many nowadays concentrate their minds on small disputable points of revealed religion, while they refuse to look at the great standing evidences of God's truth, is to my mind one of the most marvellous features of modern unbelief

(4) Fourthly, and lastly, unbelief is marvellous when you consider how the vast majority of those who Profess it drop it, and give it up at last. Few of us perhaps have the least idea how seldom any man leaves the world an unbeliever. The near approach of death has a mighty effect on consciences, and brings into fearful relief the utter superficiality of much that is called scepticism. The very people who go through life sneering and scoffing at Christianity, and those who support it, continually break down in their own last hours, and are glad enough to send for the ministers of religion, and seek comfort in the old doctrine of the despised creeds. Some, with a mighty swing of the pendulum, go from one extreme to another, and, after living sceptics for years, go out of the

world in grovelling credulity, on humblest submission to the worst superstitions of the Church of Rome. Others who do not go so far, are willing to be read to, and prayed with, and receive the Lord's Supper, after neglecting every Christian ordinance and despising God's house for scores of years. Wretched indeed must systems be which prove so useless and comfortless in the hour when comfort is most wanted!

But the wonder of all wonders is, that these failures of unbelief are so notoriously and constantly occurring, and yet men will not see them, and the ranks of scepticism are perpetually filled by fresh recruits. If those who profess to deny Revelation generally died happy deaths, and left the world in great peace and joy, holding their opinions to the last, we might well expect them to have followers. But when, on the contrary, it is the rarest thing to see an unbeliever dying calmly in unbelief and giving no sign of discomfort, while the vast majority of unbelievers throw down their arms at last, and seek for the very religious consolation which they once affected to despise, it is impossible to avoid one broad conclusion. That conclusion is, that of all spiritual diseases by which fallen man is afflicted, there is none so truly marvellous and unreasonable as unbelief.

And now let me wind up this subject, with a few words of kindly advice to all my readers, and especially to the young. I am no longer young myself. It is thirty-five years since I first began to write on religious subjects. But even now I think I know the heart of a young man. I can remember the days when I tried hard to be an unbeliever, because religion crossed my path, and I did not like its holy requirement. I was delivered from that pit, I believe, by the grace of God leading me to a book which, of late years, has undeservedly fallen out of sight, I mean “Faber's Difficulties of Infidelity.” I read that book, and felt it could not be answered. But the remembrance of the struggle I went through in those days is still fresh in my mind, and I always have a deep feeling of sympathy, when I hear of the mental conflicts of young men.

Some of my readers, I dare say, are often troubled with sceptical doubts about the truth of Christianity. You are not professed unbelievers; God forbid that I should say this. But you see many things in the Bible which you cannot quite understand. You see not a few men of powerful and commanding intellect rejecting Christianity almost entirely. You hear many, slighting things said, and depreciatory remarks made cleverly and smartly about the facts and doctrines of the Bible, which you are unable to answer. All this puzzles you. You stand in doubt. Is it really worth while to pray in private, and read the Bible, and keep the Sunday holy, and attend the Lord's Table? Is it necessary? Questions such as these are the first steps in the downward road. Unless you take heed, they may land you in infidelity. Listen to me while I offer a few friendly counsels.

(a) For one thing, let me, entreat you to deal honestly with your soul about secret sins. Are you quite sure there is not some bad habit, or lust, or passion, which, almost insensibly to yourself, you would like to indulge, if it were not for some remaining religious scruples? Are you quite sure that your doubts do not arise from a desire to get rid of restraint? You would like, if you could, to do something the Bible forbids, and you are looking about for reasons for disregarding the Bible. Oh! if this is the case with any of you, awake to a sense of your danger! Break the chains which are gradually closing round you. Pluck out the right eye, if need be; but never be the servant of sin. I repeat that the secret love of some vicious indulgence is the real beginning of a vast amount of infidelity.

(b) In the next place, let me ask you to deal honestly with your soul about the use of means for acquiring religious knowledge Can you lay your hand on your heart and say that you really take pains to find out what is truth? Do not be ashamed to pray for light. Do not be ashamed of reading some leading book about the Creeds and Confession of your own Church, and, above all, do not be ashamed of regularly studying the text of your Bible. Thousands, I am persuaded, in this day, know nothing of the Holy Book which they affect to despise, and are utterly ignorant of the real nature of that Christianity which they pretend they cannot believe. Let not that be the case with you. That famous “honest doubt” which many say is better than half the creeds,” is a pretty thing to talk about. But I venture a strong suspicion that much of the scepticism of the present day, if sifted and analysed, would be found to spring from utter ignorance of the primary evidences of Christianity. For my part, I take my stand on these words of Solomon, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” I fear many professed unbelievers never took the course Solomon here recommends.- Proverbs 2:1-5.

(c) Last, but not least, let me entreat you to deal honestly with the religion of faith, and those who profess it. That there is such a religion in the midst of us, and that there are thousands who profess it are simple facts which nobody can deny. These thousands believe without doubting certain great truths of Christianity, and live and die in their belief. Let it be admitted that, in some points, these men of faith do not agree,-such as the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments. But after every deduction, there remains an immense amount of common theology, about which their faith is one. On such points as sin, and God, and Christ, and the atonement, and the authority of the Bible, and the importance of holiness, and the necessity of prayer, and self-denial, and the value of the soul, and the reality of heaven and hell, and judgment, and eternity,-on such points as these, I say, these men of faith are very much of one mind. Now, I ask is it honest to turn away from these men and their religion with contempt, because they have many weaknesses and infirmities? Is it fair to despise their religion, and wrap yourself up in unbelief, because of their controversies and strifes, their feeble literature and their party spirit? Mark the fruits of peace, and hope, and comfort, which they enjoy. Mark the solid work which, with all their faults, they do in the world, in lessening sorrow and sin, and increasing happiness, and improving their fellow-men. What fruits and work can unbelief show which will bear comparison with the fruits of faith? Look these facts in the face and deal honestly with them. Systems ought to be judged by their fruits and results. When the so-called systems of modern unbelief, and scepticism, and free thought, can point to as much good done in the world by their adherents as simple faith has done by the hand of its friends, we may give them some attention. But till they do that, I boldly say, that the simple, old-fashioned religion of faith has just claim on our respect, esteem, and obedience, and ought not to be despised.

After all, I must conclude with the humbling and sorrowful remark, that we who profess faith, and are never troubled with unbelief, are not altogether free from blame. Too often our faith is little better than a mere “otiose assent” to certain theological propositions, but not a living, burning, active principle which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. It is not the faith which made primitive Christians rejoice under Roman persecution, and made Luther stand up

boldly before the Diet of Worms, and made Ridley and Latimer “love not their lives to the death,” and made Wesley give up his position at Oxford to become the Evangelist of England. We are verily guilty in this matter. If there was more real faith on earth, I suspect there would be less unbelief. Scepticism, in many a case, would shrink, and dwindle, and melt away, if it saw faith more awake and alive, and active, and stirring. Let us, for Christ's sake, and the sake of souls, amend our ways in this matter. Let us pray daily, “Lord, increase our faith.” Let us live, and move, and have our being, and deal with men, as if we really believed every jot and tittle of our creeds, and as if a dying, risen, interceding, and coming Christ were continually before our eyes.

This, I am firmly convinced, is the surest way to oppose and diminish unbelief. Let the time past suffice us to have lived content with a cold tame assent to creeds. Let the time to come find us living, active believers. It was a solemn saying, which fell from the lips of an eminent minister of Christ on his death-bed,-”We are none of us more than half awake!” If believers were more thorough, and real, and whole-hearted in their belief, there would be far less unbelief in the world.

Chapter 78

Victory

[The substance of this paper was originally preached as a sermon in St. Mary's Church, Cambridge, when J. C. Ryle was select preacher, in 1879.] VICTORY

by

J. C. Ryle

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”- 1 John 5:4-5.

IT ought to be our practice, if we have any religion, to examine the state of our souls from time to time, and to find out whether we are “right in the sight of God” (Acts 8:21).

Are we true Christians? Are we likely to go to heaven when we die? Are we born again,-born of the Spirit,-born of God? These are searching questions, which imperatively demand an answer; and the text which heads this paper will help us to give that answer. If we are born of God, we shall have one great mark of character,-we shall “overcome the world.”

In opening up this subject, there are three points to which I propose to invite attention in this paper.

I. In the first place, let us consider the name by which St. John describes a true Christian. He calls him six times over, in his First Epistle, a man “born of God,” and once, “begotten of God.”

II. In the second place, let us consider the special mark which St. John supplies of a man born of God. He says that he “overcomes the world.”

III. In the last place, let us consider the secret of the true Christian's victory over the world. He says, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

Let me clear the way by expressing an earnest hope that no reader will turn away from the subject before us, under the idea that it is a controversial one. I doubt whether any doctrine of the Bible has suffered so much from impatient dislike of controversy as that which is contained in the phrase, “Born of God.” Yet that phrase contains a great foundation verity of Christianity, which can never be neglected without damage. Deep down, below strifes and contentions about the effect of baptism, and the meaning of liturgical services, there lies in those three words one of the primary rocks of the everlasting gospel, even the inward work of the Holy Ghost on the soul of man. The atoning work of Christ FOR us, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost WITHIN us, are the two corner-stones of saving religion. Surely a truth which the last writer of the New Testament brings forward no less than seven times in the five chapters of one Epistle, a truth which he binds up seven times with some of the distinguishing characteristics of the Christian man,-such a truth ought not to be disliked or timidly passed by. Surely it may be handled profitably without entering upon debatable ground. I shall attempt so to handle it in this paper.

I. First and foremost, I ask my readers to notice the name by which St. John describes a true Christian. Here, and in five other places, he speaks of him as one “born of God.”

Let us briefly analyze this rich and wonderful expression. The natural birth of any child of man, in the humblest rank of life, is an important event. It is the bringing into being of a creature who will outlive sun, moon, stars, and earth, and may one day develop a character which shall shake the world. How much more important must spiritual birth be! How much must lie beneath that figurative phrase, “Born of God!”

(a) To be “born of God” is to be the SUBJECT OF AN INWARD CHANGE of heart, so complete, that it is like passing into a new existence. It is the introduction into the human soul of a seed from heaven, a new principle, a Divine nature, a new will. Certainly it is no outward bodily alteration; but it is no less certain that it is an entire alteration of the inward man. It adds no new faculties to our minds; but it gives an entirely new bent and bias to our old ones. The tastes and opinions of one “born of God,” his views of sin, of the world, of the Bible, of God, and of Christ, are so thoroughly new, that he is to all intents and purposes what St. Paul calls “a new creature.” In fact, as the Church Catechism truly says, it is “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.”

(b) To be “born of God” is a change which is THE PECULIAR GIFT OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST to all His believing people. It is He who plants in their hearts the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father, and makes them members of His mystical body, and sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty (Romans 8:15). It is written: “He quickeneth whom He will.” “As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (John v. 21, 26). In short, as the first chapter of St. John teaches, so it will be as long as the world stands: “To as many as received Him He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”(John 1:12-13).

(c) To be “born of God” is a change which unquestionably is VERY MYSTERIOUS. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself tells us that in well-known words: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8). But we must all confess there are a thousand things in the natural world around us which we cannot explain, and yet believe. We cannot explain how our wills act daily on our members, and make them move, or rest, at our discretion; yet no one ever thinks of disputing the fact. The wisest philosopher cannot tell us the origin of physical life. What right, then, have we to complain because we cannot comprehend the beginning of spiritual life in him that is “born of God”?

(d) But to be “born of God “is a change which WILL ALWAYS BE SEEN AND FELT. I do not say that he who is the subject of it will invariably understand his own feelings. On the contrary, those feelings are often a cause of much anxiety, conflict, and inward strife. Nor do I say that a person “born of God” will always become at once an established Christian, a Christian in whose life and ways nothing weak and defective can be observed by others. But this I do say, the Holy Ghost never works in a person's soul without producing some perceptible results in character and conduct. The true grace of God is like light and fire: it cannot be hid; it is never idle; it never sleeps. I can find no such thing as “dormant” grace in Scripture. It is written, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”

(1 John 3:9).

(e) To crown all, to be born of God is a thing which is of ABSOLUTE NECESSITY to our salvation. Without it we can neither know God rightly and serve Him acceptably in the life that now is, nor dwell with God comfortably in the life that is to come. There are two things which are indispensably needful before any child of Adam can be saved. One is the forgiveness of his sins through the blood of Christ: the other is the renewal of his heart by the Spirit of Christ. Without the forgiveness we have no title to heaven: without the renewed heart we could not enjoy heaven. These two things are never separate. Every forgiven man is also a renewed man, and every renewed man is also a forgiven man. There are two standing maxims of the gospel which should never be forgotten: one is, “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; “the other is, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (John 3:36; Romans 8:9). Quaint, but most true, is the old saying: “Once born, die twice, and die for ever; twice born, never die, and live for ever.” Without a natural birth we should never have lived and moved on earth: without a spiritual birth we shall never live and dwell in heaven. It is written, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

And now, before I pass away from the name which St. John gives in this text to the true Christian, let us not forget to ask ourselves what we know experimentally about being “born of God.” Let us search and try our hearts with honest self-examination, and seek to find out whether there is any real work of the Holy Ghost in our inward man. Far be it from me to encourage the slightest approach to hypocrisy, self-conceit, and fanaticism. Nor do I want any one to look for that angelic perfection in himself on earth, which will only be found in heaven. All I say is, let us never be content with the “outward and visible signs” of Christianity, unless we also know something of inward and spiritual grace.” All I ask, and I think I have a right to ask, is, that we should often take this First Epistle of St. John in our hands, and try to find out by its light whether we are “born of God.”

One more thing let me add, which I dare not leave unsaid. Let us never be ashamed, in a day of abounding heresy, to contend earnestly for the Godhead and personality of the Holy Ghost, and the reality of His work on souls. Just as we clasp to our hearts the doctrine of the Trinity, and the proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as great foundation verities of the gospel, so let us grasp tightly the truth about God the Holy Ghost. Let us ever give Him in our religion the place and dignity which Scripture assigns to Him. Wherever in the providence of God we may be called to worship, let our first inquiry be, “Where is the Lamb?” and our second, “Where is the Holy Ghost?” We know there have been many martyrs for Jesus Christ and the true doctrine of justification. “A day may come,” said a remarkable saint, “when there will need to be martyrs for the Holy Ghost, and His work within the soul.” Happy is he who can say with heart, as well as lips, the familiar words of our venerable Church Catechism,-“I believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world: I believe in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind: I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.”

II. The second thing I will now ask my readers to notice in my text is, the special mark which St. John supplies of the man who is a true Christian. He says, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” In short, to use the words of that holy man Bishop Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man, the Apostle teaches that “the only certain proof of regeneration is victory.”

We are all apt to flatter ourselves, that if we are duly enrolled members of that great ecclesiastical corporation the Church of England, our souls cannot be in much danger. We secretly stifle the voice of conscience with the comfortable thought, “I am a Churchman; why should I be afraid?”

Yet common sense and a little reflection might remind us that there are no privileges without corresponding responsibilities. Before we repose in self-satisfied confidence on our Church membership, we shall do well to ask ourselves whether we bear in our characters the marks of living membership of Christ's mystical body. Do we know anything of renouncing the devil and all his works, and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts? And, to bring this matter to a point, as it is set before us in our text, do we know anything of “overcoming the world”?

Of the three great spiritual enemies of man, it is hard to say which does most harm to the soul. The last day alone will settle that point. But I venture boldly to say, that at no former period has “the world” been so dangerous, and so successful in injuring Christ's Church, as it is just now. Every age is said to have its own peculiar epidemic disease. I suspect that “worldliness” is the peculiar plague of Christendom in our own era. That same love of the world's good things and good opinion,-that same dread of the world's opposition and blame,-which proved so fatal to Judas Iscariot, and Demas, and many more in the beginning of the gospel,-each is just as powerful in the nineteenth century as it was in the first, and a hundred times more. Even in days of persecution, under heathen emperors, these spiritual enemies slew their thousands, and in days of ease, and luxury and free thought, like our own, they slay their tens of thousands. The subtle influence of the world, nowadays, seems to infect the very air we breathe. It creeps into families like an angel of light, and leads myriads captive, who never know that they are slaves. The enormous increase of English wealth, and consequent power of self-indulgence, and the immense growth of a passionate taste for recreations and amusements of all kinds; the startling rise and progress of a so-called liberality of opinion, which refuses to say anybody is wrong, whatever he does, and loudly asserts that, as in the days of the Judges, every one should think and do what is right in his own eyes, and never be checked,-all these strange phenomena of our age give the world an amazing additional power, and make it doubly needful for Christ's ministers to cry aloud, “Beware of the world!”

In the face of this aggravated danger, we must never forget that the word of the living God changes not. “Love not the world,”-“Be not conformed to this world,”-“The friendship of the world is enmity with God,” these mighty sayings of God's statute-book remain still unrepealed (1 John 2:15; Romans 12:2; James 4:4). The true Christian strives daily to obey them, and proves the vitality of his religion by his obedience. It is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that the man “born of God” will be a man who, more or less, resists and overcomes the world. Such a man does not “overcome” by retiring into a corner, and becoming a monk or a hermit, but by boldly meeting his foes and conquering them. He does not refuse to fill his place in society, and do his duty in that position to which God has called him. But though “in” the world, he is not “of” the world. He uses it, but does not abuse it. He knows when to say No, when to refuse compliance, when to halt, when to say, “Hitherto have I gone, but I go no further.” He is not wholly absorbed either in the business or the pleasures of life, as if they were the sum total of existence. Even in innocent things he keeps the rein on his tastes and inclinations, and does not let them run away with him. He does not live as if life was made up of recreation, or money getting, or politics, or scientific pursuits, and as if there were no life to come. Everywhere, and in every condition, in public and in private, in

business or in amusements, he carries himself like a “citizen of a better country,” and as one who is not entirely dependent on temporal things. Like the noble Roman ambassador before Pyrrhus, he is alike unmoved by the elephant or by the gold. You will neither bribe him, nor frighten him, nor allure him into neglecting his soul. This is one way in which the true Christian proves the reality of his Christianity. This is the way in which the man “born of God” overcomes the world.

I am fully aware that, at first sight, the things I have just said may appear “hard sayings.” The standard of true Christianity which I have just raised may seem extravagant, and extreme, and unattainable in this life. I grant most freely that to “overcome” in the fashion I have described needs a constant fight and struggle, and that all such fighting is naturally unpleasant to flesh and blood. It is disagreeable to find ourselves standing alone every now and then, and running counter to the opinions of all around us. We do not like to appear narrow-minded, and exclusive, and uncharitable, and ungenial, and ill-natured, and out of harmony with our fellows. We naturally love ease and popularity, and hate collisions in religion, and if we hear we cannot be true Christians without all this fighting and warring, we are tempted to say to ourselves, “I will give it up in despair.” I speak from bitter experience. I have known and felt all this myself.

To all who are tempted in this way,-and none, I believe, are so much tempted as the young,-to all who are disposed to shrink back from any effort to overcome the world, as a thing impossible,-to all such I offer a few words of friendly exhortation. Before you turn your back on the enemy, and openly confess that he is too strong for you,-before you bow down to the strong man, and let him place his foot on your neck, let me put you in remembrance of some things which, perhaps, you are forgetting.

Is not the world, then, one of the three great foes which you were solemnly bound at baptism to resist? Was it for nothing that these words were read, “We sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, THE WORLD, and the devil, and to continue Christ's soldier and servant unto his life's end”? And is it really come to this, that you mean to renounce your obligations, and retire from your Master's service, to desert your colours, to slink away to the rear, and refuse to fight?

Again, is it not true that myriads of men and women, no stronger than yourself, have fought this battle with the world, and won it? Think of the mighty hosts of Christian soldiers who have walked in the narrow way in the last eighteen centuries, and proved more than conquerors. The same Divine Captain, the same armour, the same helps and aids by which they overcame, are ready for you. Surely if they got the victory, you may hope to do the same.

Again, is it not true that this fight with the world is a thing of absolute necessity? Does not our Master say, “Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple”? (Luke 14:27). “I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). Here, at any rate, we cannot remain neutral, and sit still. Such a line of conduct may be possible in the strife of nations, but it is utterly impossible in that conflict which concerns the soul. The boasted policy of non-interference, the “masterly inactivity” which pleases so many statesmen, the plan of keeping quiet and letting things alone,-all this will never do in the Christian warfare. To be at peace with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is to be at enmity with God, and in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. We have no choice or option. The promises to the Seven Churches in Revelation are

only “to him that overcometh.” We must fight or be lost. We must conquer or die eternally. We must put on the whole armour of God. “He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one” (Ephesians 6:11; Luke 22:36).

Surely, in the face of such considerations as these, I may well charge and entreat all who are inclined to make peace with the world, and not resist it, to awake to a sense of their danger. Awake and cast aside the chains which indolence or love of popularity are gradually weaving round you. Awake before it is too late,-before repeated worldly acts have formed habits, and habits have crystallized into character, and you have become a helpless slave. When men on every side are volunteering for war, and ready to go forth to battle for a corruptible crown, stand up and resolve to do it for one that is incorruptible. The world is not so strong an enemy as you think, if you will only meet it boldly, and use the right weapons. The fancied difficulties will vanish, or melt away like snow, as you approach them. The lions you now dread will prove chained. Hundreds could tell you that they served the world for years, and found at last that its rewards were hollow and unreal, and its so-called good things could neither satisfy nor save. Cardinal Wolsey's dying words are only the language of ten thousand hearts at this minute,-

“Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:

I feel my heart is opened.

Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal

I serv'd my king, He would not, in mine age,

Have left me naked to mine enemies.” But who, on the other hand, ever fought God's battle manfully against the world and failed to find a rich reward? No doubt the experience of Christian pilgrims is very various. Not all have “an abundant entrance” into the kingdom, and some are “saved so as by fire” (2 Peter 1:11; 1 Corinthians 3:15). But none, I am persuaded, have such joy and peace in believing, and travel to the celestial city with such light hearts, as those who come out boldly, and overcome the love and fear of the world. Such men the King of kings delights to honour while they live; and when they die, their testimony is that of old Bunyan's hero, Valiant, “I am going to my Father's house; and though with great difficulty I have got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the troubles I have been at to arrive where I am.”

III. The third and last thing which I shall ask you to notice in this text is, the secret of the true Christian's victory over the world. St. John reveals that secret to us twice over, as if he would emphasize his meaning, and make it unmistakable: “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that BELIEVETH that Jesus is the Son of God?”

Simplicity is a distinguishing characteristic of many of God's handiworks. “How beautifully simple!” has often been the philosopher's cry, on finding out some great secret of nature. Simplicity is the striking feature of the principle by which the man “born of God” overcomes the world. Perhaps he hardly understands it himself. But he is what he is, and does what he does, acts as he acts, behaves as he behaves, for one simple reason,-he BELIEVES. He realizes the existence of unseen objects, compared to which the frowns or smiles, the favour or blame of the world, are trifles light as air. God, and heaven, and judgment, and eternity, are not “words and names” with

him, but vast and substantial realities; and the faith of them makes everything else look shadowy and unreal. But, towering far above all other objects, he sees by faith an unseen Saviour, who loved him, gave Himself for him, paid his debt to God with His own precious blood, went to the grave for him, rose again, and appears in heaven for him as his Advocate with the Father. SEEING HIM, he feels constrained to love Him first and foremost, to set his chief affection on things above, not on things on the earth, and to live not for himself, but for Him who died for him. SEEING HIM, he fears not to face the world's displeasure, and fights on with a firm confidence that he will be “more than conqueror.” In short, it is the expulsive power of a new principle, a living faith in an unseen God and an unseen Jesus, that minimizes the difficulties of a true Christian, drives away the fear of man, and overcomes the world.

This is the principle that made the Apostles what they were after the day of Pentecost. When Peter and John stood before the Council, and spoke in such fashion that all men marvelled at their boldness, their vivid faith saw One higher than Annas and Caiaphas and their companions, who would never forsake them. When Saul, converted and renewed, gave up all his brilliant prospects among his own nation, to become a preacher of the gospel he had once despised, he saw far away, by faith, One that was invisible, who could give him a hundredfold more in this present life, and in the world to come life everlasting. These all overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle which made the primitive Christians hold fast their religion even to death, unshaken by the fiercest persecution of heathen emperors. They were often unlearned and ignorant men, and saw many things through a glass darkly. But their so-called “obstinacy” astonished even philosophers like Pliny. For centuries there were never wanting men like Polycarp and Ignatius, who were ready to die rather than to deny Christ. Fines, and prisons, and torture, and fire, and sword failed to crush the spirit of the noble army of martyrs. The whole power of imperial Rome, with her legions, proved unable to stamp out the religion which began with a few fishermen and publicans in Palestine. They overcame by FAITH.

This is the principle that made our own Reformers in the sixteenth century endure hardships even unto death, rather than withdraw their protest against the Church of Rome. Many of them, no doubt, like Rogers, and Philpot, and Bradford, might have enjoyed rich preferments and died quietly in their beds, if they would only have recanted. But they chose rather to suffer affliction, and strong in faith, died at the stake. This was the principle that made the rank and file of our English martyrs in the same age-labourers, artisans, and apprentices-yield their bodies to be burned. Poor and uneducated as they were, they were rich in faith; and if they could not speak for Christ, they could die for Him. These all overcame by BELIEVING.

But time would fail me if I brought forward all the evidence that might be adduced on this subject. Let us look at our own age. Let us consider the men who have made the greatest mark on the world for Christ's cause in the last hundred years. Let us remember how clergymen like Whitefield, and Wesley, and Romaine, and Venn stood alone in their day and generation, and revived English religion, in the face of opposition, slander, ridicule, and real persecution from nine-tenths of the professing Christians in our land. Let us remember how men like William Wilberforce, and Havelock, and Henry Lawrence, and Hedley Vicars, and George Moore, the Christian merchant, have witnessed for Christ in the most difficult positions, and displayed Christ's banner even in the House of Commons, in the camp, at the regimental mess table, or in the counting-house in the

city. Let us remember how these noble servants of God were neither frightened nor laughed out of their religion, and won the respect even of their adversaries. These all had one principle. “Give me,” said that strange dictator who rode rough-shod over England's Church and Crown in the seventeenth century, “Give me men that have a principle.” These Christian soldiers of our own day had a principle, and that ruling principle was faith in an unseen God and Saviour. By this faith they lived, and walked, and fought the good fight, and overcame.

Does any one who reads this paper desire to live the life of a true Christian, and overcome the world? Let him begin by seeking to have the principle of victory within. Without this, all outward show of spirituality is utterly worthless. There is many a worldly heart under a monk's cowl. Faith, inward faith, is the one thing needful. Let him begin by praying for FAITH. It is the gift of God, and a gift which those who ask shall never ask in vain. The fountain of faith is not yet dry. The mine is not exhausted. He who is called the “Author of faith “is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and waits to be entreated (Hebrews 12:2). Without faith you will never war a good warfare, never set down your foot firmly, never make progress on the ice of this slippery world. You must believe if you would do. If men do nothing in religion, and sit still like uninterested spectators of a show, it is simply because they do not believe. Faith is the first step towards heaven.

Would any one who reads this paper fight the Christian battle with constantly increasing success and prosperity? Then let him pray daily for a continual growth of faith. Let him abide in Christ, get closer to Christ, tighten his hold on Christ every day that he lives. Let him never forget the prayer of the disciples, “Lord, increase our faith.” Let him watch jealously over his faith, and never let its fire burn low. According to the degree of his faith will be the measure of his peace, his strength, and his victory over the world.

(a) And now let us leave the whole subject with the solemn self-inquiry, “What do we know of that great test of religion which this text supplies? What do we know of overcoming the world? Where are we? What are we doing? Whose are we, and whom do we serve? Are we overcoming or being overcome?” Alas, it is a sorrowful fact, that many know not whether they are Christ's freemen or the world's slaves! The fetters of the world are often invisible. We are dragged downward insensibly, and are like one who sleeps in a boat, and knows not that he is drifting, gently drifting, towards the falls. There is no slavery so bad as that which is unfelt. There are no chains so really heavy as those which are unseen. Wise is that petition in our matchless Litany: “From all the deceits of the world, good Lord, deliver us.”

I press this inquiry in all affection on my younger readers. You are just at that generous and unsuspecting age when the world seems least dangerous and most inviting, and it stands to reason you are most likely to be ensnared and overcome. Experience alone can make you see the enemy in his true colours. When you have as many grey hairs on your heads as I have, you will place a very different estimate on the good things, or the praise or the hatred of this world. But, even now, remember my caution: “If you love your souls, hold the world at arm's length. Beware of the world.”

(b) Reader, you and I meet over this paper for once in our lives, and are parting in all probability to meet no more. You are perhaps launching forth on the waves of this troublesome world. My heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you may have a prosperous voyage, and be found at length in the safe haven of eternal life. But, oh, take heed that you are well equipped for the stormy

waters you have to cross, and see that you have a compass to steer by, that you can depend on, and a pilot who will not fail! Beware of making shipwreck by conformity to the world. Alas, how many put to sea in gallant trim, with colours flying, and brilliant prospects, and are lost at last with all on board! They seem at first to begin with Moses, and Daniel, and the saints in Nero's household; but they end at last with Balaam, and Demas, and Lot's wife! Oh, remember the pilot and the compass! No compass like the Bible! No pilot like Christ!

Take the advice I give you, as a friend, this day. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come and dwell in your heart by faith, and to “deliver you from this present evil world” (Galatians 1:4). Ask Him to pour out His promised Spirit on you, and to make you willing to bear His easy yoke without further delay, and to resist the world. Strive, in the strength of Christ, to get the victory over the world, whatever it may cost you. Be ashamed of being a slave, however gilded the chains may be. Be ashamed of the mark of the collar. Resolve to play the man and be free. Liberty is the greatest of blessings, and deserves the greatest struggles. Well said the Jewish rabbis in ancient days, “If the sea were ink, and the earth parchment, it would never serve to describe the praises of liberty.” For freedom's sake, Greeks, and Romans, and Germans, and Poles, and Swiss, and Scotchmen, and Englishmen, have often cheerfully fought to the bitter end, and laid down their lives. Surely, if men have made such sacrifices for the freedom of their bodies, it is a disgrace to professing Christians if they will not fight for the liberty of their souls. This day, I repeat, resolve in the strength of Christ, that you will fight the good fight against the world; and not only fight, but overcome. “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed “(John 8:36).

(c) Finally, let us all remember that the Christian soldier's best time is yet to come. Here, in this world, we are often “sore let and hindered” in our warfare. There are many hard things to be done and borne. There are wounds and bruises; there are watchings and fatigues; there are reverses and disappointments. But the end of all things is at hand. For those who “overcome” there will be a conqueror's crown.

In the warfare of this world, the muster on the morning after a victory is often a sorrowful sight. I pity the man who could look at Miss Thompson's famous picture of The Roll-call without deep emotion. Even when peace is proclaimed, the return of victorious regiments is an occasion of very mingled feelings. That man must have had a cold heart who could see the Guards march back into London after the Crimean war without a sigh or a tear.

Thanks be to God, the review day of Christ's victorious army will be a very different thing. There will be none missing in that day. It will be a meeting without regret. It will be “a morning without clouds” and tears. It will make rich amends for all we have suffered in resisting and overcoming the world.

He who saw our gracious Queen distributing the Victoria Cross at the Horse Guards during the Russian war might well be stirred and moved at the sight. But he who saw her come down from her seat to meet a wounded officer, who could not walk, and, with her own royal hands, pin his decoration on his breast, will probably remember it as long as he lives.

But, after all, it was nothing compared to the transactions of that great day, when the Captain of our salvation and His victorious soldiers shall at length meet face to face. What tongue can tell the happiness of that time when we shall lay aside our armour, and “say to the sword, Rest, and be

still!” What mind can conceive the blessedness of that hour when we shall see the King in His beauty, and hear these words, “Well done, good and faithful servant and soldier, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord”? For that glorious day let us wait patiently, for it cannot be far off. In the hope of it let us work, and watch, and pray, and fight on, and resist the world. And let us never forget our Captain's words “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

We must be holy

J. C. Ryle Tracts

Some of these rare, short "Helmingham Series" tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you these three exactly word for word as they were first published about the middle of the last century, while J. C. Ryle was a Rector at Helmingham, Suffolk.

WE MUST BE HOLY.

READER,

We must he holy on earth before we die, if we desire to go to heaven after death. If we hope to dwell with God for ever in the life to come, we must endeavour to be like Him in the life that now is. We must not only admire holiness, and wish for holiness: we must be holy.

Holiness cannot justify and save us: holiness cannot cover our iniquities, make satisfaction for transgressions, pay our debts to God. Our best works are no better than filthy rags, when tried by the light of God's law. The righteousness which Jesus Christ brought in must be our only confidence,-the blood of atonement our only hope. All this is perfectly true, and yet we must be holy.

We must be holy, because God in the Bible plainly commands it. "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

We must be holy, because this is one great end for which Christ came into the world. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

We must be holy, because this is the only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in Christ. "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:17, James 2:26).

We must be holy, because this is the only proof that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. What can be more plain than our Lord's own words? "If ye love Me, keep my commandments." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." (John 14:15, John 14:21).

We must be holy, because this is the only sound evidence that we are God's children. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (Romans 8:14; 1 John 3:10).

Lastly, we must be holy, because without holiness on earth we should never be prepared and meet for heaven. It is written of the heavenly glory, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything

that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Revelation 21:27). St. Paul says expressly, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Ah, reader, the last text I have just quoted is very solemn. It ought to make you think. It was written by the hand of inspired man: it is not my private fancy. Its words are the words of the Bible: not of my own invention. God has said it, and God will stand to it: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

What tremendous words these are! What thoughts come across my mind as I write them down! I look at the world, and see the greater part of it lying in wickedness; I look at professing Christians, and see the vast majority having nothing of Christianity but the name; I turn to the Bible, and I hear the Spirit saying, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Surely it is a text that ought to make you consider your ways, and search your hearts. Surely it should raise within you solemn thoughts, and send you to prayer.

You may try to put me off by saying you feel much, and think much about these things,-far more than many suppose. I answer, This is not the point. The poor lost souls in hell do as much as this. The great question is, not what you think and what you feel, but what you DO. Are you holy?

You may say, It was never meant that all Christians should be holy, and that holiness such as I have described is only for great saints, and people of uncommon gifts. I answer, I cannot see this in Scripture. I read that "every man who hath hope in Christ purifieth himself" (1 John 3:3). "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

You may say, It is impossible to be so holy and to do our duty in this life at the same time: the thing cannot be done. I answer, You are mistaken: it can be done. With God on your side, nothing is impossible. It has been done by many: Moses, and Obadiah, and Daniel, and the servants of Nero's household, are all examples that go to prove it.

You may say, If you were so holy, you would be unlike other people. I answer, I know it well: it is just what I want you to be. Christ's true servants always were unlike the world around them,-a separate nation, a peculiar people; and you must be so too, if you would be saved.

You may say, At this rate very few will be saved. I answer, I know it: Jesus said so eighteen hundred years ago. Few will be saved, because few will take the trouble to seek salvation. Men will not deny themselves the pleasures of sin and their own way for a season; for this they turn their backs on an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. "Ye will not come to Me," says Jesus, "that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

You may say, These are hard sayings: the way is very narrow. I answer, I know it: Jesus said so eighteen hundred years ago. He always said that men must take up the cross daily, that they must be ready to cut off hand or foot, if they would be His disciples. It is in religion as it is in other things, "There are no gains without pains." That which costs nothing is worth nothing.

Reader, whatever you may think fit to say, you must be holy if you would see the Lord. Where is your Christianity if you are not? Show it to me without holiness, if you can. You must not merely have a Christian name and Christian knowledge, you must have a Christian character also: you must be a saint on earth, if ever you mean to be a saint in heaven. God has said it, and He will not

go back,-"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "The Pope's calendar," says Jenken, "only makes saints of the dead, but Scripture requires sanctity in the living." "Let not men deceive themselves," says Owen, "sanctification is a qualification indispensably necessary-unto those who will be under the conduct of the Lord Jesus unto salvation: He leads none to heaven but whom He sanctifies on the earth. This living Head will not admit of dead members."

Surely you will not wonder that Scripture says, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). Surely it is clear as noon-day that many of you need a complete change, -new hearts, new natures,-if ever you are to be saved. Old things must pass away, you must become new creatures. Without holiness, no man, be he who he may,-no man shall see the Lord.

Reader, consider well what I have said. Do you feel any desire to be holy? Does your conscience whisper, "I am not holy yet, but I should like to become so"? Listen to the advice I am going to give you. The Lord grant you may take it and act upon it!

Would you be holy? Would you become a new creature? Then begin with Christ. You will do just nothing till you feel your sin and weakness, and flee to Him: He is the beginning of all holiness. He is not wisdom and righteousness only to His people, but sanctification also. Men sometimes try to make themselves holy first of all, and sad work they make of it: they toil, and labour, and turn over many new leaves, and make many changes, and yet, like the woman with the issue of blood before she came to Christ, they feel nothing bettered, but rather worse. They run in vain, and labour in vain: and little wonder, for they are beginning at the wrong end. They are building up a wall of sand: their work runs down as fast as they throw it up. They are baling water out of a leaky vessel; the leak gains on them; not they on the leak. Other foundation of holiness can no man lay than that which Paul laid, even Christ Jesus. Without Christ we can do nothing. It is a strong but true saying of Traill's, "Wisdom out of Christ is damning folly; righteousness out of Christ is guilt and condemnation; sanctification out of Christ is filth and sin; redemption out of Christ is bondage and slavery."

Would you be holy: Would you be partakers of the Divine nature? Then go to Christ. Wait for nothing: wait for nobody: linger not. Think not to make you yourself ready: go, and say to Him, in the words of that beautiful hymn,-

"Nothing in my hand I bring,

Simply to Thy cross I cling;

Naked, flee to Thee for dress;

Helpless, look to Thee for grace."

There is not a brick nor a stone laid in the work of our sanctification till we go to Christ. Holiness is His special gift to His believing people; holiness is the work He carries on in their hearts, by the Spirit whom He puts within them. He is appointed a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance as well as remission of sins: to as many as receive Him He gives power to become sons of God. Holiness comes not of blood,-parents cannot give it to their children; nor yet of the will of the flesh,-man cannot produce it in himself; nor yet of the will of man, -ministers cannot give it you by baptism. Holiness comes from Christ. It is the result of vital union with Him: it is the fruit of being a living branch of the true vine. Go then to Christ, and say, "Lord, not only save me from the guilt of

sin, but send the Spirit, whom Thou didst promise, and save me from its power. Make me holy. Teach me to do Thy will."

Would you continue holy, when you have once been made so? Then abide in Christ. He says Himself, "Abide in Me, and I in you. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:4-5).

He is the Physician to whom You must daily go, if you would keep well; He is the Manna which you must daily eat, and the Rock of which you must daily drink. His arm is the arm on which you must daily lean, as you come up out of the wilderness of this world. You must not only be rooted, you must also be built up in Him.

Reader, may you and I know these things by experience, and not by hearsay only! May we all feel the importance of holiness, far more than we have ever done yet! May our years he holy years with our souls, and then I know they will be happy ones! But this I say once more, "We must be holy."

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Chapter 80

What Canst thou Know?

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are “pure gold.” Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond’s Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

“WHAT CANST THOU KNOW?”

“Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know ?

— Job 11:7-8.

THESE striking words came from the lips of Zophar the Naamathite, one of the three friends who came to comfort the patriarch Job in his affliction. Those worthy men, no doubt, meant well; and their sympathy is deserving of all praise in a cold and unfeeling world. But they completely misunderstood the case before them, and so proved “physicians of no value.” They only irritated the poor sufferer, and added to his troubles. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that they said many wise and excellent things, and of these the passage which heads this paper is one.

The verses before us contain four weighty questions. Two of them we certainly cannot answer, but two we can. A little brief discussion of the whole subject to which the text points appears suitable to the times in which we live.

Our lot is cast in a day when a wave of unbelief is passing over the world, like a wave of fever, cholera, diphtheria, or plague. It is vain to deny it. Every intelligent observer of the times knows that it is so. I do not say for a moment that the advance of science necessarily makes men unbelievers. Nothing is further from my thoughts. I welcomed the visit of the British Association to Southport in the diocese of Liverpool, Lancashire, and I am thankful for every addition to our knowledge which its leaders annually announce. I doubt whether formal, organized, systematic, reasoning infidelity is so common as many suppose. But I do say that there is in the air of these times a disposition to question everything in revealed religion, and to suspect that science and revelation cannot be reconciled. The faith of many church-goers and professing Christians seems cold, and languid, and torpid. They are continually harping on petty modern objections to Scripture.—“Are such and such things in the Bible really quite true? Do not some clever and learned people say we should not believe them?” This is the kind of mischievous talk which is often heard in many quarters. To supply some simple antidotes to this sceptical spirit, to show the unreasonableness of it, to nerve and invigorate the Christian, to make him see the strength of his position, to help him to get rid of a doubting spirit, and to enable him to grasp his old creed more tightly than ever—these are the objects I have in view in this paper.

I. First, and foremost, a wise Christian ought always to admit that there are many things in Bible religion which of necessity we cannot fully understand. The Book of Revelation, the Book of God, contains much which, like God Himself, we cannot “find out to perfection.”

The catalogue of these hard things is not a small one, and I shall only supply a few leading instances. I will mention the Mosaic account of creation,—the fall and entrance of sin into the world,—the doctrine of the Trinity,—the incarnation of Christ,—the atonement for sin made by Christ’s death,—the personality and work of the Holy Spirit,—the inspiration of Scripture,—the reality of miracles,—the use and efficacy of prayer,—the precise nature of the future state,—the resurrection of the body after death—each and all of these subjects, I say, contains much that we cannot fully explain, because it is above the reach of our faculties. No Christian of common sense, I believe, would pretend to deny it. The humblest child could ask questions about each of them which the wisest theologian in Christendom could never answer.

But what of it? Does it follow that we care to believe nothing about a subject, and to reject it altogether, because we do not understand everything about it? Is this fair and reasonable? Is this the way that we deal with our children when we require them to begin the study of mathematics, or any other branch of education? Do we allow our boys to say, “I will learn nothing till I understand everything?” Do we not require them to take many things on trust, and to begin by simply believing? “I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.”

The plain truth is that to refuse to believe Christian doctrines because they are above our reason, and we cannot fully understand them, is only one among many proofs of man’s natural pride and arrogance. We are all, at our best, poor, weak, defective creatures. Our power of grasping any subject, and seeing all round it, is extremely small. Our education rarely goes on for more than twenty years, and is often very shallow and superficial. After twenty-five most of us add little to our knowledge. We plunge into some profession in which we have little time for thought or reading, and are absorbed and distracted by the business and cares of life. By the time we are seventy, our memories and intellects begin to fail, and in a few years we are carried to our graves and see corruption. And is it likely, or probable, or reasonable to suppose that such a creature as this can ever understand perfectly the Eternal and Almighty God, or the communications that God has made to man? Is it not rather certain that there will be many things about God and revelation that he cannot, from his very nature, comprehend. I will not insult my readers by asking for a reply. I assert, without hesitation, that no Christian ever need be ashamed of admitting that there are many things in revealed religion which he does not fully understand, and does not pretend to explain. Yet he believes them fully, and lives in this belief.

After all, when a Christian meets one of those few men of science who profess to believe nothing in religion which he cannot fully understand, he would do well to ask him a simple question. Has he ever investigated the facts and doctrines of the Bible, which he says are incredible, with the same careful pains which he exercises when he uses his microscope, his telescope, his spectroscope, his dissecting knife, or his chemical apparatus? I doubt it extremely. I venture to believe that if some scientific infidels would examine the Book of God with the same reverent analysis with which they daily examine the Book of Nature, they would find that the things “hard to be understood” are not so many and inscrutable as they now suppose, and that the things plain and easy are a wide field which richly repays cultivation. That we “cannot find out the Almighty to

perfection" let us always admit. But let us never admit that we can find out nothing, and are justified in neglecting Him.

II. The second point which I wish to bring forward is this. A wise Christian ought always to remember that there are countless things in the material world around us which we do not fully understand. There are deep things in the Book of Nature as well as in the Bible. Its pages contain hard knots and mysteries as well as the pages of the Book of God. In short, science contains its hard things as well as faith.

I am quite sure that the wisest and most learned men of science would be the most ready to admit the truth of what I have just said. If anything has specially characterized them in every age, it has been their deep humility. The more they have known the more they have confessed the limited extent of their knowledge. The memorable language which Sir Isaac Newton is said to have used towards the end of his life ought never to be forgotten:—"I have been nothing more than a little child who has picked up a few shells and pebbles on the shore of the ocean of truth."

How little, to begin with, do we know about the heaven over our heads, or the earth under our feet! The sun, the moon, the planets, the fixed stars, the comets, can all supply deep questions which the wisest astronomers cannot answer. Yet, for all this, who but a fool would despise the work of Newton, and Halley, and Herschel, and Arago, and Airey? The age of the globe on which we live, the date and cause of the various convulsions it has gone through, long before man was created, the duration of the periods between each change of climate and temperature, what wise geologists will dare to speak positively of such subjects as these? They may speculate, and guess, and propound theories. But how often their conclusions have been overthrown! Yet who would dare to say that Buckland, and Sedgwick, and Phillips, and Lyell, and Murchison, and Owen had written nothing worth notice?

How little can we account for the action of some deadly poisons, and especially in the case of snake bites, and hydrophobia! The virus of a mad dog's bite will often remain dormant in the system for months, and then become active, and defy all medical treatment. But no one can explain what that virus is. The deaths caused by snake-bites in India are reported to be about 20,000 a year. Yet to this day the precise nature of the cobra's venom has baffled all chemical analysis, and once received into the human body, the most skilful doctors find they cannot prevent that venom causing death. But what man in his senses would conclude that chemistry and medicine are unworthy of respect, and that Liebig, and Fresenius, or Hervey, and Hunter, and Jenner, and Watson, have conferred no benefit on the world?

How little can men of science account for all the phenomena of light, heat, electricity, magnetism, and chemical action! How many problems lie under the words, "matter, force, energy," which no one has solved! Far be it from me to disparage the extra ordinary advances which physical science has made in this generation. But I am quite certain that its leading students, from Faraday downwards, will confess that there are many things which they cannot explain.

How little do we know about earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and epidemics ! They come suddenly, like the recent awful catastrophes at Ischia and Java, or the historic events at Pompeii and Lisbon. They cause immense destruction of life and property. But why they come when they do come, and what laws regulate them, so that the inhabitants of a country may be

prepared for them, even in this enlightened nineteenth century, we are totally and entirely ignorant. We can only lay our hands on our mouths and be still.1

How little, to bring matters to a familiar point, how less than little, or nothing in reality, can we explain the connection between our minds and bodies. Who can tell me why a sense of shame makes the little child's face turn red, or a sense of fear makes the same face turn pale? Who can tell me how my will affects my members, and what it is that make. me walk, or move, or lift my hand whenever I wish? Nobody ever did explain it, and nobody ever will. It is one of the many things that baffle all inquiry.

Now what shall we say to the facts I have adduced? That they are facts I am sure no man of common-sense will deny. If I were to say to a man of science, "I do not believe any of your conclusions, because there are many hard things in the Book of Nature which you cannot explain," I should be acting very foolishly. I shall do nothing of the kind. I have not the slightest sympathy with those weak-kneed Christians, who seem to think that science and religion can never harmonize, and that they must always scowl and look askance at one another, like two quarrelsome dogs. On the contrary, I shall always hail the annual discoveries of physical science with a hearty welcome. For the continual progress of its students by experiment and observation, and for their annual accumulation of facts, I am deeply thankful. I am not the least afraid that science will ever finally contradict Christian theology (though it may appear to do so for a season), if students of science will only be logical. I only fear that, in their zeal, they are sometimes apt to forget that it is most illogical to draw a general conclusion from a particular premise,—to build houses of theories without foundations. I am firmly convinced that the words of God's mouth, and the works of God's hands, will never be found really to contradict one another. When they appear to do so, I am content to wait. Time will untie the knot.

I do not forget that some young philosophers are fond of talking of the "Laws of Nature," and of saying that they cannot reconcile them with the Bible. They tell us that these "laws" are unchangeable, and that the miracles and supernatural parts of Revelation, which seem to contradict the laws of nature, are therefore incredible. But these philosophers would do well to remember that it is not at all certain that we know all the Laws of Nature, and that higher, and deeper Laws may not yet be discovered. At any rate they must own that some of the existing "Laws" were not known and received three or four centuries ago. But surely, if that is the case, we may fairly assume that many other "Laws" may yet be found out, and that many problems which we cannot solve now will be solved hereafter.2

Two things, however, I must say, before leaving this part of my paper.

(a) On the one side, I appeal to those few men of science who turn away from Christianity, and refuse to believe, because of the hard things which its creed requires them to believe. I ask them whether this is just and fair. We do not turn away from physical science because it contains many things which they themselves admit they cannot explain. On the contrary, we bid them God speed, and wish success to their researches and investigations. But in return we ask them to deal honestly with Christianity. We admit that it contains difficulties, like physical science; but we cannot allow that this is any reason why it should be rejected altogether.

(b) On the other side, I appeal to those timid Christians whose faith is shaken by the attacks which men of science sometimes make on their creed, and are ready to throw down their arms and run away. I ask them whether this is not weak, and cowardly, and foolish? I bid them remember that the difficulties of the sceptical man of science are just as great as those of the Christian. I entreat them to stand firm and not be afraid. Let us frankly admit that there are deep things and "hard to be understood" in our creed. But let us steadily maintain that this is no proof that it is not true and not worthy of all acceptation.

III. The third and last point to which I shall ask the attention of my readers is this. While it is true that we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection, it is not true to say that we can find out nothing at all in religion. On the contrary, we know many things which are enough to make unbelief and agnosticism inexcusable.

What, then, do we know? Let me mention a few facts which no intelligent person can pretend to deny.

(a) We find ourselves living in a world full of sorrow, pain, strife, and wickedness, which no advance of science, learning, or civilization, is able to prevent. We see around us daily proof that we are all, one after another, going out of this world to the grave. Humbling as the thought is, we are all dying daily, and these bodies, which we take such pains to feed, and clothe, and comfort, must see corruption. It is the same all over the globe. Death comes to all men and women alike, of every name, and nation, and people, and tongue; and neither rank, nor riches, nor intellect, can grant exemption. Dust we are, and to dust we return. At any rate we know this.

(b) We find, moreover, that all over the world the vast majority of mankind have a settled, rooted, in ward feeling, that this life is not all, that there is a future state, and an existence beyond the grave. The absence of this feeling is the exception. There it is. Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Hindustan, China, Mexico, and the darkest heathen tribes, as a general rule, are agreed on this point, however strange and diverse their ideas of God, and religion, and the soul. Will any one tell me that we do not know this?

(c) We find, moreover, that the only thing which has ever enabled men and women to look forward to the future without fear, and has given them peace in life, and hope in death, is that religion which Jesus Christ brought into the world nearly nineteen hundred years ago, and of which Christ Himself is the sun, and centre, and root, and foundation. Christ, I say emphatically,—Christ and His Divinity,—Christ and His atoning death,—Christ and His resurrection,—Christ and His life in heaven. Yes ! that very religion of Christ which some tell us they cannot receive because of the mysteries and difficulties of its creed, has made the deepest moral mark on mankind that has been made since man was created. Nothing called religion, whether Classic heathenism, or Buddhism, or Confucianism, or Mahometanism, has ever produced effects on consciences and conduct, which can bear comparison for a moment with the effects produced by Christianity. The changes which have taken place in the state of the world before. Christ and the world after Christ, and the difference at this day between those parts of the globe where the Bible is read, and those where it is not known, are great patent facts which have never been explained away. The holiest lives and the happiest deaths which have been seen on the earth for eighteen centuries have been the result of the supernatural theology of the Bible, of faith in and of obedience to Christ, and the story of the cross. I challenge any one to deny this.

(d) We find, above all, that the Historic Founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ Himself, is a great fact which has been before the world for eighteen centuries, and has completely baffled all the efforts of infidels and non-Christians to explain it away. No sceptical writer has ever given a satisfactory answer to the question “Who was Christ? Whence did He come?” The super-human purity of His life, confessed even by men like Rousseau and Napoleon3 ¾the super-human wisdom of His teaching,—the super-human mystery of His death,—the inexplicable incident of His resurrection,—the undeniable influence which His apostles obtained for His doctrines, without the aid of money or arms,—all these are simple matters of history, and demand the attention of every honest man who really wishes to inquire into the great subject of religion. They are indisputable facts in the annals of the world. Let those who dare deny them.

Now what shall we say to these facts? That they are facts I think no one of average intelligence can possibly deny. I assert that they form a mass of evidence in favour of Christianity which cannot be safely neglected by any honest mind. “What canst thou know?” says Zophar. I answer, we know enough to justify every Christian in resting his soul calmly and confidently on the revelation which God has given us of Himself, and of Christ, in His Bible. That revelation is supported by such an enormous mass of probable evidence that we may safely trust its truth. I answer, furthermore, that we “know” enough to warrant us in urging every sceptic to consider seriously, as a prudent man, whether he is not occupying a very dangerous and untenable position. Probabilities are all against him; and probabilities, in the vast majority of things, are the only guide of choice and action. He cannot say that the witness of eighteen centuries is so weak and worthless that it deserves no attention. On the contrary, it is so strong that, if he cannot explain it away, he ought either to throw down the arms of his unbelief, or to avow that he is not open to reason. In a word, he is not willing to be convinced. He has shut his eyes, and is deter mined not to open them. Well might our Lord say, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” Well might He “marvel at unbelief” (Luke 16:31. Mark 6:6).

I shall now conclude this paper with two general remarks which I commend to the attention of all who read it.

1. For one thing, let me try to show the true causes of a vast amount of the unbelief of the present day.

That there is a good deal of unbelief in this age it is vain to deny. The number of people who attend no place of worship, and seem to have no religion, is very considerable. A vague kind of scepticism or agnosticism is one of the commonest spiritual diseases in this generation. It meets us at every turn, and crops up in every company. Like the Egyptian plague of frogs, it makes its way into every family and home, and there seems no keeping it out. Among high and low, and rich and poor, in town and country, in Universities and manufacturing towns, in castles and in cottages, you will continually find some form of unbelief. It is no longer a pestilence that walketh in darkness, but a destruction that wasteth at noon day. It is even considered clever and intellectual, and a mark of a thoughtful mind. Society seems leavened with it. He that avows his belief of everything contained in the Bible must make up his mind in many companies to be smiled at contemptuously, and thought an ignorant and weak man.

(a) Now there is no doubt that, as I have already said, the seat of unbelief in some persons is the head. They refuse to accept anything which they cannot understand, or which seems above their reason. Inspiration, Miracles, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection, the Future State, all these mighty verities are viewed with cold indifference as disputable points, if not absolutely rejected. “Can we entirely explain them? Can we satisfy their reasoning faculties about them?” If not they must be excused if they stand in doubt. What they cannot fully understand, they tell us they cannot fully believe, and so they never observe the Sabbath, and never exhibit any religion while they live, though, strangely enough, they like to be buried with religious forms when they die.

(b) But while I admit this, I am equally certain that with some the real seat of unbelief is the heart. They love the sins and habits of life which the Bible condemns, and are determined not to give them up. They take refuge from an uneasy conscience by trying to persuade themselves that the old Book is not true. The measure of their creed is their affection. Whatever condemns their natural inclinations, they refuse to believe. The famous Lord Rochester, once a profligate and an infidel, but at last a true penitent, is recorded to have said to Bishop Burnet, as he drew near his end, “It is not reason, but a bad life, which is the great argument against the Bible.” A true and weighty saying! Many, I am persuaded, profess that they do not believe, because they know, if they did believe, they must give up their favourite sins.

(c) Last, but not least, with far the greater number of people the seat of unbelief is a lazy, indolent will. They dislike all kind of trouble. Why should they deny themselves, and take pains about Bible-reading and praying, and Sabbath observance, and diligent watchfulness over thoughts, and words, and actions, when, after all, it is not quite certain that the Bible is true? This, I have little doubt, is the form of unbelief which prevails most frequently among young people. They are not agitated by intellectual difficulties. They are often not the slaves of any special lusts or passions, and live tolerably decent lives. But deep down in their hearts there is a disinclination to make up their minds, and to be decided about anything in religion. And so they drift down the stream of life like dead fish, and float helplessly on, and are tossed to and fro, hardly knowing what they believe. And while they would shrink from telling you they are not Christians, they are without any backbone in their Christianity.

Now, whether head, or heart, or will, be in fault, it is some comfort to remember that there is probably less of real, downright, reasoning unbelief than there appears to be. Thousands, we may be sure, do not in their heart of hearts believe all that they say with their lips. Many a sceptical saying is nothing more than a borrowed article, picked up and retailed by him who says it, because it sounds clever, while, in reality, it is not the language of his inner man.

Sorrow, and sickness, and affliction, often bring out the strange fact that so-called sceptics are not sceptics at all, and that many talk scepticism merely from a desire to seem clever, and to win the temporary applause of clever men. That there is an immense amount of unbelief in the present day I make no question; but that much of it is mere show and pretence is, to my mind, as clear as noonday. No man, I think, can do pastoral work, and come to close quarters with souls, visit the sick, and attend the dying, without coming to that conclusion.

The parting advice I offer to heart sceptics is simply this. Let me entreat you to deal honestly with your soul about secret sins. Are you sure there is not some bad habit, or lust, or passion, which,

almost insensibly to yourself, you would like to indulge, if it were not for some remaining scruples? Are you quite sure that your doubts do not arise from a desire to get rid of restraint? You would like, if you could, to do something the Bible forbids, and you are looking about for reasons for disregarding the Bible. Oh! if this is the case with any of my readers, awake to a sense of your danger! Break the chains which are gradually closing round you. Pluck out the right eye, if need be; but never be the servant of sin. I repeat that the secret love of some vicious indulgence is the real beginning of a vast amount of infidelity.

The parting advice I offer to lazy sceptics is this. Let me entreat you to deal honestly with your souls about the use of means for acquiring religious knowledge. Can you lay your hand on your heart and say that you really take pains to find out what is truth? Do not be ashamed to pray for light. Do not be ashamed of reading some leading book about the Creeds and the Confession of your own Church, and, above all, do not be ashamed of regularly studying the text of your Bible. Thousands, I am persuaded, in this day, know nothing of the Holy Book which they affect to despise, and are utterly ignorant of the real nature of that Christianity which they pretend they cannot believe. Let not that be the case with you. That famous “honest doubt,” which many say is better than “half the creeds,” is a pretty thing to talk about. But I venture a strong suspicion that much of the scepticism of the present day, if sifted and analyzed, would be found to spring from utter ignorance of the primary evidences of Christianity

2. The other concluding remark which I will make is this. I will try to explain the reason why so many professing Christians are continually frightened and shaken in their minds by doubts about the truth of Christianity.

That this is the case of many I have a very strong impression. I suspect there are thousands of Sabbath-keeping, church-going Christians who would repudiate with indignation the charge of scepticism, and yet are constantly troubled about the truth of Christianity. Some new book, or lecture, or sermon, appears from the pen of men like Darwin or Colenso, and at once these worthy people are scared and panic stricken, and run from clergyman to clergyman to pour out their anxieties and fears, as if the very ark of God was in danger. “Can these new ideas be really true?” they cry. “Must we really give up the Old Testament, and the flood, and the miracles, and the resurrection of Christ? Alas! alas! what shall we do?” In short, like Ahaz, their “hearts are moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind” (Isaiah 7:2).

Now what is the cause of this readiness to give way to doubts? Why are so many alarmed about the faith of eighteen centuries, and frightened out of their wits by attacks which no more shake the evidences of Christianity than the scratch of a pin shakes the great Pyramid of Egypt.

The reason is soon told. The answer lies in a nutshell. The greater part of modern Christians are utterly ignorant of the evidences of Christianity, and the enormous difficulties of infidelity. The education of the vast majority of people on these subjects is wretchedly meagre and superficial, or it is no education at all. Not one in a hundred church-goers, probably, has ever read a page of Leslie, or Leland, or Watson, or Butler, or Paley, or Chalmers, or M’Ilvaine, or Daniel Wilson, or Porteus, or Whately. What wonder if the minds of such people are like a city without walls, and utterly unable to resist the attacks of the most commonplace infidelity, much less of the refined and polished scepticism of these latter days.

The remedy for this state of things is patent and plain. Every professing Christian should arm his mind with some elementary knowledge of the evidences of revealed religion and the difficulties of infidelity, and so be ready to give a reason for the faith that he professes. He ought not merely to read and love his Bible, but to be able to tell any one why he believes the Bible to be true. Ministers should preach occasionally on evidences. It was one of that great man Cecil's counsels to a clergyman, "In your sermons never forget the infidel." Schools, Colleges, and Universities, which make any pretence to be Christian, should never altogether leave out evidences in their scheme of instruction for the young. In short, if we want the coming generation to hold fast Christianity, we must provide them with defensive armour.

With these two remarks I close my paper. Thank God! we travel on to a world where there is no ignorance, no scepticism, and no doubt. We shall soon see as we have been seen, and know as we have been known. Alas! What a waking up remains for many the moment the last breath is drawn! There is no unbelief in the grave. Voltaire now knows whether there is a sin-hating God; and David Hume now knows whether there is an endless hell. The infant of days, by merely dying, acquires a knowledge which the subtlest philosophers, while on earth, profess their inability to attain. The dead Hottentot knows more than the living Socrates. To that future world the true Christian may look forward calmly, confidently, and without fear. He that has Christ in his heart, and the Bible in his bead, is standing on a rock, and has no cause to be afraid. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, let us be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). If we cannot "find out the Almighty to perfection," we can know enough to give us peace in life, and hope in death. What we "know" let us hold fast.

One thing at least is certain. If we "KNOW" little we can DO much. Is it not written, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."—"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (John 7:17; Deuteronomy 29:29).

FOOTNOTES

1 [this particular note is from the editor of the Drummond Tract "Home Truths" edition published soon after Bishop Ryle's death in 1899].

Science has moved forward since Bishop Ryle penned these lines: still his reasoning is valid for to-day. The Bacterial or Germ Theory of disease has not cleared up all the mysteries connected with its origin and nature. Again, as regards the ultimate constitution of matter and force, the conclusions which held ground among scientific men until lately have been completely overthrown by the discovery of the remarkable metal radium, and the study of its phenomena. Lastly, the more recent convulsions, volcanic and seismic, which occurred at St. Pierre, San Francisco, and Messina, accompanied as these have been with tremendous loss of life, prove that the progress of science still leaves the human race as helpless as ever in the presence of this class of calamity.

2 The following page from Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" contains so many useful thoughts about miracles and the so-called laws of nature that I make no apology for giving it to the readers of this paper, and commending it to their attention. In giving it I must not be supposed to be a wholesale admirer of the writer, or of his peculiar style.

“But is not a Miracle simply a violation of the Laws of Nature’? ask several. Whom I answer by this new question, What are the Laws of Nature? To me, perhaps, the rising of one from the dead were no violation of these Laws, but a confirmation; were some far deeper Law, now first penetrated into, and by Spiritual Force, even as the rest have all been, brought to bear on us with its Material force.

“Here, too, some may inquire, not without astonishment, ‘On what ground shall one, that can make iron swim, come and declare that therefore he can teach religion?’ To us, truly, of the nineteenth century, such declaration were inapt enough, which, nevertheless, to our fathers, of the first century, was full of meaning.

“But is it not the deepest Law of Nature that she be constant?’ cries an illuminated class. ‘Is not the Machine of the Universe fixed to move by unalterable rules?’ Probable enough, good friends; nay, I, too, must believe that the God whom ancient inspired men assert to be ‘without variableness or shadow of turning’ does indeed never change; that Nature, that the Universe, which no one whom it so pleases can be prevented from calling a Machine, does move by the most unalterable rules. And now of you, too, I make the old inquiry, ‘What those same unalterable rules, forming the complete statute book of Nature, may possibly be?’

‘They stand written in our Works of Science’ say you; ‘in the accumulated records of man’s experience?’ Was man with his experience present at the Creation, then, to see how it all went on? Have any deepest scientific individuals yet dived down to the foundation of the Universe, and gauged everything there? Did the Maker take them into His counsel, that they read His ground-plan of the incomprehensible All; and can say, ‘This stands marked therein, and no more than this’? Alas! not in anyone! These scientific individuals have been nowhere but where we also are, have seen some handbreadths deeper than we see into the Deep that is infinite, without bottom, as without shore.

“System of Nature! To the wisest man, wide as is his vision, Nature remains of quite infinite depth, of quite infinite expansion; and all experience thereof limits itself to some few computed centuries and measured square miles. The course of Nature’s phases, on this our little fraction of a Planet, is partially known to us: but who knows what deeper courses these depend on, what infinitely larger Cycle (of causes) our little Epicycle revolves on? To the Minnow every cranny, and pebble, and quality, and accident of its little native Crack may have become familiar; but does the Minnow understand the Ocean Tides and periodic currents, the Trade-winds, and Monsoons, and Moon’s Eclipses; by all which the condition of its little world is regulated, and may, from time to time (unmiraculously enough) be quite overset and reversed? Such a Minnow is Man; his Creek this Planet Earth, his Ocean the immeasurable All, his Monsoons and Periodic Currents the Mysterious Course of Providence through Æons of Æons!”

3 The language of Rousseau about Christ, referred to in this sermon, is so remarkable that I think it may be useful to give it in its entirety:

“Is it possible that He, whose history the Gospel records, can be but a mere man? Does He speak in the tone of an enthusiast, or of an ambitious sectary? What mildness, what purity in His manners! What touching grace in His instructions, what elevation in His maxims! What profound wisdom in His discourses ! What presence of mind ! What ingenuity, and what justness in His

answers! What government of His passions! What prejudice, what blindness or ill faith must that be which dares to compare Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus, with the Son of Mary! What a difference between the two! Socrates dying without pain, without disgrace, easily sustains his part to the last. The death of Socrates philosophizing tranquilly with his friends is the mildest that could be desired: that of Jesus expiring in torments, injured, mocked, cursed by all the people, is the most horrible that can be feared. Socrates, taking the empoisoned cup, blesses him who presents it to him with tears. Jesus, in the midst of a frightful punishment, prays for his enraged executioners. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."—Emile Rousseau.

The words of Napoleon at St. Helena towards the close of his life were these: "I know men, and I tell you that Jesus is not a man."

Chapter 81

What think ye of Christ?

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland.

"WHAT THINK YE OF

CHRIST ?"

Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, the son of David.- Matthew 22:42.

READER,

Christmas is a season which almost all Christians observe in one way or another. Some keep it as a religious season. Some keep it as a holiday. But all over the world, wherever there are Christians, in one way or another Christmas is kept.

Perhaps there is no country in which Christmas is so much observed as it is in England. Christmas holidays, Christmas parties, Christmas family-gatherings, Christmas services in churches, Christmas hymns and carols, Christmas holly and mistletoe,-who has not heard of these things? They are as familiar to English people as anything in their lives. They are among the first things we remember when we were children. Our grandfathers and grandmothers were used to them long before we were born. They have been going on in England for many hundred years. They seem likely to go on as long as the world stands.

But, reader, how many of those who keep Christmas ever consider why Christmas is kept? How many, in their Christmas plans and arrangements, give a thought to Him, without whom there would have been no Christmas at all? How many ever remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the cause of Christmas ? How many ever reflect that the first intention of Christmas was to remind Christians of Christ's birth and coming into the world? Reader, how is it with you? What do you think of at Christmas ?

Bear with me a few minutes, while I try to press upon you the question which heads this tract. I do not want to make your Christmas merriment less. I do not wish to spoil your Christmas cheer. I only wish to put things in their right places. I want Christ Himself to be remembered at Christmas! Give me your attention while I unfold the question-"What think ye of Christ?"

I. Let us consider, firstly, why all men ought to think of Christ.

II. Let us examine, secondly, the common thoughts of many about Christ.

III. Let us count up, lastly, the thoughts of true Christians about Christ.

Reader, I dare say the demands upon your time this Christmas are many. Your holidays are short. You have friends to see. You have much to talk about. But still, in the midst of all your hurry and excitement, give a little time to your soul. There will be a Christmas some year, when your place will be empty. Before that time comes, suffer me as a friend to press home on your conscience the inquiry,-"What think ye of Christ?"

I. First, then, let us consider why all men ought to think of Christ.

This is a question which needs to be answered, at the very outset of this tract. I know the minds of some people when they are asked about such things as I am handling today. I know that many are ready to say, "Why should we think about Christ at all ? We want meat, and drink, and money, and clothes, and amusements. We have no time to think about these high subjects. We do not understand them. Let parsons, and old women, and Sunday-school children mind such things if they like. We have no time in a world like this to be thinking of Christ."

Such is the talk of thousands in this country. They never go either to church or chapel. They never read their Bibles. The world is their god. They think themselves very wise and clever. They despise those whom they call "religious people." But whether they like it or not, they will all have to die one day. They have all souls to be lost or saved in a world to come. They will all have to rise again from their graves, and to have a reckoning with God. And shall their scoffing and contempt stop our mouths, and make us ashamed? No, indeed! not for a moment! Listen to me and I will tell you why.

All men ought to think of Christ, because of the office Christ fills between God and man. He is the eternal Son of God, through whom alone the Father can be known, approached, and served. He is the appointed Mediator between God and man, through whom alone we can be reconciled with God, pardoned, justified, and saved. He is the Divine Person whom God the Father has sealed to be the giver of everything that man requires for his soul. To Him are committed the keys of death and hell. In His favour is life. In Him alone there is hope of salvation for mankind. Without Him no child of Adam can be saved. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 Corinthians 3:11; 1 John 5:12) And ought not man to think of Christ? Shall God the Father honour Him, and shall not man? I tell every reader of this tract that there is no person, living or dead, of such immense importance to all men as Christ. There is no person that men ought to think about so much as Christ.

All men ought to think of Christ, because of what Christ has done for all men. He thought upon man, when man was lost, bankrupt, and helpless by the fall, and undertook to come into the world to save sinners. In the fullness of time He was born of the Virgin Mary, and lived for man thirty-three years in this evil world. At the end of that time He suffered for sin on the cross, as man's substitute. He bore man's sins in His own body, and shed His own lifeblood to pay man's debt to God. He was made a curse for man, that man might be blessed. He died for man that man might live. He was counted a sinner for man that man might be counted righteous. And ought not man to think of Christ? I tell every reader of this tract that if Christ had not died for us, we might all of us, for anything we know, be lying at this moment in hell.

All men ought to think of Christ, because of what Christ will yet do to all men. He shall come again one day to this earth with power and glory, and raise the dead from their graves. All shall come forth at His bidding. Those who would not move when they heard the church-going bell, shall obey the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God. He shall set up His judgment-seat, and summon all mankind to stand before it. To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. Not one shall be able to escape that solemn assize. Not one but shall receive at the mouth of Christ an eternal sentence. Every one shall receive according to what he has done in the body, whether it be good or bad. And ought not men to think of Christ? I tell every reader of this tract, that whatever he may choose to think now, a day is soon coming when his eternal condition will hinge entirely on his relations to Christ.

But why should I say more on this subject? The time would fail me if I were to set down all the reasons why all men ought to think of Christ. Christ is the grand subject of the Bible. The Scriptures testify of Him.-Christ is the great object to whom all the Churches in Christendom profess to give honour. Even the worst and most corrupt branches of it will tell you that they are built on Christ.-Christ is the end and substance of all sacraments and ordinances.-Christ is the grand subject which every faithful minister exalts in the pulpit.-Christ is the object that every true pastor sets before dying people on their deathbeds.-Christ is the great source of light and peace and hope. There is not a spark of spiritual comfort that has ever illumined a sinner's heart, that has not come from Christ. Surely it never can be a small matter whether we have any thoughts about Christ.

Reader, I leave this part of my subject here. There are many things which swallow up men's thoughts while they live, which they will think little of when they are dying. Hundreds are wholly absorbed in political schemes, and seem to care for nothing but the advancement of their own party.-Myriads are buried in business and money matters, and seem to neglect everything else but this world.-Thousands are always wrangling about the forms and ceremonies of religion, and are ready to cry down everybody who does not use their shibboleths, and worship in their way. But an hour is fast coming when only one subject will be minded, and that subject will be Christ! We shall all find-and many perhaps too late-that it mattered little what we thought about other things, so long as we did not think about Christ.

Reader, I tell you this Christmas, that all men ought to think about Christ. There is no one in whom all the world has such a deep interest. There is no one to whom all the world owes so much. High and low, rich and poor, old and young, gentle and simple,-all ought to think about Christ.

II. Let us examine, secondly, the common thoughts of many about Christ.

To set down the whole list of thoughts about Christ, would indeed be thankless labour. It must content us to range them under a few general heads. This will save us both time and trouble. There were many strange thoughts about Christ when He was on earth. There are many strange and wrong thoughts about Christ now, when He is in heaven.

The thoughts of some people about Christ are simply blasphemous. They are not ashamed to deny His Divinity. They refuse to believe the miracles recorded of Him. They pretend to find fault with not a few of His sayings and doings. They even question the perfect honesty and sincerity of some things that He did. They tell us that He ought to be ranked with great Reformers and

Philosophers, like Socrates, Seneca, and Confucius, but no higher.-Thoughts like these are purely ridiculous and absurd. They utterly fail to explain the enormous influence which Christ and Christianity have had for eighteen hundred years in this world. There is not the slightest comparison to be made between Christ and any other teacher of mankind that ever lived. The difference between Him and others is a gulf that cannot be spanned, and a height that cannot be measured. It is the difference between gold and clay,-between the sun and a candle. Nothing can account for Christ and Christianity, but the old belief that Christ is very God. Reader, are the thoughts I have just described your own? If they are, take care!

The thoughts of some people about Christ are vague, dim, misty, and indistinct. That there was such a Person they do not for a moment deny. That He was the Founder of Christianity, and the object of Christian worship, they are quite aware. That they hear of Him every time they go to public worship, and ought to have some opinion or belief about Him, they will fully admit. But they could not tell you what it is they believe. They could not accurately describe and define it. They have not thoroughly considered the subject They have not made up their minds! -Thoughts such as these are foolish, silly, and unreasonable. To be a dying sinner with an immortal soul, and to go on living without making up one's mind about the only Person who can save us, the Person who will at last judge us, is the conduct of a lunatic or an idiot, and not of a rational man. Reader, are the thoughts I have just described your own? If any are, take care!

The thoughts of some men about Christ are mean and low. They have, no doubt, a distinct opinion about His position in their system of Christianity. They consider that if they do their best, and live moral lives, and go to church pretty regularly, and use the ordinances of religion, Christ will deal mercifully with them at last, and make up any deficiencies.-Thoughts such as these utterly fail to explain why Christ died on the cross. They take the crown off Christ's head, and degrade Him into a kind of make-weight to man's soul. They overthrow the whole system of the Gospel, and pull up all its leading doctrines by the roots. They exalt man to an absurdly high position; as if he could pay some part of the price of his soul!-They rob man of all the comfort of the Gospel; as if he must needs do something and perform some work to justify his own soul!-They make Christ a sort of Judge far more than a Saviour, and place the cross and the atonement in a degraded and inferior position! Reader, are the thoughts I have just described your own? If they are, take care !

The thoughts of some men about Christ are dishonouring and libellous. They seem to think that we need a mediator between ourselves and our Saviour! They appear to suppose that Christ is so high, and awful, and exalted a Person, that poor, sinful man may not approach Him! They say that we must employ an Episcopacy ordained minister as a kind of go-between, to stand between us and Jesus, and manage for our souls! They send us to saints, or angels, or the Virgin Mary, as if they were more kind and accessible than Christ!-Thoughts such as these are a practical denial of Christ's priestly office. They overthrow the whole doctrine of His peculiar business, as man's Intercessor. They hide and bury out of sight His especial love to sinners and His boundless willingness to receive them. Instead of a gracious Saviour, they make Him out an austere and hard King. Reader, are the thoughts I have just described your own? If they are, take care!

The thoughts of some men about Christ are wicked and unholy. They seem to think that they may live as they please, because Christ died for sinners! They will indulge every kind of wickedness, and yet flatter themselves that they are not blameworthy for it, because Christ is a merciful

Saviour! They will talk complacently of God's election, and the necessity of grace, and the impossibility of being justified by works and the fullness of Christ, and then make these glorious doctrines an excuse for lying, cheating, drunkenness, fornication, and every kind of immorality.-Thoughts such as these are as blasphemous and profane as downright infidelity. They actually make Christ the patron of sin. Reader, are these thoughts I have described your own? If they are, take care!

Reader, two general remarks apply to all these thoughts about Christ of which I have just been speaking. They all show a deplorable ignorance of Scripture. I defy any one to read the Bible honestly and find any warrant for them in that blessed Book. Men cannot know their Bibles when they hold such opinions.-They all help to prove the corruption and darkness of human nature. Man is ready to believe anything about Christ except the simple truth. He loves to set up an idol of his own, and bow down to it, rather than accept the Saviour whom God puts before him.

I leave this part of my subject here. It is a sorrowful and painful one, but not without its use. It is necessary to study morbid anatomy, if we would understand health. The ground must be cleared of rubbish before we build.

III. Let us now count up, lastly, the thoughts of true Christians about Christ.

The thoughts I am going to describe are not the thoughts of many. I admit this most fully. It would be vain to deny it. The number of right thinkers about Christ in every age has been small. The true Christians among professing Christians have always been few. If it were not so, the Bible would have told an untruth. "Strait is the gate," says the Lord Jesus, "and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.-Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." "Many walk," says Paul, "of whom I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction." (Matthew 7:13-14. Php_3:18-19)

True Christians have high thoughts of Christ. They see in Him a wondrous Person, far above all other beings in His nature,-a Person who is at one and the same time perfect God, mighty to save, and perfect Man, able to feel.-They see in Him an All-powerful Redeemer, who has paid their countless debts to God, and delivered their souls from guilt and hell.-They see in Him an Almighty Friend, who left heaven for them, lived for them, died for them, rose again for them,-that He might save them for evermore.-They see in Him an Almighty Physician, who washed away their sins in His own blood, put His own Spirit in their hearts, delivered them from the power of sin, and gave them power to become God's children.-Happy are they who have such thoughts! Reader, have you?

True Christians have trustful thoughts of Christ. They daily lean the weight of their souls upon Him by faith, for pardon and peace. They daily commit the care of their souls to Him, as a man commits a treasure to a safe keeper. They daily cling to Him by faith, as a child in a crowd clings to its mother's hand. They look to Him daily for mercy, grace, comfort, help, and strength, as Israel looked to the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness for guidance. Christ is the Rock under their feet, and the staff in their hands, their ark and their city of refuge, their sun and their shield, their bread and their medicine, their health and their light, their fountain and their shelter, their portion and their home, their door and their ladder, their root and their head, their advocate and their

physician, their captain and their elder brother, their life, their hope, and their all. Happy are they who have such thoughts! Reader, have you?

True Christians have experimental thoughts of Christ. The things that they think of Him, they do not merely think with their heads. They have not learned them from schools, or picked them up from others. They think them because they have found them true by their own heart's experience. They have proved them, and tasted them, and tried them. They think out for themselves what they have felt . There is all the difference in the world between knowing that a man is a doctor or a lawyer, while we never have occasion to employ him, and knowing him as "our own," because we have gone to him for medicine or law. Just in the same way there is a wide difference between head knowledge and experimental thoughts of Christ. Happy are they who have such thoughts? Reader, have you?

True Christians have loving and reverent thoughts of Christ. They love to do the things that please Him. They like, in their poor weak way, to show their affection to Him by keeping His words. They love everything belonging to Him,-His day, His house, His ordinances, His people, His Book. They never find His yoke heavy, or His burden painful to bear, or His Commandments grievous. Love lightens all. They know something of the mind of Mr. Standfast, in "Pilgrim's Progress," when he said, as he stood in the river,-"I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and whenever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, then I have coveted to set my foot over it." Happy are they who have such thoughts? Reader, have you?

True Christians have hopeful thoughts of Christ. They expect to receive far more from Him one day than they have ever received yet. They hope that they shall be kept to the end, and never perish. But this is not all. They look forward to Christ's second coming and expect that then they shall see far more than they have seen, and enjoy far more than they have yet enjoyed. They have the earnest of an inheritance now in the Spirit dwelling in their heart. But they hope for a far fuller possession when this world has passed away. They have hopeful thoughts of Christ's second Advent, of their own resurrection from the grave of their reunion with all the saints who have gone before them, of eternal blessedness in Christ's kingdom. Happy are they who have such thoughts! They sweeten life, and lift men over many cares. Reader, have you such thoughts ?

Reader, thoughts such as these are the property of all true Christians. Some of them know more of them and some of them know less. But all know something about them. They do not always feel them equally at all time! They do not always find such thoughts equally fresh and green in their minds. They have their winter as well as their summer, and their low tide as well as their high water. But all true Christians are, more or less, acquainted with these thoughts. In this matter churchmen and dissenters, rich and poor, all are agreed, if they are true Christians. In other things they may be unable to agree and see alike. But they all agree in their thoughts about Christ. One word they can all say, which is the same in every tongue. That word is "Hallelujah," praise to the Lord Christ! One answer they can all make, which in every tongue is equally the same. That word is, "Amen," so be it!

And now, reader, I shall wind up my Christmas tract, by simply bringing before your conscience the question which forms its title. I ask you this day, -"What think ye of Christ?"

What others think about Him is not the question now. Their mistakes are no excuse for you.-Their correct views will not save your soul. The point you have before you is simply this,-"What do you think yourself?"

Reader, this Christmas may possibly be your last. Who can tell but you may never live to see another December come round? Who can tell but your place may be empty, when the family party next Christmas is gathered together? Do not, I entreat you, put off my question or turn away from it. It can do you no harm to look at it and consider it. What do you think of Christ?

Begin, I beseech you, this day to have right thoughts of Christ, if you never had them before. Let the time past suffice you to have lived without real and heartfelt religion.-Let this present Christmas be a starting point in your soul's history. Awake to see the value of your soul, and the immense importance of being saved. Break off sharp from sin and the world. Get down your Bible and begin to read it. Call upon the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and beseech Him to save your soul. Rest not, rest not till you have trustful, loving, experimental, hopeful thoughts of Christ.

Reader, mark my words! If you will only take the advice I have now given you, you will never repent it. Your life in future will be happier. Your heart will be lighter. Your Christmas gatherings will be more truly joyful. Nothing makes Christmas meetings so happy as to feel that we are all travelling on towards an eternal gathering in heaven.

Reader, I say for the last time, if you would have a happy Christmas, have right thoughts about Christ

I remain, Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE _____

APPENDIX. The following extract from a Sermon, preached a hundred years ago in the open air by Whitefield, upon the text-"What think ye of Christ"-will probably be acceptable to readers of my tracts, and be thought a suitable appendix to what I have been saying. And here I cannot help expressing my deep regret that the sermons of that mighty preacher are not better known, and more valued than they are. No doubt they have come down to us in a miserable condition. They were evidently taken down and prepared for the press by reporters who were alike ignorant of theology, of paragraphing, and of punctuation. Still, even in their present mangled and deformed state, they contain many passages of striking power, and will repay an attentive perusal.

After pressing on his hearers the questions-(l) What think ye of Christ as God. -(2) What think ye of Christ as Man?-and (3) What think ye of being justified by Christ?-Whitefleld goes on to say:-

"Fourthly and lastly, what think you of Jesus Christ being formed within you? For whom Christ justifies them He also sanctifies. Although He finds, yet He does not leave us unholy. A true Christian may not so properly be said to live, as Jesus Christ to live in him. They only that are led by the Spirit of Christ are the true sons of God.

" This is a great mystery; but I speak of Christ and the new birth. Marvel not at my asking you what you think about Christ being formed within you. Either God must change His nature, or we ours. For as in Adam we have all spiritually died, so all that are effectually saved by Christ must in Christ be spiritually made alive. His only end in dying, and rising again, and interceding for us now in

heaven, is to redeem us from the misery of our fallen nature, and by the operation of His blessed Spirit, to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. None but those that thus are changed by His grace here shall appear with Him in glory hereafter.

"Examine yourselves, therefore, my brethren whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves,-and think it not sufficient to say in your creed-'I believe in Jesus Christ.' Many say so, who do not believe, who are reprobates, and yet in a state of death. You take God's name in vain when you call Him Father, and your prayers are turned into sin, unless you believe in Christ, so as to have your life hid with Him in God, and to receive life and nourishment from Him as branches from the vine.

"I know indeed the men of this generation deny there is any such thing as feeling Christ within them. But alas! to what a dreadful condition would such reduce us-even to the state of the abandoned heathen, who, St. Paul tells us, were past feeling. The Apostle prays that the Ephesians may abound in all knowledge and spiritual understanding,-or, as it might be rendered, spiritual sensation. And in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, the minister prays that the Lord may make the sick person know and feel that there is no other name given under heaven unto men, in whom and through whom they may receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a spiritual as well as a corporeal feeling; and though it is not communicated to us in a sensible manner, as outward objects affect our senses, yet it is as real as any sensible or visible sensation, and may be as truly felt and discerned by the soul as any impression from without can be felt by the body. All who are born again of God know that I lie not.

"What think you, Sirs, did Naaman feel when he was cured of his leprosy? Did the woman feel virtue coming out of Jesus Christ, when she touched the hem of His garment, and was cured of her bloody issue? So surely mayest thou feel, O believer, when Jesus Christ dwelleth in thy heart. I pray God to make you all know and feel this, ere you depart hence.

"O my brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you. I trust I feel something of that hidden but powerful presence of Christ, whilst I am preaching to you. Indeed it is sweet,-it is exceedingly comfortable. All the harm I wish you who without cause are my enemies, is that you felt the like. Believe me, though it would be hell to my soul to return to a natural state again, yet I would willingly change states with you for a little while, that you might know what it is to have Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith. Do not turn your backs. Do not let the devil hurry you away. Be not afraid of convictions. Do not think worse of the doctrine because preached without the church walls. Our Lord, in the days of His flesh, preached on a mount, in a ship, and a field; and I am persuaded many have felt His gracious presence here. Indeed we speak what we know. Do not therefore reject the kingdom of God against yourselves. Be so wise as to receive our witness.

"I cannot, I will not let you go. Stay a little, and let us reason together. However lightly you may esteem your souls, I know our Lord has set an unspeakable value on them. He thought them worthy of His most precious blood. I beseech you, therefore, O sinners, be ye reconciled to God. I hope you do not fear being accepted in the Beloved. Behold, He calleth you. Behold, He prevents and follows you with His mercy,-and hath sent forth His servants into the highways and hedges, to compel you to come in.

"Remember, then, that at such an hour of such a day, in such a year, in this place, you were all told what you ought to think concerning Jesus Christ. If you now perish, it will not be from lack of knowledge. I am free from the blood of you all. You cannot say I have been preaching damnation to you. You cannot say I have, like legal preachers, been requiring you to make bricks without straw. I have not bidden you to make yourselves saints and then come to God. I have offered you salvation on as cheap terms as you can desire. I have offered you Christ's whole wisdom, Christ's whole righteousness, Christ's whole sanctification and eternal redemption, if you will but believe on Him. If you say you cannot believe, you say right; for faith, as well as every other blessing, is the gift of God. But then wait upon God, and who knows but He may have mercy on thee?

"Why do we not entertain more loving thoughts of Christ? Do you think He will have mercy on others and not on you? Are you not sinners? Did not Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners?

" If you say you are the chief of sinners, I answer, that will be no hindrance to your salvation. Indeed it will not, if you lay hold on Christ by faith. Read the Evangelists, and see how kindly He behaved to His disciples, who had fled from and denied Him. 'Go, tell my brethren,' says He. He did not say,-'Go, tell those traitors,' but 'Go, tell my brethren and Peter.' It is as though He had said,-'Go, tell my brethren in general, and Peter in particular, that I am risen. O comfort his poor drooping heart. Tell him I am reconciled to him. Bid him weep no more so bitterly. For though with oaths and curses he thrice denied Me, yet I have died for his sins; I have risen again for his justification: I freely forgive him all.' Thus slow to anger and of great kindness was our all-merciful High Priest! And do you think He has changed His nature, and forgets poor sinners, now He is exalted to the right hand of God? No! He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; and sitteth there only to make intercession for us.

"Come, then, ye harlots,-come, ye publicans, -come, ye most abandoned sinners,-come, and believe on Jesus Christ. Though the whole world despise you and cast you out, yet He will not disdain to take you up. O amazing, O infinitely condescending love! even you He will not be ashamed to call His brethren. How will you escape, if you neglect such a glorious offer of salvation? What would the damned spirits, now in the prison of hell, give, if Christ was so freely offered to them? And why are we not lifting up our eyes in torments? Does any one out of this great multitude dare say he does not deserve damnation? Why are we left, and others taken away by death? What is this but an instance of God's free grace, and a sign of His goodwill toward us? Let God's goodness lead us to repentance! O let there be joy in heaven over some of you repenting!"

Chapter 82

Where are your sins?

Where Are Your Sins?

A Question about Absolution. BY THE RIGHT REV.

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DRUMMOND'S TRACT DEPOT, STIRLING.

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"Make me to know my transgression and my sin."- Job 13:22.

"Cleanse me from my sin."- Psalms 51:2.

"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."- 1 John 1:7.

"Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood."- Romans 3:25.

READER,

The question which forms the title of this tract ought to stir up many thoughts in your heart. It concerns every man and woman born into the world. You ought never to rest till you can give it a satisfactory answer.-"WHERE ARE YOUR SINS?"

I ask you this day to look this question in the face. I ask you to give me your attention for a few minutes, while I try to enforce it on your conscience. A time draws nigh when the question must be answered. The hour cometh when all other questions shall seem like a drop of water in comparison with this. We shall not say, "Where is my money?"-or, "Where are my lands?"-or, "Where is my property?" Our only thought will be, "My sins! my sins!-Where are my sins?"

Reader, I am going to offer you a few remarks, which may help to throw light on the mighty question which is before your eyes. My heart's desire and prayer to God is this, that this tract may be greatly useful to your soul. I entreat you to give it fair reading. Do not put it in the fire; do not tear it in pieces. Read it: read it! Read it to the end! Who can tell but the Holy Ghost may employ this tract for the saving of your soul

I. My first remark is this. You have many sins. I say this boldly, and without the least hesitation.

I know not who you are, or how the time past of your life has been spent. But I know, from the Word of God, that every son and daughter of Adam is a great sinner in the sight of God. There is no exception: it is the common disease of the whole family of Adam, in every quarter of the globe. From the king on his throne, to the beggar by the roadside,-from the landlord in his hall, to the labourer in his cottage,-from the fine lady in her drawing-room, to the humblest maid-servant in the

kitchen,-from the clergyman in the pulpit, to the little child in the Sunday-school,-we are all by nature guilty, guilty: guilty in the sight of God. "In many things we offend all."-"There is none righteous: no, not one."-"All have sinned," "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (James 3:2; Romans 10:1-21; Romans 5:12; 1 John 1:8) It is useless to deny it. We have all sinned many sins!

Reader, do you doubt the truth of these words? Then go and examine the law of God, as expounded by the Son of God Himself. Read with attention the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. See how the commandments of God apply to our words as well as to our actions, and to our thoughts and motives, as well as to our words. Know that "the Lord seeth not as man seeth: man looketh at the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh at the heart." In His sight the very "thought of foolishness is sin." (1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 24:9)

And now turn to the history of your own life, and try it by the standard of' this holy law. Think of the days of your childhood, and all your waywardness, and selfishness, and evil tempers, and perversity, and backwardness to that which is good.-Remember the days of your youth,-your self-will, your pride, your worldly inclinations, your impatience of control, your longing after forbidden things.-Call to mind your conduct since you came to man's estate, and the many departures from the right way, of which you have been guilty every year.-Surely, in the face of your life's history, you will not stand up and say, "I have not sinned!"

And then turn to the history of your own heart. Consider how many evil things have gone through it, of which the world knows nothing at all.-Remember the thousands of sinful imaginations, and corrupt ideas, which your heart has entertained, even while your outward conduct has been correct, moral, and respectable.-Think of the vile thoughts, and deceitful intentions, and false motives, and malicious, envious, spiteful feelings, which have walked up and down in your inward man, while those nearest to you never dreamed or guessed what was going on.-Surely, in the face of your heart's history, you will not stand up and say, "I have not sinned!"

Reader, once more I ask you, Do you doubt what I am saying? Do you doubt whether you have sinned many sins?-Then go and examine the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. Read the concluding portion of that chapter, which describes the proceedings of the judgment day. Note carefully the grounds on which the wicked, at the left hand, are condemned to everlasting fire. No mention is made of great open acts of wickedness which they have committed. They are not charged with having murdered, or stolen, or borne false witness, or committed adultery. They are condemned for sins of omission! The mere fact that they have left undone things which they ought to have done, is sufficient to ruin their souls for ever. In short, a man's sins of emission alone are enough to sink him into hell!

And now look at yourself by the light of this wonderful passage of Scripture. Try to remember the countless things you have left undone, which you might have done, and have left unsaid, that you might have said. The acts of self-denying kindness, which you might have performed, but have neglected,-how many they are! The good you might have done, and the happiness you might have caused, at very little trouble to yourself,-how vast is the amount of it! Surely, in the face of our Lord's teaching about sins of omission, you will not stand up and say, "I have not sinned!"

Reader, once more I ask, Do you doubt the truth of what I am saying? I think it quite possible that you do. I know something of man's exceeding blindness to his own natural state. Listen to me once more, whilst I ply your conscience with another argument. Oh, that God may open your eyes, and show you what you are!

Sit down, and take pen and paper, and count up the sins that you have probably sinned since you first knew good from evil. Sit down, I say, and make a sum. Grant for a moment that there have been, on an average, fifteen hours in every twenty-four during which you have been awake, and an active and accountable being.-Grant for a moment that in each one of these fifteen hours you have sinned only two sins. Surely you will not say that this is an unfair supposition. Remember, we may sin against God in thought, word, or deed. I repeat, it cannot be thought an extreme thing to suppose that in each waking hour you have, in thought, or word, or deed, sinned two sins. And now add up the sins of your life, and see to what sum they will amount.

At the rate of fifteen waking hours in a day, you have sinned every day thirty sins!-At the rate of seven days in a week, you have sinned two hundred and ten sins every week!-At the rate of four weeks in every month, you have sinned eight hundred and forty sins every month!-At the rate of twelve months in every year, you have sinned ten thousand and eighty sins every year!-And, in short, not to go further with the calculation, every ten years of your life you have sinned, at the lowest computation, more than ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND SINS!

Reader, I do beseech you to look calmly at this sum. I defy you to disprove its correctness. I ask you, on the contrary, whether I have not entirely understated your case? I appeal to you, as an honest person, whether it be not true, that many an hour, and many a day in your life, you have sinned incessantly? I ask you confidently, whether the sum would not be far more correct if the total number of your sins was multiplied ten-fold?-Oh, cease from your self-righteousness! Lay aside this proud affectation of "not being so very bad," in which you are trying to wrap yourself up. Be bold enough to confess the truth. Listen not to that old liar, the devil. Surely in the face of that damning sum which I have just cast up, you will not dare to deny that "you have many sins."

I leave this part of my subject here, and pass on. I sadly fear that many a reader will run his eye over what I have been saying, and remain unconvinced and unmoved. I have learned by mournful experience that the last thing a man finds out and understands, is his own state in the sight of God. Well saith the Holy Ghost, that we are all by nature "blind," and "deaf," and "dumb," and "asleep," and "beside ourselves," and "dead!" Nothing, nothing, nothing will ever convince man of sin but the power of the Holy Ghost. Show him hell, and he will not flee from it; show him heaven, and he will not seek it; silence him with warnings, and yet he will not stir; prick his conscience, and yet he will remain hard. Power from on high must come down and do the work. To show man what he really is, needs the Holy Spirit of God.

Reader, if you have any feeling of your own sinfulness, you ought to thank God for it. That very sense of weakness, wickedness, and corruption, which perhaps makes you uncomfortable, is in reality a token for good, and a cause for praise. The first step towards being really good, is to feel bad. The first preparation for heaven, is to know that we deserve nothing but hell. Before we can be counted righteous we must know ourselves to be miserable sinners. Before we can have inward happiness and peace with God, we must learn to be ashamed and confounded because of our manifold transgressions. Before we can rejoice in a well-grounded hope, we must be taught to

say, "Unclean! unclean! God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

Reader, if you love your soul, beware of checking and stifling this inward feeling of your own sinfulness. I beseech you, by the mercies of God, do not trample on it, do not crush it, do not take it by the throat and refuse to give it your attention. Beware of taking the advice of worldly men about it. Treat it not as a case of low-spirits, disordered health, or anything of the kind. Beware of listening to the devil's counsel about it. Do not try to drown it in drink and revelling; do not try to drive over it with horses, and dogs, and carriages, and field-sports; do not try to purge it away by a course of card-parties, and balls, and concerts. Oh, reader, if you love your soul, do not, do not treat the first sense of sin in this miserable fashion. Do not commit spiritual suicide,-do not murder your soul!

Go rather and pray God to show you what this feeling of sin means. Ask Him to send the Holy Spirit to teach you what you are, and what He would have you to do. Go and read your Bible, and see whether there is not just cause for your being uncomfortable, and whether this sense of being "wicked and bad" is not just what you have a right to expect. Who can tell but it is a seed from heaven which is one day to bear fruit in Paradise in your complete salvation? Who can tell but it is a spark from heaven which God means to blow up into a steady and shining light? Who can tell but it is a stone from above before which the devil's kingdom in your heart is to go down, and a stone which shall prove the first foundation of a glorious temple of the Holy Ghost?-Happy indeed is that man or woman who can go along with my first remark, and say, "IT IS TRUE: I HAVE MANY SINS."

II. My second remark is this. It is of the utmost importance to have our sins cleansed away.

I say this boldly and confidently. I am aware of the multitude of things which are thought "important" in the world, and receive the first and best of men's attentions. But I know well what I am saying. I am bold to say that my Master's business deserves to be placed before all other business; and I learn from my Master's book that there is nothing of such importance to a man as to have his sins forgiven and cleansed away.

Remember, reader, there is a God above you. You see Him not in the city. Hurry and bustle, trade and commerce, appear to swallow up men's minds. You see Him not in the country. Farming and labouring go on in regular course, and seed time and harvest never fail. But all this time there is an eternal Eye looking down from heaven and seeing all that man do: an eye that never slumbers, and never sleeps. Yes! there is not only a Queen, and a government, and a landlord, and a master, to be remembered: there is One higher, far higher than all these, who expects His dues to be paid. That One is the most high God.

This God is a God of infinite holiness. He is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity, and cannot bear that which is evil. He sees defects and infirmities where you see none. In His sight the very heavens are not clean.-He is a God of infinite knowledge. He knows every thought, and word, and action of every son of Adam's children: there are no secrets hid from Him. All that we think, and say, and do, is noted down and recorded in the book of His remembrance.-He is a God of infinite power. He made all things at the beginning. He orders all things according to His will. He casts down the Kings of this world in a moment. None can stand against Him when He is angry.-Above all, He is a God in whose hands are our lives and all our concerns. He first gave us being. He has

kept us alive since we were born. He will remove us when He sees fit, and reckon with us according to our ways. Such is the God with whom we have to do.

Reader, think of these things. Surely when you consider you will be afraid. Surely you will see it is of the utmost importance to have your sins cleansed away. Surely you will inquire, "How do matters stand between me and God?"

Remember, furthermore, that death is before you. You cannot live always. There must be an end, one day, of all your scheming and planning, and buying and selling, and working and toiling. A visitor will come to your house who will take no denial. The king of terrors will demand admission, and serve you with notice to quit. Where are the rulers and kings who governed millions a hundred years ago? Where are the rich men who made fortunes and founded houses? Where are the landlords who received rents, and added field to field? Where are the labourers who ploughed the land and reaped the corn? Where are the clergymen who read services and preached sermons? Where are the children who played in the sunshine as if they would never be old? Where are the old men who leaned on their sticks and gossiped about the days when they were young? There is but one answer. They are all dead: dead, dead! Strong, and beautiful, and active as they once were, they are all dust and ashes now. Mighty and important as they all thought their business, it all came to an end. And we are travelling in the same way! A few more years, and we also shall be lying in our graves!

Reader, think of these things. Surely when you consider your latter end you will not think the cleansing away of sin a light matter. Surely you will see something in the question, "Where are your sins?" Surely you will consider, "How am I going to die?"

Remember, furthermore, that resurrection and judgment await you. All is not over when the last breath is drawn and your body becomes a lump of cold clay. No: all is not over! The realities of existence then begin. The shadows will have passed away for ever. The trumpet shall one day sound, and call you forth from your narrow bed; the graves shall be rent asunder, and their tenants shall be summoned forth to meet God; the ears that would not obey the church going bell shall be obliged to obey that summons; the proud wills that would not submit to listen to sermons shall be compelled to listen to the judgment of God. The great white throne shall be set: the books shall be opened. Every man, woman, and child, shall be arraigned at that great assize. Every one shall be judged according to his works. The sins of every one shall be answered for. And every one shall receive his eternal portion either in heaven or in hell!

Reader, think of these things. Surely in remembrance of that day you must allow that the subject I am upon deserves attention. Surely you must confess that it is of the utmost importance to have your sins cleansed away. Surely you will consider, "How am I going to be judged?"

I must speak out what is upon my mind. I feel great sorrow and trouble of heart about many men and women in the world. I fear for many who live in this so called Christian land; I fear for many who profess and call themselves Christians; I fear for many who go to church or chapel every Sunday and have a decent form of religion; I fear that they do not see the immense importance of having their sins cleansed away. I can see plainly that there are many other things which they think far more important. Money, and land, and farms, and horses, and carriages, and dogs, and meat, and drink, and clothes, and houses, and marriages, and families, and business, and

pleasure,-these, these are the sort of things which many evidently think the "first things." And as for the forgiveness and cleansing away of their sins, it is a matter which has only the second place in their thoughts.

See the man of business, as he pores over his ledger and account books, and runs his eye over the columns of figures. See the man of pleasure, as he tears over the country with his horses and dogs, or rushes after excitement at the races, the theatre, the card party, or the ball. See the poor thoughtless labourer, as he carries off his hard-earned wages to the public house, and wastes them in ruining both body and soul. See them all, how thoroughly they are in earnest! See them all, how they throw their hearts into what they are doing!-And then mark them all at church next Sunday: listless, careless, yawning, sleepy, and indifferent, as if there were no God, and no devil, and no Christ, and no heaven, and no hell! Mark how evident it is that they have left their hearts outside the church! Mark how plain it is that they have no real interest in religion! And then say whether it be not true that many know nothing of the importance of having their sins cleansed away. Oh, reader, take heed lest this be the case with you!

Reader, do you feel anything of the importance of being forgiven? Then, in the name of God, I call upon you to encourage that feeling more and more This is the point to which we desire to bring all people's souls. We want you to understand that religion does not consist in professing certain outward duties, and going through certain outward forms. It consists in being reconciled to God, and enjoying peace with Him. It consists in having our sins cleansed away, and knowing that they are cleansed. It consists in being brought back into friendship with the King of kings, and living in the sunshine of that friendship.-Listen not to those who would fain persuade you that if you only "go to church" regularly you will of course go to heaven. Settle it rather in your mind, that true saving religion, such as the Bible teaches, is another kind of thing altogether. The very foundation of real Christianity is to know that you have many sins, and deserve hell,-and to feel the importance of having these sins cleansed away, in order that you may go to heaven.

Happy, says the world, are they who have plenty of property and fine houses! Happy are they who have carriages, and horses, and servants, and large balances at their bankers, and great troops of friends! Happy are they who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, who have nothing to do but to spend their money and enjoy themselves!-Yet what is the real value of such happiness? It gives no solid, real satisfaction, even at the time of enjoyment. It endures but for a few years. It only lasts till death comes in, like the hand at Belshazzar's feast, and breaks up all. And then, in too many cases, this so-called happiness is exchanged for ETERNAL MISERY IN HELL.

"Blessed," says the Word of God, "are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered! Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity!-Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven! Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted! Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled!" (Psalms 32:1-2; Matthew 5:2, &e.)-Their blessedness shall never come to an end: their happiness is no summer-dried fountain, just failing when need is the sorest; their friends are no summer swallows, forsaking them, like Adonijah's guests, the first moment that the trumpet sounds. Their sun shall never go down. Their joy shall bud in time, and bloom in eternity. Theirs, in a word, is true happiness, for it is for evermore.

Reader, do you believe what I am saying? It is all true. You will see one day whose words shall stand, the words of man or the Word of God. Be wise in time. Settle it in your heart this very hour, that the most important thing that man can attend to is the cleansing and forgiveness of his sins.

III. My third remark is this. You cannot cleanse away your own sins.

I make this statement boldly and confidently. Startling as it sounds to the natural heart, I lay it down as a piece of undeniable Scriptural truth. In spite of all the Pharisees, and Roman Catholics, and Socinians, and Deists, and idolaters of human reason and human power, I unhesitatingly repeat my assertions.-Man's sins are many and great. It is of the utmost importance that these sins should be cleansed away. Man's guilt in the sight of God, is enormous. Man's danger of hell, after he dies, is imminent and tremendous. And yet man cannot cleanse away his own sins. It is written, and it is true, "By deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Romans 3:20)

It will not cleanse away your sins to be sorry for them. You may mourn over your past wickedness, and humble yourself in sackcloth and ashes. You may shed floods of tears, and acknowledge your own guilt and danger. You may,-you must,-you ought to do this. But you will not by so doing wipe out your transgressions from the book of God. SORROW CANNOT MAKE ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

The convicted criminal in a court of justice is often sorry for his offences. He sees the misery and ruin they have brought upon him. He mourns over his folly in not listening to advice and in giving way to temptation. But the judge does not let him off because he is sorry. The deed has been done: the law has been broken; the penalty has been incurred. The punishment must be inflicted, notwithstanding the criminal's tears.-Reader, this is precisely your position in the sight of God. Your sorrow is right, and good, and proper. But your sorrow has no power whatever to cleanse away your sins. It needs something more than penitence to take the burden off your heart.

It will not cleanse away your sins to mend your life. You may reform your conduct, and turn over a new leaf: you may break off many evil habits, and take up many good ones; you may become, in short, an altered man in all your outward behaviour. You may,-you must,-you ought, to do so. Without such change no soul ever was saved. But you will not, by so doing, wipe away one particle of your guilt in God's sight. REFORMATION MAKES NO ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

The bankrupt tradesman, who owes ten thousand pounds and has not ten shillings to pay, may resolve to become a reformed character. After wasting his whole substance in riotous living, he may become steady, temperate, and respectable. It is all right and proper that he should be so: but this will not satisfy the claims of those to whom he owes money. Once more I say, this is precisely your case by nature in the sight of God. You owe him ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay. To-day's amendments are all very well, but they do not wipe away yesterday's debts.-It requires something more than amendment and reformation to give you a light heart and to set your conscience free.

It will not cleanse away your sins to become diligent in the use of the forms and ordinances of religion. You may alter your habits about Sunday, and attend services from morning to night: you may take pains to hear preaching on week-days, as well as on Sundays; you may receive the Lord's Supper on every possible occasion, and give alms, and keep fasts. It is all very well as far as it goes. It is a right and proper thing to attend to your religious duties. But all the means of grace

in the world will never do you any good so long as you trust in them as saviours. They will not bind up the wounds of your heart, and give you inward peace. FORMALITY CANNOT MAKE ATONEMENT FOR SIN.

A lantern on a dark night is a very useful thing. It can help the traveller to find his way home; it can preserve him from losing his path, and keep him from falling into danger. But the lantern itself is not the traveller's fireside. The man who is content to sit down in the road by the side of his lantern, must never be surprised if he dies of cold. Reader, if you try to satisfy your conscience with a formal attendance on means of grace, you are no wiser than this traveller. It needs something more than formality to take the burden from your conscience, and to give you peace with God.

It will not cleanse away your sins to look to man for help. It is not in the power of any child of Adam to save another's soul. No bishop, no priest, no ordained man of any Church or denomination has power to forgive sins: no human absolution, however solemnly conferred, can purge that conscience which is not purged by God. It is well to ask the counsel of the ministers of the Gospel when the conscience is perplexed. It is their office to help the labouring and heavy-laden, and to show them the way of peace. But it is not in the power of any minister to deliver any man from his guilt. We can only show the path that must be followed: we can only point out the door at which every one must knock. It requires a hand far stronger than that of man to take the chains off conscience, and set the prisoner free.

The bankrupt who asks a bankrupt to set him up in business again is only losing time; the pauper who travels off to a neighbour pauper, and begs him to help him out of difficulties, is only troubling himself in vain. The prisoner does not beg his fellow-prisoner to set him free; the shipwrecked sailor does not call on his shipwrecked comrade to place him safe ashore. Help in all these cases must come from some other quarter: relief in all these cases must be sought from some other hand. Reader, it is just the same in the matter of cleansing away your sins. So long as you seek it from man, whether man ordained or man not ordained, you seek it where it cannot be found. You must go further: you must look higher. You must turn elsewhere for comfort. It is not in the power of any man on earth or in heaven to take the burden of sin from off a brother's soul. "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give a ransom for him." (Psalms 49:7)

Reader, thousands in every age have tried to cleanse themselves from their sins in the ways I have now described, and have tried in vain. Thousands, I doubt not, are trying at this very moment, and find themselves "nothing bettered, but rather worse." They are climbing up a steep precipice of ice, toiling hard and yet slipping backwards as fast as they climb.-They are pouring water into a cask full of holes, labouring busily, and yet no nearer the end of their work than when they began.-They are rowing a boat against a rapid stream, plying the oar diligently, and yet in reality losing ground every minute.-They are trying to build up a wall of loose sand, wearing themselves out with fatigue, and yet seeing their work roll down on them as fast as they throw it up.-They are striving to pump dry a sinking ship: the water gains on them and they will soon be drowned.-Such is the experience, in every part of the world, of all who think to cleanse themselves from their sins. Reader, be warned to-day. Do not be one of them.

Beware, I do entreat you, of quack medicines in religion. Beware of supposing that penitence, and reformation, and formality, and priest-craft, can ever give you peace with God. They cannot do it. It

is not in them. The man who says they can must be ignorant of two things. He cannot know the length and breadth of human sinfulness: he cannot understand the height and depth of the holiness of God. There never breathed the man or woman on earth who tried to cleanse himself from his sins, and in so doing obtained relief.

Reader, if you have found out this truth by experience, be diligent to impart it to others. Show them as plainly as you can their guilt and danger by nature. Tell them, with no less plainness, the immense importance of having their sins forgiven and cleansed away. But then warn them not to waste time in seeking to be cleansed in unlawful fashions. Warn them against the specious advice of "Mr. Legality" and his companions, so vividly described in "Pilgrim's Progress." Warn them against false remedies and sham medicines for the soul. Send them to the old wicket-gate, described in Scripture, however hard and rough the way may seem. Tell them it is "the old path and the good way," and that, whatever men may say, it is the only way to obtain cleansing of our sins.

IV. The fourth remark I have to make is this. The blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse away all your sins.

Reader, I enter on this part of my tract with a thankful heart. I bless God that after setting before you the awful nature of your spiritual disease, I am able to set before you an almighty remedy. But I feel it needful to dwell upon this remedy for a few minutes. A thing of such wondrous efficacy as this blood ought to be clearly understood: there should be no vagueness or mystery in your ideas about it. When you hear of the "blood of Christ" you ought thoroughly to comprehend what the expression means

The blood of Christ is that life-blood which Jesus shed when He died for sinners upon the cross. It is the blood which flowed so freely from His head pierced with thorns, and His hands and feet pierced with nails, and His side pierced with a spear, in the day when He was crucified and slain. The quantity of that blood may very likely have been small; the appearance of that blood was doubtless like that of our own: but never since the day when Adam was first formed out of the dust of the ground, has any blood been shed of such deep importance to the whole family of mankind.

It was blood that had been long covenanted and promised. In the day when sin came into the world, God mercifully engaged that "the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." One born of woman should appear one day, and deliver the children of Adam from Satan's power. That Seed of the woman was our Lord Jesus Christ. In the day that He suffered on the cross, He triumphed over Satan and accomplished redemption for mankind. When Jesus shed His life-blood on the cross, the head of the serpent was bruised, and the ancient promise was fulfilled.

It was blood that had been long typified and prefigured. Every sacrifice that was offered up by patriarchs, was a testimony of their faith in a greater sacrifice yet to come; every shedding of the blood of lambs and goats under the Mosaic law was meant to foreshadow the dying of the true Lamb of God for the sin of the world. When Christ was crucified, these sacrifices and types received their full accomplishment. The true sacrifice for sin was at length offered; the real atoning blood was at length shed. From that day the offerings of the Mosaic law were no longer needed. Their work was done. They might be laid aside.

It was blood which was of infinite merit and value in the sight of God. It was not the blood of one who was nothing more than a singularly holy man, but of one who was God's own fellow, very God of very God. It was not the blood of one who died involuntarily, as a martyr to truth, but of one who voluntarily undertook to be the Substitute and Proxy for mankind, to bear their sins and carry their iniquities. It made atonement for man's transgressions; it paid man's enormous debt to God; it provided a way of righteous reconciliation between sinful man and his holy Maker; it made a road from heaven to earth, by which God could come down to man, and show mercy; it made a road from earth to heaven, by which man could draw near to God, and yet not feel afraid. Without it there could have been no remission of sin. Through it God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. From it a fountain has been formed, wherein sinners can wash and be clean to all eternity.

Reader, this wondrous blood of Christ, applied to your conscience, can cleanse you from all sin. It matters nothing what your sins may have been, "Though they be as scarlet they may be made like snow. Though they be red like crimson they can be made like wool." (Isaiah 1:18) From sins of youth and sins of age,-from sins of ignorance and sins of knowledge,-from sins of open profligacy and sins of secret vice,-from sins against law and sins against Gospel,-from sins of head, and heart, and tongue, and thought, and imagination,-from sins against each and all of the ten commandments,-from all these the blood of Christ can set us free. To this end was it appointed; for this cause was it shed; for this purpose it is still a fountain open to all mankind. That thing which you cannot do for yourself can be done in a moment by this precious fountain. YOU CAN HAVE ALL YOUR SINS CLEANSED AWAY.

In this blood all the dead saints have been cleansed hitherto, who are now waiting the resurrection of the just. From Abel, the first of whom we read, down to the last who has fallen asleep to-day, they have all "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14) Not one has entered into rest by his own works and deservings; not one has made himself clean before God by his own goodness and his own strength. They have all "overcome by the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 12:11) And their testimony in Paradise is clear and distinct: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Revelation 5:9)

By this blood all the living saints of God have peace and hope now; by it they have boldness to enter into the holiest; by it they are justified and made nigh to God; by it their consciences are daily purged and filled with holy confidence. About it all believers are agreed, however much they may differ on other matters. Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists,-all are agreed that the blood of Christ is that only thing that can cleanse the soul.-All are agreed that in ourselves we are "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." But all are agreed that in the blood of Christ the chief of sinners can be made clean.

Reader, would you like to know what we ministers of the Gospel are ordained to do? We are not set apart for no other end than to read services, and administer sacraments, and marry people, and bury the dead. We are not meant to do nothing more than show you the church, or ourselves, or our party. We are set for the work of showing men the blood of Christ; and except we are continually showing it, we are no true ministers of the Gospel.

Reader, would you like to know what is our heart's desire and prayer for the souls to whom we minister? We want to bring them to the blood of Christ. We are not content to see our churches filled, and our ordinances well attended, our congregations numerous, and our cause outwardly flourishing. We want to see men and women coming to the great Fountain for sin and uncleanness, and washing their souls in it that they may be clean. Here only is rest for the conscience. Here only is peace for the inward man. Here only is a cure for spiritual diseases Here only is the secret of a light and happy heart. No doubt we have within us a fountain of evil and corruption; but, blessed be God, there is another Fountain of greater power still,-even the precious blood of the Lamb: and, washing daily in that other Fountain, we are clean from all sin.

V. The fifth, and last remark I have to make, is this. Faith is absolutely necessary, and the only thing necessary, in order to give you an interest in the cleansing blood of Christ.

Reader, I ask your special attention to this point. A mistake here is often ruinous to a man's soul. It is a great tear at the root of your Christianity if you do not clearly see the true way of union between Christ and the soul.-That way is faith.

Church-membership and reception of the sacraments are no proof that you are washed in Christ's blood. Thousands attend a Christian place of worship, and receive the Lord's Supper from the hands of Christian ministers, and yet show plainly that they are not cleansed from their sins. Beware of despising means of grace, if you have any desire to be saved. But never, never forget that Church-membership is not faith.

Faith is the one thing needful in order to give you the benefit of Christ's cleansing blood. He is called a "propitiation through faith in His blood." "He that believeth on Him hath everlasting life." "By Him all that believe are justified from all things." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The wisdom of the whole world will never provide a better answer to an anxious inquirer than that which Paul gave to the Philippian jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."-"Art thou convinced of sin?" says the Gospel. "Dost thou really see that thou hast many sins, and art deserving of hell? Dost thou renounce all hope of cleansing thyself from thy sins by thine own power? Then thou art just the man for whom the Gospel provides comfort. Behold the atoning blood of Christ! Only trust in it, and this day thou shalt be freely pardoned. Only believe, and this very moment thy sins shall be cleansed away."-It is only "Believe and have." It is only "Believe and be clean." Let those who will call such doctrine rant and enthusiasm. I am bold to call it by another name. It is the "glorious Gospel" of the grace of God.

Reader, I ask you not to misunderstand my meaning in thus speaking of faith. I do not tell you that faith is the only mark of the man whose sins are cleansed away. I do not say that the faith which gives a man an interest in Christ's atoning blood, is ever found alone. Saving faith is no barren, solitary grace. It is always accompanied by repentance and personal holiness.-But this I say confidently, that in the matter of giving the soul an interest in Christ, faith is the only thing required. In the matter of justification before God, faith, I repeat emphatically, stands entirely alone. Faith is the hand that lays hold on Christ. Faith begins, faith carries on, faith keeps up the claim which the sinner makes on the Saviour. By faith we are justified. By faith we bathe our souls in the great Fountain for sin. By faith we go on obtaining fresh supplies of pardoning mercy all through our journey. By faith we live, and by faith we stand.

Reader, nothing whatever besides this faith is required, in order to your complete justification and cleansing from all sin. Let this sink deeply into your mind. Where is the man that desires to enjoy real comfort from the Gospel? Seek, I do entreat you, to have clear and simple views of the nature of saving faith. Beware of those dark, and confused, and muddy notions of faith, by which so many distress their souls. Dismiss from your mind the idea that faith is a mere act of the intellect. It is not assent to doctrines or articles; it is not belief of "Paley's Evidences" or "Pearson on the Creed." It is simply the grasp of a contrite heart on the outstretched hand of an Almighty Saviour,-the repose of a weary head on the bosom of an Almighty Friend.-Cast away all idea of work, or merit, or doing, or performing, or paying, or giving, or buying, or labouring, in the act of believing on Christ. Understand that faith is not giving, but taking,-not paying, but receiving,-not buying, but being enriched. It is the eye that looks to the brazen serpent, and looking obtains life and health; it is the mouth that drinks down the reviving medicine, and drinking receives strength and vigour for the whole body; it is the hand of the drowning man which lays hold on the rope thrown to him, and laying hold enables him to be drawn up from the deep water safe and sound. This, and nothing more than this, is the true idea of saving faith. This, and this only, is the faith that is required to give you an interest in the blood of Christ. Believe in this way, and your sins are at once cleansed away!

Reader, nothing whatever except this faith will ever give you an interest in Christ's atoning blood. You may go daily to Christ's church; you may often use Christ's name; you may bow the head at the name of Jesus; you may eat of the bread and wine which Christ commanded to be received. But all this time, without faith, you have neither part nor lot in Christ: without faith, so far as you are concerned, Christ's blood has been shed in vain.

I desire to enter my solemn protest against the modern notions which prevail on this solemn subject. I protest against the opinion which many now maintain, that any are saved by Christ excepting those who believe. There is much vague talk in some quarters about the Fatherhood of God and the love of God, as if we who are called "Evangelical" denied these glorious truths. We do not deny them at all: we hold them as strongly as any. We give place to no man in this matter. But we utterly deny that God is the spiritual Father of any excepting those who are His children by faith in Christ Jesus. We utterly deny that men have a right to take comfort in God's love, except they believe on Him through whom that love has been manifested, even His dear Son. The atoning blood of the Son of God is the grand exhibition of God's love towards sinners. The sinner who desires to be saved, must have personal dealings with Him who shed that blood. By personal faith he must wash in it; by personal faith he must drink of it; by personal faith he must put in his own claim to all its blessings: without this faith there can be no salvation.

Reader, would you know the main objects that we ministers have in view in our preaching? We preach that you may believe. Faith is the thing that we desire to see produced in your souls; faith is the thing that, once produced, we desire to see growing. We rejoice to see you coming regularly to hear the Gospel; we rejoice to see an orderly, well-behaved congregation of worshippers: but faith, faith, faith,-is the grand result which we long to see in your souls. Without faith we cannot feel comfortable about you; without faith you are in imminent danger of hell. According to your faith will be the strength of your Christianity; according to the degree of your faith will be the increase of your peace and hope, and the closeness of your walk with God. Reader, you will not wonder that there is nothing we care for so much as your believing.

I hasten to bring my remarks to a conclusion. I have tried to show you five things, and have endeavoured to set them before you in plain language

(1) I have told you that you have many sins. (2) I have told you that it is of the utmost importance to have these sins cleansed away. (3). I have told you that you cannot cleanse away your own sins. (4) I have told you that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. (5) I have told you that faith only is needful, but absolutely needful, to give you any interest in Christ's blood; I have told you what I am firmly persuaded is God's own truth,-the truth on which I desire myself to live and die. I pray God that the Holy Ghost may apply this truth with mighty power to many souls.

Reader, I will wind up all this subject by three words of parting application. Our years are passing quickly away. The night cometh, when no man can work. Yet a little time and our place in another world will be settled to all eternity. A few more years, and we shall be either in heaven or in hell. Surely this fact alone ought to set us thinking. Bear with me while I try to turn your thoughts in a profitable direction; bear with me while, as a friend and brother, I try to talk to you about your soul.

1. My first word of application shall be a question. I address it to all into whose hands this tract may fall, without distinction or exception. It is a question which concerns deeply every man, woman, and child in the world, whatever be their rank or station; it is the question which forms the title of this tract

"Where are your sins?"

Reader, remember, I do not ask you what you call yourself in religion; I do not ask you where you go,-or whom you hear,-or to what party you belong,-or what are your peculiar opinions about Church or Dissent. I leave such matters alone. I am weary to see the enormous waste of time of which multitudes are yearly guilty in respect to these matters: I am for the realities and substance of Christianity; I want to fix your attention on the things which will look important in the hour of death and at the last day. And I say boldly, that one of the first questions which demand your notice, is the question of my tract:-"Where are your sins?"

I am not asking what you intend, or mean, or hope, or resolve to aim at, at some future time; I leave all that to children and fools. To-morrow is the devil's day, but today is God's. And here, as in God's sight, this very day, while you are reading my tract, I ask you to find an answer to my question: "Where are your sins?"

Reader, I ask you to mark what I am going to say. I say it calmly, deliberately, advisedly, and with consideration: I tell you that at this moment there are only two places in which your sins can be, and I defy the wisdom of the world to find out a third. Either your sins are UPON YOURSELF, unpardoned, unforgiven, uncleansed, unwashed away,-sinking you daily nearer to hell! Or else your sins are UPON CHRIST, taken away, forgiven, pardoned, blotted out and cleansed away by Christ's precious blood! I am utterly unable to see any third place in which a man's sins can possibly be; I am utterly unable to discover any third alternative. Forgiven or unforgiven,-pardoned or not pardoned,-cleansed away or not cleansed,-this, according to the Bible, is the exact position of every one's sins. Reader, how is it with you? "Where are your sins?"

I do pray you to lay this question to heart, and never to rest till you can give it an answer; I do entreat you to examine your own state,-to prove your own spiritual condition,-and to find out how

matters stand between you and God. Let the time past suffice for trifling and indecision about your soul.

Give it up,-give it up,-give it up for ever. Let the time past suffice for a mere formal, aimless, meaningless, comfortless religion. Lay it aside,-lay it aside,-lay it aside for ever. Be real; be thorough; be in earnest. Deal with your soul as a reasonable being; deal with it as one who feels that eternal interests are at stake; deal with it as one who has made up his mind, and is determined to live in suspense no longer. Oh, resolve this very day to find an answer to my question: "Where are your sins?" Are they on yourself, or are they on Christ?

2. My second word of application shall be an invitation. I address it to all who feel unable to give a satisfactory answer to the question of my tract; I address it to all who feel sinful, and lost, and condemned, and unfit to die. It is that invitation which is the glory of the Gospel. I say to you, "Come to Christ, and be cleansed in His blood without delay."

I know not what you may have been in your past life: it matters nothing. You may have broken every commandment under heaven; you may have sinned with a high hand against light and knowledge; you may have despised a father's warnings and a mother's tears; you may have run greedily into every excess of riot, and plunged into every kind of abominable profligacy; you may have turned your back entirely on God, His day, His house, His ministers, His word, I say again, it matters nothing. Do you feel your sins? Are you sick of them? Are you ashamed of them? Are you weary of them? Then come to Christ just as you are, and Christ's blood shall make you clean.

I see you lingering, and doubting, and fancying the news too good to be true; I hear the devil whispering in your ear, "You are too bad; you are too wicked to be saved." I charge you, in God's name, not to give way to such doubts. I remind you that Satan always was a liar. One time he told you it was "too soon" for religion: and now he tells you it is "too late." I tell you confidently, that Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him; I tell you confidently, that He has received, cleansed, and pardoned thousands as bad as you: He never changes. Only come to Him, and His blood shall cleanse you from all sin.

I can well fancy that you feel at a loss, and know not what to do; I can well believe that you do not see which way to turn, or what step to take, or in what manner to follow out my counsel. I bid you go and say so to the Lord Jesus Christ! I bid you seek some quiet solitary place, and pour out your heart before Him: tell Him that you are a poor miserable sinner; tell Him that you know not how to pray, or what to say, or what to do. But tell Him that you have heard something about His blood cleansing a man from all sin, and entreat Him to think on you, and cleanse your soul. Oh, reader, take this advice,-and who can tell but you may say one day, "The blood of Christ does indeed cleanse a man from all sin."

Reader, for the last time I offer my invitation. I stand in the life-boat alongside the wreck to which you are clinging, and I entreat you to come in. The day is far spent; the night is coming on; the clouds are gathering; the waves are rising. Yet a little time and the old wreck of this world will go to pieces. Come into the life-boat; come in and be safe: come to the blood of Christ; wash, and be clean: come with all your sins to Christ, and cast them on Him He will bear them away; He will cleanse then; He will pardon them. Only believe and be saved.

3. My last word shall be an exhortation. I address it to all who have been taught by the Spirit to feel their sins, and have fled to the hope set before them in the Gospel; I address it to all who have discovered the grand truth that they are guilty sinners, and have washed in the blood of Christ in order to have their sins cleansed away. That exhortation shall be short and simple. I bid them "cling to Christ."

Cling to Christ, I say: and never forget your debt to Him. Sinners you were, when you were first called by the Holy Ghost, and fled to Jesus. Sinners you have been, even at your bed, from the day of your conversion. Sinners you will find yourselves to your dying hour, having nothing to boast of in yourselves. Then cling to Christ.

Cling to Christ, I say: and make use of His atoning blood every day. Go to Him every morning as your morning sacrifice, and confess your need of His salvation. Go to Him every night, after the bustle of the day, and plead for fresh absolution. Wash in the great Fountain every evening, after all the defilement of contact with the world. "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet." But his feet he needs to wash. (John 13:10)

Cling to Christ, I say: and show the world how you love Him. Show it by obedience to His commandments. Show it by conformity to His image. Show it by following His example. Make your Master's cause lovely and beautiful before men, by your own holiness of temper and conversation. Let all the world see, that he who is much forgiven is the man who loves much, and that he who loves most is the man who does most for Christ. (Luke 7:47)

Cling to Christ, I say: and have high thoughts of the atonement made by His blood upon the cross. Think highly of His incarnation and His example,-think highly of His miracles and His words,-think highly of His resurrection, and intercession, and coming again. But think highest of all of Christ's sacrifice and the propitiation made by His death. Contend earnestly for the old faith concerning His atonement. See, in the old doctrine that He died as a substitute for sinners, the only solution of a thousand passages in the Old Testament, and a hundred passages in the New. Never, never be ashamed to let men know that you derive all your comfort from the atoning blood of Christ, and from His substitution for you on the cross.

Cling to Christ, I say lastly: and make much of the old foundation truths concerning salvation by His blood. These are the old friends to which our souls will turn at last in the hour of our departure. These are the ancient doctrines on which we shall lean back our aching heads, when life is ebbing away and death is in sight. We shall not ask ourselves then whether we have been Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Churchmen or Dissenters. We shall not find comfort then in new-fangled notions and human inventions,-in baptism and churchmembership,-in sects and parties,-in ceremonies and forms. Nothing will do us good then but the blood of Christ. Nothing will support us then but the witness of the Spirit, that in the blood of Jesus we have washed, and by that blood have been made clean.

Reader, I commend these things to your notice. If you never knew these things before, may you soon become acquainted with them! If you have known them in time past, may you know them better for time to come! We can never know too well the right answer to the mighty question,-"Where are your sins?"

HYMN.

I thought upon my sins and I was sad,-
My soul was troubled sore and fill'd with pain
But then I thought on Jesus, and was glad,-
My heavy grief was turned to joy again.
I thought upon the law, the fiery law,
Holy, and just, and good in its decree:
I look'd to Jesus, and in Him I saw
That law fulfilled,.-its curse endured for me.
I thought I saw an angry, frowning God,
Sitting as Judge upon the great white throne:
My so was overwhelm'd,-then Jesus showed
His gracious face, and all my dread was gone.
I saw my sad estate,-condemned to die:
Then terror seized my heart, and dark despair;
But when, to Calvary I turned my eye,
I saw the cross, and read forgiveness there.
I saw that I was lost,-far gone astray,-.
No hope of safe return there seemed to be;
But then I heard that Jesus was the way,
A new and living way prepared for me.
Then in that way, so free, so safe, so sure,
Sprinkled all o'er with reconciling blood,
Will I abide; and never wander more,-
Walking along in fellowship with God.
H. BONAR.

Whitefield

[extract taken from]

THE

CHRISTIAN LEADERS

OR,

The Last Century;

OR,

ENGLAND A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

By the

REV. J. C. R Y L E, B. A .,

Christ Church, Oxford;

AUTHOR OF "EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS," &c.

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“Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of

their fathers.”—JOB viii. 8.

_____ LONDON:

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_____

1878.

[The following biographical paper on George Whitefield was originally delivered in a lecture by J. C. Ryle in 1852, and he enlarged it for publication with 10 other evangelical biographies in a classic book entitled “Christian Leaders of the 18th Century”. There is today a paperback version available from THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST at a most reasonable price and is highly recommended.] George Whitefield and his Ministry. by

J. C. Ryle D.D.

CHAPTER I.

Whitefield's Birth-place and Parentage—Educated at Gloucester Grammar School—Enters Pembroke College, Oxford—Season of Spiritual Conflict—Books which were made useful to him—Ordained by Bishop Benson—First Sermon—Preaches in London—Curate of Dummer, Hants—Goes to America—Returns in a Year—Preaches in the open air—Is excluded from most London Pulpits—Extent of his Labours for thirty-one years—Dies at Newbury Port, America, in 1770—Interesting circumstances of his Death. WHO were the men that revived religion in England a hundred years ago? What were their names, that we may do them honour? Where were they born? How were they educated? What are the leading facts in their lives? What was their special department of labour? To these questions I wish to supply some answers in the present and future chapters.

I pity the man who takes no interest in such inquiries. The instruments that God employs to do his work in the world deserve a close inspection. The man who did not care to look at the rams' horns that blew down Jericho, the hammer and nail that slew Sisera, the lamps and trumpets of Gideon, the sling and stone of David, might fairly be set down as a cold and heartless person. I trust that all who read this volume will like to know something about the English evangelists of the eighteenth century.

The first and foremost whom I will name is the well-known George Whitefield. Though not the first in order, if we look at the date of his birth, I place him first in the order of merit, without any hesitation. Of all the spiritual heroes of a hundred years ago none saw so soon as Whitefield what the times demanded, and none were so forward in the great work of spiritual aggression. I should think I committed an act of injustice if I placed any name before his.

Whitefield was born at Gloucester in the year 1714. That venerable county-town, which was his birth-place, is connected with more than one name which ought to be dear to every lover of Protestant truth. Tyndal, one of the first and ablest translators of the English Bible, was a Gloucestershire man. Hooper, one of the greatest and best of our English reformers, was Bishop of Gloucester, and was burned at the stake for Christ's truth, within view of his own cathedral, in Queen Mary's reign. In the next century Miles Smith, Bishop of Gloucester, was one of the first to protest against the Romanizing proceedings of Laud, who was then Dean of Gloucester. In fact, he carried his Protestant feeling so far that, when Laud moved the communion-table in the cathedral to the east end, and placed it for the first time "altar-wise," in 1616, Bishop Smith was so much offended that he refused to enter the walls of the cathedral from that day till his death. Places like Gloucester, we need not doubt, have a rich entailed inheritance of many prayers. The city where Hooper preached and prayed, and where the zealous Miles Smith protested, was the place where the greatest preacher of the gospel England has ever seen was born.

Like many other famous men, Whitefield was of humble origin, and had no rich or noble connections to help him forward in the world. His mother kept the Bell Inn at Gloucester, and appears not to have prospered in business; at any rate, she never seems to have been able to do anything for Whitefield's advancement in life. The inn itself is still standing, and is reputed to be the birth-place, not only of our greatest English preacher, but also of a well-known English prelate—Henry Philpot, Bishop of Exeter.

Whitefield's early life, according to his own account, was anything but religious; though, like many boys, he had occasional prickings of conscience and spasmodic fits of devout feeling. But habits

and general tastes are the only true test of young people's characters. He confesses that he was "addicted to lying, filthy talking, and foolish jesting," and that he was a "Sabbath-breaker, a theatre-goer, a card-player, and a romance-reader." All this, he says, went on till he was fifteen years old.

Poor as he was, his residence at Gloucester procured him the advantage of a good education at the Free Grammar School of that city. Here he was a day-scholar until he was fifteen. Nothing is known of his progress there. He can hardly, however, have been quite idle, or else he would not have been ready to enter an University afterwards at the age of eighteen. His letters, moreover, show an acquaintance with Latin, in the shape of frequent quotations, which is seldom acquired, if not picked up at school. The only known fact about his school-days is this curious one, that even then he was remarkable for his good elocution and memory, and was selected to recite speeches before the Corporation of Gloucester at their annual visitation of the Grammar School.

At the age of fifteen Whitefield appears to have left school, and to have given up Latin and Greek for a season. In all probability, his mother's straitened circumstances made it absolutely necessary for him to do something to assist her in business and to get his own living. He began, therefore, to help her in the daily work of the Bell Inn. "At length," he says, "I put on my blue apron, washed cups, cleaned rooms, and, in one word, became a professed common drawer for nigh a year and a half."

This state of things, however, did not last long. His mother's business at the Bell did not flourish, and she finally retired from it altogether. An old school-fellow revived in his mind the idea of going to Oxford, and he went back to the Grammar School and renewed his studies. Friends were raised up who made interest for him at Pembroke College, Oxford, where the Grammar School of Gloucester held two exhibitions. And at length, after several providential circumstances had smoothed the way, he entered Oxford as a servitor at Pembroke at the age of eighteen.1

Whitefield's residence at Oxford was the great turning-point in his life. For two or three years before he went to the University his journal tells us that he had not been without religious convictions. But from the time of his entering Pembroke College these convictions fast ripened into decided Christianity. He diligently attended all means of grace within his reach. He spent his leisure time in visiting the city prison, reading to the prisoners, and trying to do good. He became acquainted with the famous John Wesley and his brother Charles, and a little band of like-minded young men, including the well-known author of "Theron and Aspasio," James Hervey. These were the devoted party to whom the name "Methodists" was first applied, on account of their strict "method" of living. At one time he seems to have greedily devoured such books as "Thomas a Kempis," and "Castanuza's Spiritual Combat," and to have been in danger of becoming a semi-papist, an ascetic, or a mystic, and of placing the whole of religion in self-denial. He says in his Journal, "I always chose the worst sort of food. I fasted twice a week. My apparel was mean. I thought it unbecoming a penitent to have his hair powdered. I wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes; and though I was convinced that the kingdom of God did not consist in meat and drink, yet I resolutely persisted in these voluntary acts of self-denial, because I found in them great promotion of the spiritual life." Out of all this darkness he was gradually delivered, partly by the advice of one or two experienced Christians, and partly by reading such books as Scougal's "Life of God in the Heart of Man," Law's "Serious Call," Baxter's "Call to the

Unconverted," Alleine's "Alarm to Unconverted Sinners," and Matthew Henry's "Commentary." "Above all," he says, "my mind being now more opened and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the book of God in one month than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men." Once taught to understand the glorious liberty of Christ's gospel, Whitefield never turned again to asceticism, legalism, mysticism, or strange views of Christian perfection. The experience received by bitter conflict was most valuable to him. The doctrines of free grace, once thoroughly grasped, took deep root in his heart, and became, as it were, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Of all the little band of Oxford methodists, none seem to have got hold so soon of clear views of Christ's gospel as he did, and none kept it so unwaveringly to the end.

At the early age of twenty-two Whitefield was admitted to holy orders by Bishop Benson of Gloucester, on Trinity Sunday, 1736. His ordination was not of his own seeking. The bishop heard of his character from Lady Selwyn and others, sent for him, gave him five guineas to buy books, and offered to ordain him, though only twenty-two years old, whenever he wished. This unexpected offer came to him when he was full of scruples about his own fitness for the ministry. It cut the knot and brought him to the point of decision. "I began to think," he says, "that if I held out longer I should fight against God."

Whitefield's first sermon was preached in the very town where he was born, at the church of St. Mary-le-Crypt, Gloucester. His own description of it is the best account that can be given:—"Last Sunday, in the afternoon, I preached my first sermon in the church of St. Mary-le-Crypt, where I was baptized, and also first received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Curiosity, as you may easily guess, drew a large congregation together upon this occasion. The sight at first a little awed me. But I was comforted with a heartfelt sense of the divine presence, and soon found the unspeakable advantage of having been accustomed to public speaking when a boy at school, and of exhorting the prisoners and poor people at their private houses while at the university. By these means I was kept from being daunted overmuch. As I proceeded I perceived the fire kindled, till at last, though so young and amidst a crowd of those who knew me in my childish days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of gospel authority. Some few mocked, but most seemed for the present struck; and I have since heard that a complaint was made to the bishop that I drove fifteen mad the first sermon! The worthy prelate wished that the madness might not be forgotten before next Sunday."

Almost immediately after his ordination, Whitefield went to Oxford and took his degree as Bachelor of Arts. He then commenced his regular ministerial life by undertaking temporary duty at the Tower Chapel, London, for two months. While engaged there he preached continually in many London churches; and among others, in the parish churches of Islington, Bishopsgate, St. Dunstan's, St. Margaret's, Westminster, and Bow, Cheapside. From the very first he obtained a degree of popularity such as no preacher, before or since, has probably ever reached. Whether on week-days or Sundays, wherever he preached, the churches were crowded, and an immense sensation was produced. The plain truth is, that a really eloquent, extempore preacher, preaching the pure gospel with most un-common gifts of voice and manner, was at that time an entire novelty in London. The congregations were taken by surprise and carried by storm.

From London he removed for two months to Dummer, a little rural parish in Hampshire, near Basingstoke. This was a totally new sphere of action, and he seemed like a man buried alive among poor illiterate people. But he was soon reconciled to it, and thought afterwards that he reaped much profit by conversing with the poor. From Dummer he accepted an invitation, which had been much pressed on him by the Wesleys, to visit the colony of Georgia in North America, and assist in the care of an Orphan House which had been set up near Savannah for the children of colonists. After preaching for a few months in Gloucestershire, and especially at Bristol and Stonehouse, he sailed for America in the latter part of 1737, and continued there about a year. The affairs of this Orphan House, it may be remarked, occupied much of his attention from this period of his life till he died. Though well-meant, it seems to have been a design of very questionable wisdom, and certainly entailed on Whitefield a world of anxiety and responsibility to the end of his days.

Whitefield returned from Georgia at the latter part of the year 1738, partly to obtain priest's orders, which were conferred on him by his old friend Bishop Benson, and partly on business connected with the Orphan House. He soon, however, discovered that his position was no longer what it was before he sailed for Georgia. The bulk of the clergy was no longer favourable to him, and regarded him with suspicion as an enthusiast and a fanatic. They were especially scandalized by his preaching the doctrine of regeneration or the new birth, as a thing which many baptized persons greatly needed! The number of pulpits to which he had access rapidly diminished. Churchwardens, who had no eyes for drunkenness and impurity, were filled with intense indignation about what they called "breaches of order." Bishops, who could tolerate Arianism, Socinianism, and Deism, were filled with indignation at a man who declared fully the atonement of Christ and the work of the Holy Ghost, and began to denounce him openly. In short, from this period of his life, Whitefield's field of usefulness within the Church of England narrowed rapidly on every side.

The step which at this juncture gave a turn to the whole current of Whitefield's ministry was his adoption of the system of open-air preaching. Seeing that thousands everywhere would attend no place of worship, spent their Sundays in idleness or sin, and were not to be reached by sermons within walls, he resolved, in the spirit of holy aggression, to go out after them "into the highways and hedges," on his Master's principle, and "compel them to come in." His first attempt to do this was among the colliers at Kingswood near Bristol, in February 1739. After much prayer he one day went to Hannam Mount, and standing upon a hill began to preach to about a hundred colliers upon Matt. v. 1—3. The thing soon became known. The number of hearers rapidly increased, till the congregation amounted to many thousands. His own account of the behaviour of these neglected colliers, who had never been in a church in their lives, is deeply affecting:—"Having," he writes to a friend, "no righteousness of their own to renounce, they were glad to hear of a Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The first discovery of their being affected was the sight of the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of their coal-pits. Hundreds of them were soon brought under deep conviction, which, as the event proved, happily ended in a sound and thorough conversion. The change was visible to all, though numbers chose to impute it to anything rather than the finger of God. As the scene was quite new, it often occasioned many inward conflicts. Sometimes, when twenty thousand people were before me, I had not in my own

apprehension a word to say either to God or them. But I was never totally deserted, and frequently (for to deny it would be lying against God) was so assisted that I knew by happy experience what our Lord meant by saying, 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' The open firmament above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight of thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some in the trees, and at times all affected and in tears, was almost too much for, and quite overcame me."

Two months after this Whitefield began the practice of open-air preaching in London, on April 27, 1739. The circumstances under which this happened were curious. He had gone to Islington to preach for the vicar, his friend Mr. Stonehouse. In the midst of the prayer the churchwardens came to him and demanded his license for preaching in the diocese of London. Whitefield, of course, had not got this license any more than any clergyman not regularly officiating in the diocese has at this day. The upshot of the matter was, that being forbidden by the churchwardens to preach in the pulpit, he went outside after the communion service, and preached in the churchyard. "And," says he, "God was pleased so to assist me in preaching, and so wonderfully to affect the hearers, that I believe we could have gone singing hymns to prison. Let not the adversaries say, I have thrust myself out of their synagogues. No; they have thrust me out."

From that day forward he became a constant field-preacher, whenever weather and the season of the year made it possible. Two days afterwards, on Sunday, April 29, he records:—"I preached in Moorfields to an exceeding great multitude. Being weakened by my morning's preaching, I refreshed myself in the afternoon by a little sleep, and at five went and preached at Kennington Common, about two miles from London, when no less than thirty thousand people were supposed to be present." Henceforth, wherever there were large open spaces round London, wherever there were large bands of idle, godless, Sabbath-breaking people gathered together, in Hackney Fields, Mary-le-bonne Fields, May Fair, Smithfield, Blackheath, Moorfields, and Kennington Common, there went Whitefield and lifted up his voice for Christ.2 The gospel so proclaimed was listened to and greedily received by hundreds who never dreamed of going to a place of worship. The cause of pure religion was advanced, and souls were plucked from the hand of Satan, like brands from the burning. But it was going much too fast for the Church of those days. The clergy, with a few honourable exceptions, refused entirely to countenance this strange preacher. In the true spirit of the dog in the manger, they neither liked to go after the semi-heathen masses of population themselves, nor liked any one else to do the work for them. The consequence was that the ministrations of Whitefield in the pulpits of the Church of England from this time almost entirely ceased. He loved the Church in which he had been ordained; he gloried in her Articles; he used her Prayer book with pleasure. But the Church did not love him, and so lost the use of his services. The plain truth is that the Church of England of that day was not ready for a man like Whitefield. The Church was too much asleep to understand him, and was vexed at a man who would not keep still and let the devil alone.

The facts of Whitefield's history from this period to the day of his death are almost entirely of one complexion. One year was just like another; and to attempt to follow him would be only going repeatedly over the same ground. From 1739 to the year of his death, 1770, a period of thirty-one years, his life was one uniform employment. He was eminently a man of one thing, and always about his Master's business. From Sunday mornings to Saturday nights, from the 1st of January to the 31st of December, excepting when laid aside by illness, he was almost incessantly preaching

Christ, and going about the world entreating men to repent and come to Christ and be saved. There was hardly a considerable town in England, Scotland, or Wales, that he did not visit as an evangelist. When churches were opened to him he gladly preached in churches; when only chapels could be obtained, he cheerfully preached in chapels. When churches and chapels alike were closed, or were too small to contain his hearers, he was ready and willing to preach in the open air. For thirty-one years he laboured in this way, always proclaiming the same glorious gospel, and always, as far as man's eye can judge, with immense effect. In one single Whitsuntide week, after preaching in Moorfields, he received one thousand letters from people under spiritual concern, and admitted to the Lord's table three hundred and fifty persons. In the thirty-four years of his ministry it is reckoned that he preached publicly eighteen thousand times.

His journeyings were prodigious, when the roads and conveyances of his time are considered. He was familiar with "perils in the wilderness and perils in the seas," if ever man was in modern times. He visited Scotland fourteen times, and was nowhere more acceptable or useful than he was in that Bible-loving country. He crossed the Atlantic seven times, backward and forward, in miserable slow sailing ships, and arrested the attention of thousands in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. He went over to Ireland twice, and on one occasion was almost murdered by an ignorant Popish mob in Dublin. As to England and Wales, he traversed every county in them, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland.

His regular ministerial work in London for the winter season, when field-preaching was necessarily suspended, was something prodigious. His weekly engagements at the Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road, which was built for him when the pulpits of the Established Church were closed, comprised the following work:—Every Sunday morning he administered the Lord's Supper to several hundred communicants at half-past six. After this he read prayers, and preached both morning and afternoon. Then he preached again in the evening at half-past five, and concluded by addressing a large society of widows, married people, young men and spinsters, all sitting separately in the area of the Tabernacle, with exhortations suitable to their respective stations. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings, he preached regularly at six. On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings, he delivered lectures. This, it will be observed, made thirteen sermons a week! And all this time he was carrying on a large correspondence with people in almost every part of the world.

That any human frame could so long endure the labours that Whitefield went through does indeed seem wonderful that his life was not cut short by violence, to which he was frequently exposed, is no less wonderful. But he was immortal till his work was done. He died at last very suddenly at Newbury Port, in North America, on Sunday, September the 29th, 1770, at the comparatively early age of fifty-six. He was once married to a widow named James, of Abergavenny, who died before him. If we may judge from the little mention made of his wife in his letters, the marriage does not seem to have contributed much to his happiness. He left no children, but he left a name far better than that of sons and daughters. Never perhaps was there a man of whom it could be so truly said that he spent and was spent for Christ than George Whitefield.

The circumstances and particulars of this great evangelist's end are so deeply interesting, that I shall make no excuse for dwelling on them. It was an end in striking harmony with the tenor of his life. As he had lived for more than thirty years, so he died, preaching to the very last. He literally

almost died in harness. “Sudden death,” he had often said, “is sudden glory. Whether right or not, I cannot help wishing that I may go off in the same manner. To me it would be worse than death to live to be nursed, and to see friends weeping about me.” He had the desire of his heart granted. He was cut down in a single night by a spasmodic fit of asthma, almost before his friends knew that he was ill.

On the morning of Saturday the 29th of September, the day before he died, Whitefield set out on horseback from Portsmouth in New Hampshire, in order to fulfil an engagement to preach at Newbury Port on Sunday. On the way, unfortunately, he was earnestly importuned to preach at a place called Exeter, and though feeling very ill, he had not the heart to refuse. A friend remarked before he preached that he looked more uneasy than usual, and said to him, “Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach.” To this Whitefield replied: “True, sir;” and then turning aside, he clasped his hands together, and looking up, said: “Lord Jesus, I am weary in thy work, but not of thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for thee once more in the fields, seal thy truth, and come home and die.” He then went and preached to a very great multitude in the fields from the text 2 Cor. xiii. 5, for the space of nearly two hours. It was his last sermon, and a fitting conclusion to his whole career.

An eye-witness has given the following striking account of this closing scene of Whitefield’s life: —“He rose from his seat and stood erect. His appearance alone was a powerful sermon. The thinness of his visage, the paleness of his countenance, the evident struggling of the heavenly spark in a decayed body for utterance, were all deeply interesting; the spirit was willing, but the flesh was dying. In this situation he remained several minutes, unable to speak. He then said: ‘I will wait for the gracious assistance of God, for he will, I am certain, assist me once more to speak in his name.’ He then delivered perhaps one of his best sermons. The latter part contained the following passage: ‘I go; I go to a rest prepared: my sun has given light to many, but now it is about to set—no, to rise to the zenith of immortal glory. I have outlived many on earth, but they cannot outlive me in heaven. Many shall outlive me on earth and live when this body is no more, but there—oh, thought divine!—I shall be in a world where time, age, sickness, and sorrow are unknown. My body fails, but my spirit expands. How willingly would I live forever to preach Christ. But I die to be with him. How brief—comparatively brief—has been my life compared to the vast labours which I see before me yet to be accomplished. But if I leave now, while so few care about heavenly things, the God of peace will surely visit you.”

After the sermon was over, Whitefield dined with a friend, and then rode on to Newbury Port, though greatly fatigued. On arriving there he supped early, and retired to bed. Tradition says, that as he went up-stairs, with a lighted candle in his hand, he could not resist the inclination to turn round at the head of the stair, and speak to the friends who were assembled to meet him. As he spoke the fire kindled within him, and before he could conclude, the candle which he held in his hand had actually burned down to the socket. He retired to his bedroom, to come out no more alive. A violent fit of spasmodic asthma seized him soon after he got into bed, and before six o’clock the next morning the great preacher was dead. If ever man was ready for his change, Whitefield was that man. When his time came, he had nothing to do but to die. Where he died there he was buried, in a vault beneath the pulpit of the church where he had engaged to preach. His sepulchre is shown to this very day; and nothing makes the little town where he died so famous as the fact that it contains the bones of George Whitefield.

Such are the leading facts in the life of the prince of English evangelists of a hundred years ago. His personal character, the real extent of his usefulness, and some account of his style of preaching, are subjects that I must reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

Estimate of good that Whitefield did—Testimonies to his direct Usefulness—Indirect good that he did—Peculiar character of his Preaching—Witnesses to his real power as a Preacher—Analysis of his seventy-five published Sermons—Simplicity, Directness, Power of Description, Earnestness, Pathos Action, Voice, and Fluency, his leading Excellences—Inner Life, Humility, Love to Christ, Laboriousness, Self-denial, Disinterestedness, Cheerfulness, Catholicity—Specimen of his Preaching.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD, in my judgment, was so entirely chief and first among the English Reformers of the last century, that I make no apology for offering some further information about him. The real amount of good he did, the peculiar character of his preaching, the private character of the man, are all points that deserve consideration. They are points, I may add, about which there is a vast amount of misconception.

This misconception perhaps is unavoidable, and ought not to surprise us. The materials for forming a correct opinion about such a man as Whitefield are necessarily very scanty. He wrote no book for the million, of world-wide fame, like Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." He headed no crusade against an apostate Church, with a nation at his back, and princes on his side, like Martin Luther. He founded no religious denomination, which pinned its faith on his writings and carefully embalmed his best acts and words, like John Wesley. There are Lutherans and Wesleyans in the present day, but there are no Whitefieldites. No! The great evangelist of last century was a simple, guileless man, who lived for one thing only, and that was to preach Christ. If he did that, he cared for nothing else. The records of such a man are large and full in heaven, I have no doubt but they are few and scanty upon earth.

We must not forget, beside this, that the many in every age see nothing in a man like Whitefield but fanaticism and enthusiasm. They abhor everything like "zeal" in religion. They dislike every one who turns the world upside down, and departs from old traditional ways, and will not let the devil alone. Such persons, no doubt, would tell us that the ministry of Whitefield only produced temporary excitement, that his preaching was common-place rant, and that his character had nothing about it to be specially admired. It may be feared that eighteen hundred years ago they would have said much the same of St. Paul.

The question, "What good did Whitefield do?" is one which I answer without the least hesitation. I believe that the direct good, which he did to immortal souls, was enormous. I will go further,—I believe it is incalculable. Credible witnesses in England, Scotland, and America, have placed on record their conviction that he was the means of converting thousands of people. Many, wherever he preached, were not merely pleased, excited, and arrested, but positively turned from sin, and made thorough servants of God. "Numbering the people," I do not forget, is at all times an objectionable practice. God alone can read hearts and discern the wheat from the tares. Many, no doubt, in days of religious excitement, are set down as converted who are not converted at all. But I wish my readers to understand that my high estimate of Whitefield's usefulness is based on a

solid foundation. I ask them to mark well what Whitefield's contemporaries thought of the value of his labours.

Franklin, the well-known American philosopher, was a cold-blooded, calculating man, a Quaker by profession, and not likely to form too high an estimate of any minister's work. Yet even he confessed that "it was wonderful to see the change soon made by his preaching in the manners of the inhabitants of Philadelphia. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious." Franklin himself, it may be remarked, was the leading printer of religious works at Philadelphia; and his readiness to print Whitefield's sermons and journals shows his judgment of the hold that he had on the American mind.

Maclaurin, Willison, and MacCulloch, were Scotch ministers whose names are well known north of the Tweed, and the two former of whom deservedly rank high as theological writers. All these have repeatedly testified that Whitefield was made an instrument of doing immense good in Scotland. Willison in particular says, "that God honoured him with surprising success among sinners of all ranks and persuasions."

Old Henry Venn, of Huddersfield and Yelling, was a man of strong good sense, as well as of great grace. His opinion was, that "if the greatness, extent, success, and disinterestedness of a man's labours can give him distinction among the children of Christ, then we are warranted to affirm that scarce any one has equalled Mr. Whitefield." Again he says: "He was abundantly successful in his vast labours. The seals of his ministry, from first to last, I am persuaded, were more than could be credited could the number be fixed. This is certain, his amazing popularity was only from his usefulness; for he no sooner opened his mouth as a preacher, than God commanded an extraordinary blessing upon his word."

John Newton was a shrewd man, as well as an eminent minister of the gospel. His testimony is: "That which finished Mr. Whitefield's character as a shining light, and is now his crown of rejoicing, was the singular success which the Lord was pleased to give him in winning souls. It seemed as if he never preached in vain. Perhaps there is hardly a place in all the extensive compass of his labours where some may not yet be found who thankfully acknowledge him as their spiritual father."

John Wesley did not agree with Whitefield on several theological points of no small importance. But when he preached his funeral sermon, he said: "Have we read or heard of any person who called so many thousands, so many myriads of sinners to repentance. Above all, have we read or heard of any one who has been the blessed instrument of bringing so many sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?"

Valuable as these testimonies undoubtedly are, there is one point which they leave totally untouched. That point is the quantity of indirect good that Whitefield did. Great as the direct effects of his labours were, I believe firmly that the indirect effects were even greater. His ministry was made a blessing to thousands who never perhaps either saw or heard him.

He was among the first in the eighteenth century who revived attention to the old truths which produced the Protestant Reformation. His constant assertion of the doctrines taught by the Reformers, his repeated reference to the Articles and Homilies, and the divinity of the best English theologians, obliged many to think, and roused them to examine their own principles. If the whole

truth was known, I believe it would prove that the rise and progress of the Evangelical body in the Church of England received a mighty impulse from George Whitefield.

But this is not the only indirect good that Whitefield did in his day. He was among the first to show the right way to meet the attacks of infidels and sceptics on Christianity. He saw clearly that the most powerful weapon against such men is not cold, metaphysical reasoning and dry critical disquisition, but preaching the whole gospel—living the whole gospel—and spreading the whole gospel. It was not the writings of Leland, and the younger Sherlock, and Waterland, and Leslie, that rolled back the flood of infidelity one half so much as the preaching of Whitefield and his companions. They were the men who were the true champions of Christianity. Infidels are seldom shaken by mere abstract reasoning. The surest arguments against them are gospel truth and gospel life.

Above all, he was the very first Englishman who seems to have thoroughly understood what Dr. Chalmers aptly called the aggressive system. He was the first to see that Christ's ministers must do the work of fishermen. They must not wait for souls to come to them, but must go after souls, and "compel them to come in." He did not sit tamely by his fireside, like a cat in a rainy day, mourning over the wickedness of the land. He went forth to beard the devil in his high places. He attacked sin and wickedness face to face, and gave them no peace. He dived into holes and corners after sinners. He hunted out ignorance and vice wherever they could be found. In short, he set on foot a system of action that, up to his time, had been comparatively unknown in this country, but a system which, once commenced, has never ceased to be employed down to the present day. City missions, town missions, district visiting societies, open-air preachings, home missions, special services, theatre preachings, are all evidences that the value of the "aggressive system" is now thoroughly recognized by all the Churches. We understand better how to go to work now than we did a hundred years ago. But let us never forget that the first man to commence operations of this kind was George Whitefield, and let us give him the credit he deserves.

The peculiar character of Whitefield's preaching is the subject which next demands some consideration. Men naturally wish to know what was the secret of his unparalleled success. The subject is one surrounded with considerable difficulty, and it is no easy matter to form a correct judgment about it. The common idea of many people, that he was a mere common place ranting Methodist, remarkable for nothing but great fluency, strong doctrine, and a loud voice, will not bear a moment's investigation. Dr. Johnson was foolish enough to say, that "he vociferated and made an impression, but never drew as much attention as a mountebank does; and that he did not draw attention by doing better than others, but by doing what was strange." But Johnson was anything but infallible when he began to talk about ministers and religion. Such a theory will not hold water. It is contradictory to undeniable facts.

It is a fact that no preacher in England has ever succeeded in arresting the attention of such crowds as Whitefield constantly addressed around London. No preacher has ever been so universally popular in every country that he visited, in England, Scotland, and America. No preacher has ever retained his hold on his hearers so entirely as he did for thirty-four years. His popularity never waned. It was as great at the end of his day as it was at the beginning. Wherever he preached, men would leave their workshops and employments to gather round him, and hear like those who heard for eternity. This of itself is a great fact to command the ear of "the masses"

for a quarter of a century, and to be preaching incessantly the whole time, is an evidence of no common power.

It is another fact that Whitefield's preaching produced a powerful effect on people in every rank of life. He won the admiration of high as well as low, of rich as well as poor, of learned as well as unlearned. If his preaching had been popular with none but the uneducated and the poor, we might have thought it possible that there was little in it but declamation and noise. But, so far from this being the case, he seems to have been acceptable to numbers of the nobility and gentry. The Marquis of Lothian, the Earl of Leven, the Earl of Buchan, Lord Rae, Lord Dartmouth, Lord James A. Gordon, might be named among his warmest admirers, beside Lady Huntingdon and a host of ladies.

It is a fact that eminent critics and literary men, like Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Chesterfield, were frequently his delighted hearers. Even the cold artificial Chesterfield was known to warm under Whitefield's eloquence. Bolingbroke said, "He is the most extraordinary man in our times. He has the most commanding eloquence I ever heard in any person." Franklin the philosopher spoke in no measured terms of his preaching powers. Hume the historian declared that it was worth going twenty miles to hear him.

Now, facts like these can never be explained away. They completely upset the theory that Whitefield's preaching was nothing but noise and rant. Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, Hume, and Franklin, were not men to be easily deceived. They were no mean judges of eloquence. They were probably among the best qualified critics of their day. Their unbought and unbiased opinions appear to me to supply unanswerable proof that there must have been something very extraordinary about Whitefield's preaching. But still, after all, the question remains to be answered, What was the secret of Whitefield's unrivalled popularity and effectiveness? And I frankly admit that, with the scanty materials we possess for forming our judgment, the question is a very hard one to answer.

The man who turns to the seventy-five sermons published under Whitefield's name will probably be much disappointed. He will see in them no commanding intellect or grasp of mind. He will find in them no deep philosophy, and no very striking thoughts. It is only fair, however, to say, that by far the greater part of these sermons were taken down in shorthand by reporters, and published without correction. These worthy men appear to have done their work very indifferently, and were evidently ignorant alike of stopping and paragraphing, of grammar and of gospel. The consequence is, that many passages in these seventy-five sermons are what Bishop Latimer would have called a "mingle-mangle," and what we should call in this day "a complete mess." No wonder that poor Whitefield says, in one of his last letters, dated September 26, 1769, "I wish you had advertised against the publication of my last sermon. It is not verbatim as I delivered it. It some places it makes me speak false concord, and even nonsense. In others the sense and connection are destroyed by injudicious, disjointed paragraphs, and the whole is entirely unfit for the public review."

I venture, however, to say boldly that, with all their faults, Whitefield's printed sermons will well repay a candid perusal. The reader must recollect that they were not carefully prepared for the press, like the sermons of Melville or Bradley, but wretchedly reported, paragraphed, and stopped, and he must read with this continually before his mind. Moreover, he must remember that English

composition for speaking to hearers, and English composition for private reading, are almost like two different languages, so that sermons which “preach” well “read” badly. Let him, I say, remember these two things, and judge accordingly, and I am much mistaken if he does not find much to admire in many of Whitefield’s sermons. For my own part, I must plainly say that I think they are greatly underrated.

Let me now point out what appear to have been the distinctive characteristics of Whitefield’s preaching.

For one thing, Whitefield preached a singularly pure gospel. Few men, perhaps, ever gave their hearers so much wheat and so little chaff. He did not get up to talk about his party, his cause, his interest or his office. He was perpetually telling you about your sins, your heart, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, the absolute need of repentance, faith, and holiness, in the way that the Bible presents these mighty subjects. “Oh, the righteousness of Jesus Christ!” he would often say; “I must be excused if I mention it in almost all my sermons.” Preaching of this kind is the preaching that God delights to honour. It must be pre-eminently a manifestation of truth.

For another thing, Whitefield’s preaching was singularly lucid and simple. His hearers, whatever they might think of his doctrine, could never fail to understand what he meant. His style of speaking was easy, plain, and conversational. He seemed to abhor long and involved sentences. He always saw his mark, and went directly at it. He seldom troubled his hearers with abstruse argument and intricate reasoning. Simple Bible statements, apt illustrations, and pertinent anecdotes, were the more common weapons that he used. The consequence was that his hearers always understood him. He never shot above their heads. Here again is one grand element of a preacher’s success. He must labour by all means to be understood. It was a wise saying of Archbishop Usher, “To make easy things seem hard is every man’s work; but to make hard things easy is the work of a great preacher.”

For another thing, Whitefield was a singularly bold and direct preacher. He never used that indefinite expression “we,” which seems so peculiar to English pulpit oratory, and which only leaves a hearer’s mind in a state of misty confusion. He met men face to face, like one who had a message from God to them, “I have come here to speak to you about your soul.” The result was that many of his hearers used often to think that his sermons were specially meant for themselves. He was not content, as many, with sticking on a meagre tail-piece of application at the end of a long discourse. On the contrary, a constant vein of application ran through all his sermons. “This is for you, and this is for you.” His hearers were never let alone.

Another striking feature in Whitefield’s preaching was his singular power of description. The Arabians have a proverb which says, “He is the best orator who can turn men’s ears into eyes.” Whitefield seems to have had a peculiar faculty of doing this. He dramatized his subject so thoroughly that it seemed to move and walk before your eyes. He used to draw such vivid pictures of the things he was handling, that his hearers could believe they actually saw and heard them. “On one occasion,” says one of his biographers, “Lord Chesterfield was among his hearers. The great preacher, in describing the miserable condition of an unconverted sinner, illustrated the subject by describing a blind beggar. The night was dark, and the road dangerous. The poor mendicant was deserted by his dog near the edge of a precipice, and had nothing to aid him in groping his way but his staff. Whitefield so warmed with his subject, and enforced it with such

graphic power, that the whole auditory was kept in breathless silence, as if it saw the movements of the poor old man; and at length, when the beggar was about to take the fatal step which would have hurled him down the precipice to certain destruction, Lord Chesterfield actually made a rush forward to save him, exclaiming aloud, 'He is gone! he is gone!' The noble lord had been so entirely carried away by the preacher, that he forgot the whole was a picture."

Another leading characteristic of Whitefield's preaching was his tremendous earnestness. One poor uneducated man said of him, that "he preached like a lion." He succeeded in showing people that he at least believed all he was saying, and that his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, were bent on making them believe it too. His sermons were not like the morning and evening gun at Portsmouth, a kind of formal discharge, fired off as a matter of course, that disturbs nobody. They were all life and fire. There was no getting away from them. Sleep was next to impossible. You must listen whether you liked it or not. There was a holy violence about him which firmly took your attention by storm. You were fairly carried off your legs by his energy before you had time to consider what you would do. This, we may be sure, was one secret of his success. We must convince men that we are in earnest ourselves if we want to be believed. The difference between one preacher and another, is often not so much in the things said, as in the manner in which they are said.

It is recorded by one of his biographers that an American gentleman once went to hear him, for the first time, in consequence of the report he heard of his preaching powers. The day was rainy, the congregation comparatively thin, and the beginning of the sermon rather heavy. Our American friend began to say to himself; "This man is no great wonder after all" He looked round, and saw the congregation as little interested as himself. One old man, in front of the pulpit, had fallen asleep. But all at once Whitefield stopped short. His countenance changed. And then he suddenly broke forth in an altered tone: "If I had come to speak to you in my own name, you might well rest your elbows on your knees, and your heads on your hands, and sleep; and once in a while look up, and say, What is this babbler talking of? But I have not come to you in my own name. No! I have come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts" There he brought down his hand and foot with a force that made the building ring), "and I must and will be heard." The congregation started. The old man woke up at once. "Ay, ay!" cried Whitefield, fixing his eyes on him, "I have waked you up, have I? I meant to do it. I am not come here to preach to stocks and stones: I have come to you in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, and I must, and will, have an audience." The hearers were stripped of their apathy at once. Every word of the sermon after this was heard with deep attention, and the American gentleman never forgot it.

One more feature in Whitefield's preaching deserves special notice; and that is, the immense amount of pathos and feeling which it always contained. It was no uncommon thing with him to weep profusely in the pulpit. Cornelius Winter, who often accompanied him in his latter journeys, went so far as to say that he hardly ever knew him get through a sermon without some tears. There seems to have been nothing of affectation in this. He felt intensely for the souls before him, and his feelings found an outlet in tears. Of all the ingredients of his success in preaching, none, I suspect, were so powerful as this. It awakened affections and touched secret springs in men, which no amount of reasoning and demonstration could have moved. It smoothed down the prejudices which many had conceived against him. They could not hate the man who wept so much over their souls. "I came to hear you," said one to him, "with my pocket full of stones,

intending to break your head; but your sermon got the better of me, and broke my heart." Once become satisfied that a man loves you, and you will listen gladly to anything he has to say.

I will now ask the reader to add to this analysis of Whitefield's preaching, that even by nature he possessed several of the rarest gifts which fit a man to be an orator. His action was perfect—so perfect that even Garrick, the famous actor, gave it unqualified praise. His voice was as wonderful as his action—so powerful that he could make thirty thousand people hear him at once, and yet so musical and well toned that some said he could raise tears by his pronunciation of the word "Mesopotamia." His manner in the pulpit was so curiously graceful and fascinating that it was said that no one could hear him for five minutes without forgetting that he squinted. His fluency and command of appropriate language were of the highest order, prompting him always to use the right word and to put it in the right place. Add, I repeat, these gifts to the things already mentioned, and then consider whether there is not sufficient in our hands to account for his power and popularity as a preacher.

For my own part, I have no hesitation in saying that I believe no English preacher has ever possessed such a combination of excellent qualifications as Whitefield. Some, no doubt, have surpassed him in some of his gifts; others, perhaps, have equalled him in others. But for a well-balanced combination of some of the finest gifts that a preacher can possess, united with an unrivalled voice, manner, delivery, action, and command of words, Whitefield, I repeat my opinion, stands alone. No Englishman, I believe, dead or alive, has ever equalled him. And I suspect we shall always find that, just in proportion as preachers have approached that curious combination of rare gifts which Whitefield possessed, just in that very proportion have they attained what Clarendon defines true eloquence to be—"a strange power of making themselves believed."

The inner life and personal character of this great spiritual hero of the last century are a branch of my subject on which I shall not dwell at any length. In fact, there is no necessity for my doing so. He was a singularly transparent man. There was nothing about him requiring apology or explanation. His faults and good qualities were both clear and plain as noon-day. I shall therefore content myself with simply pointing out the prominent features of his character, so far as they can be gathered from his letters and the accounts of his contemporaries, and then bring my sketch of him to a conclusion.

He was a man of deep and unfeigned humility. No one can read the fourteen hundred letters of his, published by Dr. Gillies, without observing this. Again and again, in the very zenith of his popularity, we find him speaking of himself and his works in the lowliest terms. "God be merciful to me a sinner," he writes on September 11, 1753, "and give me, for his infinite mercy's sake, an humble, thankful, and resigned heart Truly I am viler than the vilest, and stand amazed at his employing such a wretch as I am." "Let none of my friends," he writes on December 27, 1753, "cry to such a sluggish, lukewarm, unprofitable worm, Spare thyself. Rather spur me on, I pray you, with an Awake, thou sleeper, and begin to do something for thy God." Language like this, no doubt, seems foolishness and affectation to the world; but the well-instructed Bible reader will see in it the heartfelt experience of all the brightest saints. It is the language of men like Baxter, and Brainerd, and M'Cheyne. It is the same mind that was in the inspired Apostle Paul. Those that have most light and grace are always the humblest men.

He was a man of burning love to our Lord Jesus Christ. That name which is “above every name” stands out incessantly in all his correspondence. Like fragrant ointment, it gives a savour to all his communications. He seems never weary of saying something about Jesus. “My Master,” as George Herbert said, is never long out of his mind. His love, his atonement, his precious blood, his righteousness, his readiness to receive sinners, his patience and tender dealing with saints, are themes which appear ever fresh before his eyes. In this respect, at least, there is a curious likeness between him and that glorious Scotch divine, Samuel Rutherford.

He was a man of unwearied diligence and laboriousness about his Master’s business. It would be difficult, perhaps, to name any one in the annals of the Churches who worked so hard for Christ, and so thoroughly spent himself in his service. Henry Venn, in a funeral sermon for him, preached at Bath, bore the following testimony:—“What a sign and wonder was this man of God in the greatness of his labours! One cannot but stand amazed that his mortal frame could, for the space of near thirty years, without interruption, sustain the weight of them; for what so trying to the human frame, in youth especially, as long-continued, frequent, and violent straining of the lungs? Who that knows their structure would think it possible that a person little above the age of manhood could speak in a single week, and that for years—in general forty hours, and in very many weeks sixty—and that to thousands; and after this labour, instead of taking any rest, could be offering up prayers and intercessions, with hymns and spiritual songs, as his manner was, in every house to which he was invited? The truth is, that in point of labour this extraordinary servant of God did as much in a few weeks as most of those who exert themselves are able to do in the space of a year.”

He was to the end a man of eminent self-denial. His style of living was most simple. He was remarkable to a proverb for moderation in eating and drinking. All through life he was an early riser. His usual hour for getting up was four o’clock, both in summer and winter; and equally punctual was he in retiring about ten at night A man of prayerful habits, he frequently spent whole nights in reading and devotion. Cornelius Winter, who often slept in the same room, says that he would sometimes rise during the night for this purpose. He cared little for money, except as a help to the cause of Christ, and refused it, when pressed upon him for his own use, once to the amount of £7000. He amassed no fortune, and founded no wealthy family. The little money he left behind him at his death arose entirely from the legacies of friends. The Pope’s coarse saying about Luther, “This German beast does not love gold,” might have been equally applied to Whitefield.

He was a man of remarkable disinterestedness and singleness of eye. He seemed to live only for two objects—the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Of secondary and covert objects he knew nothing at all. He raised no party of followers who took his name. He established no denominational system, of which his own writings should be cardinal elements. A favourite expression of his is most characteristic of the man: “Let the name of George Whitefield perish, so long as Christ is exalted.”

He was a man of a singularly happy and cheerful spirit. No one who saw him could ever doubt that he enjoyed his religion. Tried as he was in many ways throughout his ministry—slandered by some, despised by others, misrepresented by false brethren, opposed everywhere by the ignorant clergy of his time, worried by incessant controversy—his elasticity never failed him. He was eminently a rejoicing Christian, whose very demeanour recommended his Master’s service. A

venerable lady of New York, after his death, when speaking of the influences by which the Spirit won her heart to God, used these remarkable words,—“Mr. Whitefield was so cheerful that it tempted me to become a Christian.”

Last, but not least, he was a man of extraordinary charity, catholicity, and liberality in his religion. He knew nothing of that narrow-minded feeling which makes some men fancy that everything must be barren outside their own camps, and that their own party has got a complete monopoly of truth and heaven. He loved all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. He measured all by the measure which the angels use,—“Did they profess repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and holiness of conversation?” If they did, they were as his brethren. His soul was with such men, by whatever name they were called. Minor differences were wood, hay, and stubble to him. The marks of the Lord Jesus were the only marks he cared for. This catholicity is the more remarkable when the spirit of the times he lived in is considered. Even the Erskines, in Scotland, wanted him to preach for no other denomination but their own—viz., the Secession Church. He asked them, “Why only for them?”—and received the notable answer that “they were the Lord’s people.” This was more than Whitefield could stand. He asked “if there were no other Lord’s people but themselves;” he told them, “if all others were the devil’s people, they certainly had more need to be preached to!” and he wound up by informing them, that “if the Pope himself would lend him his pulpit, he would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Christ in it” To this catholicity of spirit he adhered all his days. If other Christians misrepresented him, he forgave them; and it they refused to work with him, he still loved them. Nothing could be a more weighty testimony against narrow-mindedness than his request, made shortly before his death, that, when he did die, John Wesley should be asked to preach his funeral sermon. Wesley and he had long ceased to agree about Calvinistic points; but Whitefield, to the very last, was determined to forget minor differences, and to regard Wesley as Calvin did Luther, “only as a good servant of Jesus Christ.” On another occasion a censorious professor of religion asked him “whether he thought they would see John Wesley in heaven?” “No, sir,” was the striking answer; “I fear not he will be so near the throne, and we shall be at such a distance, that we shall hardly get a sight of him.”

Far be it from me to say that the subject of this chapter was a man without faults. Like all God’s saints, he was an imperfect creature. He sometimes erred in judgment He often drew rash conclusions about Providence, and mistook his own inclination for God’s leadings. He was frequently hasty both with his tongue and his pen. He had no business to say that “Archbishop Tillotson knew no more of the gospel than Mahomet.” He was wrong to set down some people as the Lord’s enemies, and others as the Lord’s friends so precipitately and positively as he sometimes did. He was to blame for denouncing many of the clergy as “letter-learned Pharisees,” because they could not receive the doctrine of the new birth. But still, after all this has been said, there can be no doubt that in the main he was an eminently holy, self-denying, and consistent man. “The faults of his character,” says an American writer, “were like spots on the sun—detected without much difficulty by any cool and careful observer who takes pains to look for them, but to all practical purposes lost in one general and genial effulgence.” Well indeed would it be for the Churches of our day, if God was to give them more ministers like the great evangelist of England a hundred years ago!

It only remains to say that those who wish to know more about Whitefield would do well to peruse the seven volumes of his letters and other publications, which Dr. Gillies edited in 1770. I am much

mistaken if they are not agreeably surprised at their contents. To me it is matter of astonishment that, amidst the many reprints of the nineteenth century, no publisher has yet attempted a complete reprint of the works of George Whitefield.

A short extract from the conclusion of a sermon preached by Whitefield on Kennington Common, may be interesting to some readers, and may serve to give them some faint idea of the great preacher's style. It was a sermon on the text, "What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42)

"O my brethren, my heart is enlarged towards you. I trust I feel something of that hidden but powerful presence of Christ, whilst I am preaching to you. Indeed it is sweet—it is exceedingly comfortable. All the harm I wish you, who without cause are my enemies, is that you felt the like. Believe me, though it would be hell to my soul to return to a natural state again, yet I would willingly change states with you for a little while, that you might know what it is to have Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith. Do not turn your backs. Do not let the devil hurry you away. Be not afraid of convictions. Do not think worse of the doctrine because preached without the church walls. Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, preached on a mount, in a ship, and a field; and I am persuaded many have felt his gracious presence here. Indeed, we speak what we know. Do not therefore reject the kingdom of God against yourselves. Be so wise as to receive our witness.

"I cannot, I will not let you go. Stay a little, and let us reason together. However lightly you may esteem your souls, I know our Lord has set an unspeakable value on them. He thought them worthy of his most precious blood. I beseech you, therefore, O sinners, be ye reconciled to God. I hope you do not fear being accepted in the Beloved. Behold, he calleth you. Behold, he prevents, and follows you with his mercy, and hath sent forth his servants into the highways and hedges to compel you to come in.

"Remember, then, that at such an hour of such a day, in such a year, in this place, you were all told what you ought to think concerning Jesus Christ. If you now perish, it will not be from lack of knowledge. I am free from the blood of you all. You cannot say I have been preaching damnation to you. You cannot say I have, like legal preachers, been requiring you to make bricks without straw. I have not bidden you to make yourselves saints and then come to God. I have offered you salvation on as cheap terms as you can desire. I have offered you Christ's whole wisdom, Christ's whole righteousness, Christ's whole sanctification and eternal redemption, if you will but believe on him. If you say you cannot believe, you say right; for faith, as well as every other blessing, is the gift of God. But then wait upon God, and who knows but he may have mercy on thee.

"Why do we not entertain more loving thoughts of Christ? Do you think he will have mercy on others and not on you? Are you not sinners? Did not Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners?

"If you say you are the chief of sinners, I answer that will be no hindrance to your salvation. Indeed it will not, if you lay hold on Christ by faith. Read the Evangelists, and see how kindly he behaved to his disciples, who had fled from and denied him. 'Go, tell my brethren,' says he. He did not say, 'Go, tell those traitors,' but, 'Go, tell my brethren and Peter.' It is as though he had sa

Whole Family

J. C. Ryle Tracts

These tracts are classics of Gospel Truth that readers of J. C. Ryle have come to expect from all his writings. His tracts are "pure gold." Many of these tracts, not published since the 19th Century, have come into my possession, and I offer you some of these inspiring works exactly word for word as they were first published by Drummond's Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland. THE WHOLE FAMILY!

"The whole family in heaven and earth."- Ephesians 3:15.

READER,

Look at the words which form the title of this tract, and ponder them well. They are words which ought to stir some feelings in our minds at any time, and especially at Christmas. There lives not the man or woman on earth who is not a member of some "family." The poorest as well as the richest has his kith and kin, and can tell you something of "his family."

Family gatherings at Christmas, we all know, are very common. Thousands of firesides are crowded then, if at no other time of the year. The young man in town snatches a few days from business, and takes a run down to "the old folks at home." The young woman in service gets a short holiday, and comes to visit her father and mother. Brothers and sisters meet for a few hours. Parents and children look one another in the face. How much there is to talk about! How many questions to be asked! How many interesting things to be told! Happy indeed is that fireside which sees gathered round it at Christmas "the whole family!"

Family gatherings at Christmas are natural, and right, and good. I approve them with all my heart. It does me good to see them kept up. They are one of the very few pleasant things which have survived the fall of man. Next to the grace of God, I see no principle which unites people so much in this sinful world as family feeling. Community of blood is a most powerful tie. I have often observed that people will stand up for their relations, merely because they are their relations,-and refuse to hear a word against them,-even when they have no sympathy with their tastes and ways. Anything that helps to keep up family feeling ought to be commended. It is a wise thing, when it can be done, to gather together at Christmas "the whole family."

Family gatherings, nevertheless, are often sorrowful things. It would be strange indeed, in such a world as this, if they were not. Few are the family circles which do not show gaps and vacant places as years pass away. Changes and deaths make sad havoc as time goes on. Thoughts will rise up within us, as we grow older, about faces and voices no longer with us, which no Christmas merriment can entirely keep down. When the younger members of the family have once begun to shift for themselves and launch forth into the world, the old heads may long survive the scattering of the nest. But after a certain time, it seldom happens that you see together "the whole family."

And now, reader, let me take occasion from Christmas to tell you of a great family to which I want you to belong. It is a family despised by many, and not even known by some; but it is a family of far more importance than any family on earth. To belong to it entitles a man to far greater privileges than to be the son of a king. It is the family of which St Paul speaks to the Ephesians, when he tells them of the "whole family in heaven and earth." It is the family of God.

Reader, give me your attention while I try to describe this family, and recommend it to your notice. I do not wish to mar your Christmas merriment, or to lessen the joy of your Christmas gathering, wherever it may be. I only want to remind you of a better family, even a heavenly one, and of the great benefits which membership of that family conveys. I want you to be found one of that family, when its gathering shall come at last,-a gathering without separation, or sorrow, or tears. Hear me while, as a minister of Christ and friend to your soul, I talk for a few minutes about "the whole family in heaven and earth:"

I. First of all, what is this family?

II Secondly, what is its present position?

III. Thirdly, what are its future prospects?

I wish to unfold these three things before you, and I invite your serious consideration of them. Our Christmas gatherings on earth must have an end one day. Our last earthly Christmas must come. Happy indeed is that Christmas which finds us prepared to meet God!

I. What is that family which the Bible calls "the whole family in heaven and earth?" Of whom does it consist?

The family before us consists of all real Christians,-of all who have the Spirit,-of all true believers in Christ,-of the saints of every age, and church, and nation, and tongue. It includes the blessed company of all faithful people. It is the same as the election of God,-the household of faith,-the mystical body of Christ,-the bride,-the living temple,-the sheep that never perish,-the Church of the first-born,-the holy catholic Church. All these expressions are only "the family of God" under other names.

Membership of the family before us does not depend on any earthly connection. It comes not by natural birth, but by new birth. Ministers cannot impart it to their hearers. Parents cannot give it to their children. You may be born in the godliest family in the land, and enjoy the richest means of grace a church can supply, and yet never belong to the family of God. To belong to it you must be born again. None but the Holy Ghost can make a living member of this family. It is His special office and prerogative to bring into the Church such as shall be saved. They that are born again are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13)

Reader, do you ask the reason of this name which the Bible gives to the company of all true Christians? Would you like to know why they are called "a family"? Listen, and I will tell you.

True Christians are called a "family" because they have all one Father. They are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. They are all born of one Spirit. They are all sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. They have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father. (Galatians 3:26; John 3:8; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Romans 8:15) They do not regard God with slavish

fear, as an austere Being, only ready to punish them. They look up to Him with tender confidence as a reconciled and loving parent, as One forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, to all who believe on Jesus, and full of pity even to the least and feeblest. The words, "Our Father which art in heaven," are no mere form in the mouth of true Christians. No wonder they are called God's "family."

True Christians are called "a family," because they all rejoice in one name. That name is the name of their great Head and Elder Brother, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Just as a common family name is the uniting link to all the members of a Highland clan so does the name of Jesus tie all believers together in one vast family. As members of outward visible Churches they have various names and distinguishing appellations. As living members of Christ, they all, with one heart and mind, rejoice in one Saviour. Not a heart among them but feels drawn to Jesus as the only object of hope. Not a tongue among them but would tell you that "Christ is all." Sweet to them all is the thought of Christ's death for them on the cross. Sweet is the thought of Christ's intercession for them at the right hand of God. Sweet is the thought of Christ's coming again to unite them to Himself in one glorified company for ever. In fact, you might as well take away the sun out of heaven, as take away the name of Christ from believers. To the world there may seem little in His name. To believers it is full of comfort, hope, joy, rest, and peace. No wonder they are called "a family."

True Christians, above all, are called "a family" because there is so strong a family likeness among them. They are all led by one Spirit, and are marked by the same general features of life, heart, taste, and character. Just as there is a general bodily resemblance among the brothers and sisters of family, so there is a general spiritual resemblance among all the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. They all hate sin and love God. They all rest their hope of salvation on Christ, and have no confidence in themselves. They all endeavour to come out and be separate from the ways of the world, and to set their affections on things above. They all turn naturally to the same Bible as the only food of their souls, and the only sure guide in their pilgrimage toward heaven. They find it a "lamp to their feet, and a light to their path."(Psalms 119:105) They all go to the same throne of grace in prayer, and find it as needful to speak to God as to breathe. They all live by the same rule, the Word of God, and strive to conform their daily life to its precepts. They have all the same inward experience. Repentance, faith, hope, charity, humility, inward conflict, are things with which they are all more or less acquainted. No wonder they are called "a family."

Reader, this family likeness among true believers is a thing that deserves special attention. To my own mind it is one of the strongest indirect evidences of the truth of Christianity. It is one of the greatest proofs of the reality of the work of the Holy Ghost. Some true Christians live in civilized countries, and some in the midst of heathen lands. Some are highly educated, and some are unable to read a letter. Some are rich and some are poor. Some are Churchmen and some are Dissenters. Some are old and some are young. And yet, notwithstanding all this, there is a marvellous oneness of heart and character among them. Their joys and their sorrows, their love and their hatred, their likes and their dislikes, their tastes and their distastes, their hopes and their fears, are all most curiously alike. Let others think what they please, I see in all this the finger of God. His handiwork is always one and the same. No wonder that true Christians are compared to "a family."

Take a converted Englishman and a converted Hindoo, and let them suddenly meet for the first time. I will engage, if they can understand one another's language, they will soon find common ground between them, and feel at home. The one may have been brought up at school and college, and enjoyed every privilege of English civilization. The other may have been trained in the midst of gross heathenism, and accustomed to habits, ways, and manners as unlike the Englishman's as darkness compared to light. And yet now in half an hour they feel that they are friends! The Englishman finds that he has more in common with his Hindoo brother than he has with many an old college companion or school-fellow! Who can account for this? How can it be explained? Nothing can account for it but the unity of the Spirit's teaching. It is "one touch" of grace, not nature, "that makes the whole world kin." God's people are in the highest sense "a family."

Reader, this is the family to which I wish to direct your attention this Christmas. This is the family to which I want you to belong. I ask you this day to consider it well, if you never considered it before. I have shown you the Father of the family, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.-I have shown you the Head and Elder Brother of the family, the Lord Jesus Himself.-I have shown you the features and characteristics of the family. Its members have all great general marks of resemblance.-Once more I say, consider it well.

Outside this family, remember, there is no salvation. None but those who belong to it, according to the Bible, are in the way that leads to heaven. The salvation of our souls does not depend on union with one Church or separation from another. They are miserably deceived who think that it does, and will find it out to their cost one day, except they awake. No, reader, the life of our souls depends on something far more important! This is life eternal, to be a member of "the whole family in heaven and earth."

II. I will now pass on to the second thing which I promised to consider. What is the present position of "the whole family in heaven and earth"?

The family to which I am directing your attention this day is divided into two great parts. Each part has its own residence or dwelling-place. Part of the family is in heaven, and part is on earth. For the present the two parts are entirely separated from one another. But they form one body in the sight of God, though resident in two places: and their union is sure to come one day.

Two places, be it remembered, and two only, contain the family of God. The Bible tells us of no third habitation. There is no such thing as purgatory, whatever some Christians may think fit to say. There is no house of training or probation for those who are not true Christians when they die. Oh no! There are but two parts of the family,-the part that is seen and the part that is unseen, the part that is in "heaven" and the part that is on "earth." The members of the family that are not in heaven are on earth, and those that are not on earth are in heaven. Two parts, and two only! Two places, and two only! Let this never be forgotten.

Some of God's family are safe in heaven. They are at rest in that place which the Lord Jesus expressly calls "Paradise." (Luke 23:43) They have finished their course. They have fought their battle. They have done their appointed work. They have learned their lessons. They have carried their cross. They have passed through the waves of this troublesome world and reached the harbour. Little as we know about them we know that they are happy. They are no longer troubled

by sin and temptation. They have said goodbye for ever to poverty and anxiety, to pain and sickness, to sorrow and tears. They are with Christ Himself, who loved them and gave Himself for them, and in His company they must needs be happy. (Php_1:23) They have nothing to fear in looking back to the past. They have nothing to dread in looking forward to things to come. Three things only are lacking to make their happiness complete. These three are the second advent of Christ in glory, the resurrection of their own bodies, and the gathering together of all believers. And of these three things they are sure.

Some of God's family are still upon earth. They are scattered to and fro in the midst of a wicked world, a few in one place and a few in another. All are more or less occupied in the same way, according to the measure of their grace. All are running a race, doing a work, warring a warfare, carrying a cross, striving against sin, resisting the devil, crucifying the flesh, struggling against the world, witnessing for Christ, mourning over their own hearts, hearing, reading, and praying, however feebly, for the life of their souls. Each is often disposed to think no cross so heavy as his own, no work so difficult, no heart so hard. But each and all hold on their way, a wonder to the ignorant world around them, and often a wonder to themselves.

But, reader, however divided God's family may be at present in dwelling-place and local habitation, it is still one family. Both parts of it are still one in character, one in possessions, and one in relation to God. The part in heaven has not so much superiority over the part on earth as at first sight may appear. The difference between the two is only one of degree.

Both parts of the family love the same Saviour, and delight in the same perfect will of God. But the part on earth loves with much imperfection and infirmity, and lives by faith, not by sight. The part in heaven loves without weakness, or doubt, or distraction. It walks by sight, and not by faith, and sees what it once believed.

Both parts of the family are saints. But the saints on earth are often poor weary pilgrims, who find the "flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit lusting against the flesh, so that they cannot do the things they would." (Galatians 5:17) They live in the midst of an evil world, and are often sick of themselves and of the sin they see around them.-The saints in heaven, on the contrary, are delivered from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and enjoy a glorious liberty. They are called "the spirits of just men made perfect." (Hebrews 12:23)

Both parts of the family are alike God's children. But the children in heaven have learned all their lessons, have finished their appointed tasks, have begun an eternal holiday.-The children on earth are still at school. They are daily learning wisdom, though slowly and with much trouble, and often needing to be reminded of their past lessons by chastisement and the rod. Their holidays are yet to come.

Both parts of the family are alike God's soldiers. But the soldiers on earth are yet militant Their warfare is not accomplished. Their fight is not over.

They need every day to put on the whole armour of God. The soldiers in heaven are all triumphant. No enemy can hurt them now. No fiery dart can reach them. Helmet and shield may both be laid aside. They may at last say to the sword of the Spirit, Rest and be still. They may at length sit down, and need not to watch and stand on guard.

Last, but not least, both parts of the family are alike safe and secure. Wonderful as this may sound, it is true! Christ cares as much for His members on earth as His members in heaven. You might as well think to pluck the stars out of heaven as to pluck one saint, however feeble, out of Christ's hand. Both parts of the family are alike secured by "an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." (2 Samuel 23:5) The members on earth, through the burden of the flesh and the dimness of their faith, may neither see, nor know, nor feel their own safety. But they are safe, though they may not see it. The whole family is "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." (1 Peter 1:5) The members yet on the road are as secure as the members who have got home. Not one shall he found missing at the last day. The words of the Christian poet shall be found strictly true:

"More happy, but not more secure,

The glorified spirits in heaven."

Reader, before I leave this part of my subject, I ask you to understand thoroughly the present position of God's family, and to form a just estimate of it. Learn not to measure its numbers or its privileges by what you see with your eyes. You see only a small body of believers in this present time. But you must not forget that a great company has got safe to heaven already, and that when all are assembled at the last day they will be "a multitude which no man can number." (Revelation 7:9) You only see that part of the family which is struggling on earth. You must never forget that the greater part of the family has got home and is resting in Paradise.-You see the militant part but not the triumphant. You see the part that is carrying the cross, but not the part which is safe at the other side of the river. The family of God is far more rich and glorious than you suppose. Believe me, it is no small thing to belong to the "whole family in heaven and earth."

III. I will now pass on to the last thing which I promised to consider. What are the future prospects of "the whole family" in heaven and earth?

The future prospects of a family! What a vast amount of uncertainty these words open up when we look at any family now in the world! How little we can tell of the things coming on any of us! What a mercy that we do not know the sorrows, and trials, and separations, through which our beloved children may have to pass, when we have left the world! It is a mercy that we do not know "what a day may bring forth," and a far greater mercy that we do not know what may happen in twenty years. (Proverbs 27:1) Reader, foreknowledge of the future prospects of our belongings would spoil many a family gathering this Christmas, and fill the whole party with gloom.

Think how many a fine boy, who is now the delight of his parents, will by and by walk in the prodigal's footsteps, and never return home! Think how many a fair daughter, the joy of a mother's heart, will follow the bent of her self-will after a few years, and insist on some miserably mistaken marriage! Think how disease and pain will often lay low the loveliest of a family circle, and make her life a burden and weariness to herself if not to others! Think of the endless breaches and divisions arising out of money matters! Alas, there is many a lifelong quarrel about a few pounds, between those who once played together in the same nursery! Reader, think of these things! The "future prospects" of many a family which will meet together this Christmas are a solemn and serious subject. Hundreds, to say the least, are gathering together for the last time. When they part they will never meet again.

But, thank God, there is one great family whose prospects are very different. It is the family of which I am speaking in this tract, and commending to your attention. The future prospects of the family of God are not uncertain. They are good, and only good,-happy, and only happy. Listen to me, and I will try to set them in order before you.

The members of God's family shall all be brought safe home one day. Here upon earth they may be scattered, tried, tossed with tempests, and bowed down with afflictions. But not one of them shall perish. (John 10:28) The weakest lamb shall not be left to perish in the wilderness. The feeblest child shall not be missing when the muster-roll is brought out at the last day. In spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the whole family shall get home. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10)

The members of God's family shall all have glorious bodies one day. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes the second time the dead saints shall all be raised and the living shall all be changed. They shall no longer have a vile mortal body, full of weaknesses and infirmities. They shall have a body like that of their risen Lord, without the slightest liability to sickness and pain. They shall no longer be clogged and hindered by an aching frame when they want to serve God. They shall be able to serve Him night and day without weariness, and to attend upon Him without distraction. The former things will have passed away. That word will be fulfilled, "I make all things new." (Revelation 21:5)

The members of God's family shall all be gathered into one company one day. It matters nothing where they have lived or where they have died. They may have been separated from one another both by time and space. One may have lived in tents, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and another travelled by railway in our own day. One may have laid his bones in an Australian desert, and another may have been buried in an English churchyard. It makes no difference. All shall be gathered together, from north and south, and east and west, and meet in one happy assembly, to part no more. The earthly partings of God's family are only for a few days. Their meeting is for eternity. It matters little where we live. It is a time of scattering now, and not of gathering.-It matters little where we die. All graves are equally near to Paradise.-But it does matter much whether we belong to God's family. If we do we are sure to meet again at last. The members of God's family shall all be united in mind and judgement one day. They are not so now about many little things. About the things needful to salvation there is a marvellous unity among them. About many speculative points in religion, about forms of worship and Church government, they often sadly disagree. But there shall be no disagreement among them one day. Ephraim shall no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim. Churchmen shall no more quarrel with Dissenters, nor Dissenters with Churchmen. Partial knowledge and dim vision shall be at an end for ever. Divisions and separations, misunderstandings and misconstructions, shall be buried and forgotten. As there shall only be one language, so there shall only be one opinion. At last, after six thousand years of strife and jangling, perfect unity and harmony shall be found. A family shall at length be shown to angels and men in which all are of one mind.

The members of God's family shall all be perfected in holiness one day. They are not literally perfect now. Though born again, and renewed after the image of Christ, they offend and fall short in many things. (James 3:2) None know it better than they do themselves. It is their grief and

sorrow that they do not love God more heartily and serve Him more faithfully. But they shall be completely freed from all corruption one day. They shall rise again at Christ's second appearing without any of the infirmities which cleave to them in their lives. Not a single evil temper or corrupt inclination shall he found in them. They shall be presented by their Head to the Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,-perfectly holy and without blemish,-fair as the moon and clear as the sun. (Ephesians 5:27; Son_5:10) Grace, even now, is a beautiful thing, when it lives, and shines, and flourishes in the midst of imperfection. But how much more beautiful will grace appear when it is seen pure, unmixed, disentangled, and alone. And it shall be seen so when Christ comes to be glorified in His saints at the last day.

Last, but not least, the members of God's family shall all be eternally provided for one day. When the affairs of this sinful world are finally wound up and settled, there shall be an everlasting portion for all the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Not even the weakest of them shall be overlooked and forgotten. There shall be something for everyone, according to his measure. The smallest vessel of grace, as well as the greatest, shall be filled to the brim with glory, the precise nature of that glory and reward it would be folly to pretend to describe. It is a thing which eye has not seen, nor mind of man conceived. Enough for us to know that each member of God's family when he awakes up after His Master's likeness, shall be satisfied. (Psalms 17:15) Enough, above all, to know that their joy, and glory, and reward shall be for ever. What they receive in the day of the Lord they will never lose. The inheritance reserved for them, when they come of age, is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away." (1 Peter 1:4)

Reader, these prospects of God's family are great realities. They are not vague shadowy talk, of man's invention. They are real true things, and will be seen as such before long. They deserve your serious consideration. Examine them well.

Look round the families of earth with which you are acquainted, the richest, the greatest, the noblest, the happiest. Where will you find one among them all which can show prospects to compare with those of which you have just heard. The earthly riches, in many a case, will be gone in a hundred years hence. The noble blood, in many a case, will not prevent some disgraceful deed staining the family name. The happiness in many a case, will be found hollow and seeming. Few, indeed, are the homes which have not a secret sorrow or "a skeleton in the closet." Whether for present possessions or future prospects, there is no family so well off as "the whole family in heaven and earth." Whether you look at what they have now, or will have hereafter, there is no family like the family of God.

Reader, my task is done. My tract is drawing to a close. It only remains to close it with a few words of practical application. Give me your attention for the last time. May God bless what I am going to say to the good of your soul!

(1) I ask you a plain question. Take it with you to the family gathering which you are going to join at Christmas. Take it with you, and amidst all your Christmas happiness make time for thinking about it. It is a simple question, but a solemn one,-Do you yet belong to the family of God?

To the family of God, remember! This is the point of my question. It is no answer to say that you are a Protestant, or a Churchman, or a Dissenter. I want to hear of something more and better than that. I want you to have some soul-satisfying and soul-saving religion,-a religion that will give

you peace while you live, and hope when you die. To have such peace and hope you must be something more than a Protestant, or a Churchman, or a Dissenter. You must belong to "the family of God." Thousands around you do not belong to it, I can well believe. But that is no reason why you should not.

Reader, if you do not yet belong to God's family, I invite you this day to join it without delay. Open your eyes to see the value of your soul, the sinfulness of sin, the holiness of God, the danger of your present condition, the absolute necessity of a mighty change. Open your eyes to see these things, and repent this very day.-Open your eyes to see the great Head of God's family, even Christ Jesus, waiting to save your soul. See how He has loved you, lived for you, died for you, risen again for you, and obtained complete redemption for you. See how He offers you free, full, immediate pardon, if you will believe in Him. Open your eyes to see these things. Seek Christ at once. Come and believe on Him, and commit your soul to His keeping this very day.

I know nothing of your family or past history. I know not where you are going to spend your Christmas, or what company you are going to be in. But I am bold to say, that if you join the family of God this Christmas it will be the best and happiest Christmas in your life.

(2) Reader, if you really belong to the whole family in heaven and earth, count up your privileges, and learn to be more thankful. Think what a mercy it is to have something which the world can neither give nor take away,-something which is independent of sickness or poverty,-something which is your own for evermore. The old family fireside will soon be cold and tenantless. The old family gatherings will soon be past and gone for ever. The loving faces we now delight to gaze on are rapidly leaving us. The cheerful voices which now welcome us will soon be silent in the grave. But, thank God, if we belong to Christ's family there is a better gathering yet to come. Let us often think of it and be thankful!

Those grey-haired old patriarchs, whose cheerfulness made their Christianity so beautiful, and who thought of everybody more than of themselves,-those tender mothers, whose memory is still so fragrant to their children, and whose sun seemed to go down at noonday,-those little infants who were like sunbeams in our households, and were taken away before they had known good or evil,-we shall see them all again. They are not lost, but only gone before. All, all will meet us in the great home, when the last trumpet sounds and "the whole family" is gathered together. Reader, let us often think of this, and be thankful.

The family gathering of all God's people will make amends for all that their religion now costs them. A meeting where none are missing,-a meeting where there are no gaps and empty places,-a meeting where there are no tears,-a meeting where there is no parting,-such a meeting as this is worth a fight and a struggle. And such a meeting is yet to come to "the whole family in heaven and earth."

In the meantime let us strive to live worthy of the family to which we belong. Let us labour to do nothing that may cause our Father's house to be spoken against. Let us endeavour to make our Master's name beautiful by our temper, conduct and conversation. Let us love as brethren, and abhor all quarrels. Let us behave as if the honour of the family depended on our behaviour.

So living, by the grace of God, we shall make our calling and election sure, both to ourselves and others. So living, we may hope to have an abundant entrance, and to enter harbour in full sail,

whenever we change earth for heaven. So living, we shall recommend our Father's family to others, and perhaps, by God's blessing incline them to say, "We will go with you."

Reader, I commend these Christmas thoughts to your attention; and, wishing you a happy Christmas in the best and highest sense,

I remain, your affectionate friend,

J. C. RYLE.

HYMN.

"Come, let us join our friends above,

Who have obtained the prize,

And on the eagle-wings of love

To joys celestial rise!

"Let all the saints terrestrial sing,

With those to glory gone;

For all the servants of our King,

In earth and heaven, are one.

"The saints on earth, and those above,

But one communion make;

Joined to the Lord in bonds of love,

All of His grace partake.

"One family we dwell in Him;

One Church above, beneath;

Though now divided by the stream,

-The narrow stream of death.

"One army of the living God,

To His command we bow:

Part of His host have crossed the flood,

And part are crossing now.

" Our spirits too shall quickly join,

Like theirs with glory crown'd;

And shout to see our Captain's Sign,

To hear His trumpet sound."

Chapter 85

Why were our Reformers burned?

TAKEN FROM

“LIGHT FROM OLD TIMES”

[1902 edition] BY BISHOP J. C. RYLE D.D.

WHY WERE OUR REFORMERS BURNED?

THERE are certain facts in history which the world tries hard to forget and ignore. These facts get in the way of some of the world’s favourite theories, and are highly inconvenient. The consequence is that the world shuts its eyes against them. They are either cut dead as vulgar intruders, or passed by as tiresome bores. Little by little they sink out of sight of the students of history, like ships in a distant horizon, or are left behind like a luggage train in a siding. Of such facts the subject of this paper is a vivid example:—“The Burning of our English Reformers; and the Reason why they were Burned.”

It is fashionable in some quarters to deny that there is any such thing as certainty about religious truth, or any opinions for which it is worth while to be burned. Yet, 300 years ago, there were men who were certain they had found out truth, and were content to die for their opinions.—It is fashionable in other quarters to leave out all the unpleasant things in history, and to paint everything with a rose-coloured hue. A very popular history of our English Queens hardly mentions the martyrdoms of Queen Mary’s days! Yet Mary was not called “Bloody Mary” without reason, and scores of Protestants were burned in her reign.—Last, but not least, it is thought very bad taste in many quarters to say anything which throws discredit on the Church of Rome. Yet it is as certain that the Romish Church burned our English Reformers as it is that William the Conqueror won the battle of Hastings. These difficulties meet me face to face as I walk up to the subject which I wish to unfold in this paper. I know their magnitude, and I cannot evade them. I only ask my readers to give me a patient and indulgent hearing.

After all, I have great confidence in the honesty of Englishmen’s minds. Truth is truth, however long it may be neglected. Facts are facts, however long they may lie buried. I only want to dig up some old facts which the sands of time have covered over, to bring to the light of day some old English monuments which have been long neglected, to unstop some old wells which the prince of this world has been diligently filling with earth. I ask my readers to give me their attention for a few minutes, and I trust to be able to show them that it is good to examine the question, “Why were our Reformers burned?”

I. The broad facts of the martyrdom of our Reformers are a story well known and soon told. But it may be useful to give a brief outline of these facts, in order to supply a framework to our subject.

Edward VI., “that incomparable young prince,” as Bishop Burnet justly calls him, died on the 6th July, 1553. Never, perhaps, did any royal personage in this land die more truly lamented, or leave behind him a fairer reputation. Never, perhaps, to man’s poor fallible judgment, did the cause of

God’s truth in England receive a heavier blow. His last prayer before death ought not to be forgotten,—“O Lord God, defend this realm from papistry, and maintain Thy true religion.” It was a prayer, I believe, not offered in vain.

After a foolish and deplorable effort to obtain the crown for Lady Jane Grey, Edward was succeeded by his eldest sister, Mary, daughter of Henry VIII. and his first Queen, Catherine of Aragon, and best known in English history by the ill-omened name of “Bloody Mary.” Mary had been brought up from her infancy as a rigid adherent of the Romish Church. She was, in fact, a very Papist of Papists, conscientious, zealous, bigoted, and narrow-minded in the extreme. She began at once to pull down her brother’s work in every possible way, and to restore Popery in its worst and most offensive forms. Step by step she and her councillors marched back to Rome, trampling down one by one every obstacle, and as thorough as Lord Stratford in going straight forward to their mark. The Mass was restored; the English service was taken away; the works of Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, Tyndale, Bucer, Latimer, Hooper, and Cranmer were proscribed. Cardinal Pole was invited to England. The foreign Protestants resident in England were banished. The leading divines of the Protestant Church of England were deprived of their offices, and, while some escaped to the Continent, many were put in prison. The old statutes against heresy were once more brought forward, primed and loaded. And thus by the beginning of 1555 the stage was cleared, and that bloody tragedy, in which Bishops Bonner and Gardiner played so prominent a part, was ready to begin.

For, unhappily for the credit of human nature, Mary’s advisers were not content with depriving and imprisoning the leading English Reformers. It was resolved to make them abjure their principles, or to put them to death. One by one they were called before special Commissions, examined about their religious opinions, and called upon to recant, on pain of death ii they refused. No third course, no alternative was left to them. They were either to give up Protestantism and receive Popery, or else they were to be burned alive. Refusing to recant, they were one by one handed over to the secular power, publicly brought out and chained to stakes, publicly surrounded with faggots, and publicly sent out of the world by that most cruel and painful of deaths,—the death by fire. All these are broad facts which all the apologists of Rome can never gainsay or deny.

It is a broad fact that during the four last years of Queen Mary’s reign no less than 288 persons were burnt at the stake for their adhesion to the Protestant faith. In 1555 there were burnt 71

..1556 .. 89

.. 1557 .. 88

.. 1558 .. 40

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2881

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Indeed, the faggots never ceased to blaze whilst Mary was alive, and five martyrs were burnt in Canterbury only a week before her death. Out of these 288 sufferers, be it remembered, one was an archbishop, four were bishops, twenty-one were clergymen, fifty-five were women, and four

were children.

It is a broad fact that these 288 sufferers were not put to death for any offence against property or person. They were not rebels against the Queen's authority, caught red-handed in arms. They were not thieves, or murderers, or drunkards, or unbelievers, or men and women of immoral lives. On the contrary, they were, with barely an exception, some of the holiest, purest, and best Christians in England, and several of them the most learned men of their day.

I might say much about the gross injustice and unfairness with which they were treated at their various examinations. Their trials, if indeed they can be called trials, were a mere mockery of justice.—I might say much about the abominable cruelty with which most of them were treated, both in prison and at the stake. But you must read Fox's Martyrs on these points.—I make no comment on the stupid impolicy of the whole persecution. Never did Rome do herself such irreparable damage as she did in Mary's reign. Even unlearned people, who could not argue much, saw clearly that a Church which committed such horrible bloodshed could hardly be the one true Church of Christ!2 But I have no time for all this. I must conclude this general sketch of this part of my subject with two short remarks.

For one thing, I ask my readers never to forget that for the burning of our Reformers the Church of Rome is wholly and entirely responsible. The attempt to transfer the responsibility from the Church to the secular power is a miserable and dishonest subterfuge. The men of Judah did not slay Samson; but they delivered him bound into the hands of the Philistines! The Church of Rome did not slay the Reformers; but she condemned them, and the secular power executed the condemnation! The precise measure of responsibility which ought to be meted out to each of Rome's agents in the matter is a point that I do not care to settle. Miss Strickland, in her "Lives of the Queens of England," has tried in vain to shift the blame from unhappy Mary. With all the zeal of a woman, she has laboured hard to whitewash her character. The reader of her biography will find little about martyrdoms. But it will not do. Mr. Froude's volume tells a very different tale. The Queen, and her Council, and the Parliament, and the Popish Bishops, and Cardinal Pole, must be content to share the responsibility among them. One thing alone is very certain. They will never succeed in shifting the responsibility off the shoulders of the Church of Rome. Like the Jews and Pontius Pilate, when our Lord was crucified, all parties must bear the blame. THE BLOOD is upon them all.

For another thing, I wish my readers to remember that the burning of the Marian martyrs is an act that the Church of Rome has never repudiated, apologised for, or repented of, down to the present day. There stands the huge blot on her escutcheon; and there stands the huge fact side by side, that she never made any attempt to wipe it away. Never has she repented of her treatment of the Vaudois and the Albigenses;—never has she repented of the wholesale murders of the Spanish Inquisition;—never has she repented of the massacre of St. Bartholomew;—never has she repented of the burning of the English Reformers. We should make a note of that fact, and let it sink down into our minds. Rome never changes. Rome will never admit that she has made mistakes. She burned our English Reformers 300 years ago. She tried hard to stamp out by violence the Protestantism which she could not prevent spreading by arguments. If Rome had only the power, I am not sure that she would not attempt to play the whole game over again.

II. The question may now arise in our minds, Who were the leading English Reformers that were burned? What were their names, and what were the circumstances attending their deaths? These are questions which may very properly be asked, and questions to which I proceed at once to give an answer.

In this part of my paper I am very sensible that I shall seem to many to go over old ground. But I am bold to say that it is ground which ought often to be gone over. I, for one, want the names of our martyred Reformers to be “Household Words” in every Protestant family throughout the land. I shall, therefore, make no apology for giving the names of the nine principal English martyrs in the chronological order of their deaths, and for supplying you with a few facts about each of them. Never, I believe, since Christ left the world, did Christian men ever meet a cruel death with such glorious faith, and hope, and patience, as these Marian martyrs. Never did dying men leave behind them such a rich store of noble sayings, sayings which deserve to be written in golden letters in our histories, and handed down to our children’s children.

(1) The first leading English Reformer who broke the ice and crossed the river, as a martyr in Mary’s reign, was John Rogers, a London Minister, Vicar of St. Sepulchre’s, and Prebendary and Reader of Divinity at St. Paul’s. He was burned in Smithfield on Monday, the 4th of February, 1555. Rogers was born at Defttend, in the parish of Aston, near Birmingham. He was a man who, in one respect, had done more for the cause of Protestantism than any of his fellow-sufferers. In saying this I refer to the fact that he had assisted Tyndale and Coverdale in bringing out a most important version of the English Bible, a version commonly known as Matthews’ Bible. Indeed, he was condemned as “Rogers, alias Matthews.” This circumstance, in all human probability, made him a marked man, and was one cause why he was the first who was brought to the stake.

Rogers’ examination before Gardiner gives us the idea of his being a bold, thorough Protestant, who had fully made up his mind on all points of the Romish controversy, and was able to give a reason for his opinions. At any rate, he seems to have silenced and abashed his examiners even more than most of the martyrs did. But argument, of course, went for nothing. “Woe to the conquered!” If he had the word, his enemies had the sword.3

On the morning of his martyrdom he was roused hastily in his cell in Newgate, and hardly allowed time to dress himself. He was then led forth to Smithfield on foot, within sight of the Church of St. Sepulchre, where he had preached, and through the streets of the parish where he had done the work of a pastor. By the wayside stood his wife and ten children (one a baby) whom Bishop Bonner, in his diabolical cruelty, had flatly refused him leave to see in prison. He just saw them, but was hardly allowed to stop, and then walked on calmly to the stake, repeating the 51st Psalm. An immense crowd lined the street, and filled every available spot in Smithfield. Up to that day men could not tell how English Reformers would behave in the face of death, and could hardly believe that Prebendaries and Dignitaries would actually give their bodies to be burned for their religion. But when they saw John Rogers, the first martyr, walking steadily and unflinchingly into a fiery grave, the enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. They rent the air with thunders of applause. Even Noailles, the French Ambassador, wrote home a description of the scene, and said that Rogers went to death “as if he was walking to his wedding.” By God’s great mercy he died with comparative ease. And so the first Marian martyr passed away.

(2) The second leading Reformer who died for Christ's truth in Mary's reign was John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester. He was burned at Gloucester on Friday, the 9th of February, 1555.

Hooper was a Somersetshire man by birth. In many respects he was, perhaps, the noblest martyr of them all. Of all Edward the Sixth's bishops, none has left behind him a higher reputation for personal holiness, and diligent preaching and working in his diocese. None, judging from his literary remains, had clearer and more Scriptural views on all points in theology. Some might say that Edward the Sixth's Bishop of Gloucester was too Calvinistic; but he was not more so than the Thirty-nine Articles. Hooper was a far-sighted man, and saw the danger of leaving nest-eggs for Romanism in the Church of England. In his famous dispute with Cranmer and the other bishops about wearing Romish vestments at his consecration, it bas been, I know, the fashion to condemn him as too stiff and unbending. I say boldly that the subsequent history of our Church makes it doubtful whether we ought not to reverse our verdict. The plain truth is, that in principle Hooper was right, and his opponents were wrong.

A man like Hooper, firm, stem, not naturally genial, unbending and unsparing in his denunciation of sin, was sure to have many enemies. He was one of the first marked for destruction as soon as Popery was restored. He was summoned to London at a very early stage of the Marian persecution, and, after lingering eighteen months in prison, and going through the form of examination by Bonner, Gardiner, Tunstall, and Day, was degraded from his office, and sentenced to be burned as a heretic.

At first it was fully expected that he would suffer in Smithfield with Rogers. This plan, for some unknown reason, was given up, and to his great satisfaction Hooper was sent down to Gloucester, and burnt in his own diocese, and in sight of his own cathedral. On his arrival there, he was received with every sign of sorrow and respect by a vast multitude, who went out on the Cirencester Road to meet him, and was lodged for the night in the house of a Mr. Ingrain, which is still standing, and probably not much altered. There Sir Anthony Kingston, whom the good Bishop had been the means of converting from a sinful life, entreated him, with many tears, to spare himself, and urged him to remember that "Life was sweet, and death was bitter." To this the noble martyr returned this memorable reply, that "Eternal life was more sweet, and eternal death was more bitter."

On the morning of his martyrdom he was led forth, walking, to the place of execution, where an immense crowd awaited him. It was market-day; and it was reckoned that nearly 700o people were present. The stake was planted directly in front of the western gate of the Cathedral-close, and within 100 yards of the deanery and the east front of the Cathedral. The exact spot is marked now by a beautiful memorial at the east end of the churchyard of St. Mary-de-Lode. The window over the gate, where Popish friars watched the Bishop's dying agonies, stands unaltered to this day.

When Hooper arrived at this spot, he was allowed to pray, though strictly forbidden to speak to the people. And there he knelt down, and prayed a prayer which has been preserved and recorded by Fox, and is of exquisitely touching character. Even then a box was put before him containing a full pardon, if he would only recant. His only answer was, "Away with it; if you love my soul, away with it!" He was then fastened to the stake by an iron round his waist, and fought his last fight with the king of terrors. Of all the martyrs, none perhaps, except Ridley, suffered more than Hooper did.

Three times the faggots had to be lighted, because they would not burn properly. Three quarters of an hour the noble sufferer endured the mortal agony, as Fox says, “neither moving backward, forward, nor to any side,” but only praying, “Lord Jesus, have mercy on me; Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” and beating his breast with one hand till it was burned to a stump. And so the good Bishop of Gloucester passed away.

(3) The third leading Reformer who suffered in Mary’s reign was Rowland Taylor, Rector of Hadleigh, in Suffolk. He was burned on Aldham Common, close to his own parish, the same day that Hooper died at Gloucester, on Friday, the 9th February, I555.

Rowland Taylor is one of whom we know little, except that he was a great friend of Cranmer, and a doctor of divinity and canon law. But that he was a man of high standing among the Reformers is evident, from his being ranked by his enemies with Hooper, Rogers, and Bradford; and that he was an exceedingly able and ready divine is clear from his examination, recorded by Fox. Indeed, there is hardly any of the sufferers about whom the old Martyrologist has gathered together so many touching and striking things. One might think he was a personal friend.

Striking was the reply which he made to his friends at Hadleigh, who urged him to flee, as he might have done, when he was first summoned to appear in London before Gardiner:—

“What will ye have me to do? I am old, and have already lived too long to see these terrible and most wicked days. Fly you, and do as your conscience leadeth you. I am fully determined, with God’s grace, to go to this Bishop and tell him to his beard that he doth naught. I believe before God that I shall never be able to do for my God such good service as I may do now.”—Fox’s “Acts and Monuments,” vol. iii. p. 138.

Striking were the replies which he made to Gardiner and his other examiners. None spoke more pithily, weightily, and powerfully than did this Suffolk incumbent.

Striking and deeply affecting was his last testament and legacy of advice to his wife, his family, and parishioners, though far too long to be inserted here, excepting the last sentence: —

“For God’s sake beware of Popery: for though it appear to have in it unity, yet the same is vanity and Antichristianity, and not in Christ’s faith and verity.” Fox’s “Acts and Monuments,” vol. iii. p. 144.

He was sent down from London to Hadleigh, to his great delight, to be burned before the eyes of his parishioners. When he got within two miles of Hadleigh, the Sheriff of Suffolk asked him how he felt. “God be praised, Master Sheriff,” was his reply, “never better. For now I am almost at home. I lack but just two stiles to go over, and I am even at my Father’s house.”

As he rode through the streets of the little town of Hadleigh, he found them lined with crowds of his parishioners, who had heard of his approach, and came out of their houses to greet him with many tears and lamentations. To them he only made one constant address, “I have preached to you God’s Word and truth, and am come this day to seal it with my blood.”

On coming to Aldham Common, where he was to suffer, they told him where he was. Then he said,—“hank God, I am even at home.”

When he was stripped to his shirt and ready for the stake, he said, with a loud voice,—"Good people, I have taught you nothing but God's Holy Word, and those lessons that I have taken out of the Bible; and I am come hither to seal it with my blood." He would probably have said more, but, like all the other martyrs, he was strictly forbidden to speak, and even now was struck violently on the head for saying these few words. He then knelt down and prayed, a poor woman of the parish insisting, in spite of every effort to prevent her, in kneeling down with him. After this, he was chained to the stake, and repeating the 51st Psalm, and crying to God, "Merciful Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, receive my soul into Thy hands," stood quietly amidst the flames without crying or moving, till one of the guards dashed out his brains with a halberd. And so this good old Suffolk incumbent passed away.

(4) The fourth leading Reformer who ,suffered in Mary's reign was Robert Ferrar, Bishop of St. David's, in Wales. He was burned at Carmarthen on Friday, the 30th March, 1555. Little is known of this good man beyond the fact that he was born at Halifax, and was the last Prior of Nostel, in Yorkshire, an office which he surrendered in 1540. He was also Chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer and to the Protector Somerset, and to this influence he owed his elevation to the Episcopal bench. He was first imprisoned for various trivial and ridiculous charges on temporal matters, in the latter days of Edward the Sixth, after the fall of the Protector Somerset, and afterwards was brought before Gardiner, with Hooper, Rogers, and Bradford, on the far more serious matter of his doctrine. The articles exhibited against him clearly show that in all questions of faith he was of one mind with his fellow-martyrs. Like Hooper and Taylor, he was condemned to be burned in the place where he was best known, and was sent down from London to Carmarthen. What happened there at his execution is related very briefly by Fox, partly, no doubt, because of the great distance of Carmarthen from London in those pre-railways days; partly, perhaps, because most of those who saw Ferrar burned could speak nothing but Welsh. One single fact is recorded which shows the good Bishop's courage and constancy in a striking light. He had told a friend before the day of execution that if he saw him once stir in the fire from the pain of his burning, he need not believe the doctrines he had taught. When the awful time came, he did not forget his promise, and, by God's grace, he kept it well. He stood in the flames holding out his hands till they were burned to stumps, until a bystander in mercy struck him on the head, and put an end to his sufferings. And so the Welsh Bishop passed away.

(5) The fifth leading Reformer who suffered in Mary's reign was John Bradford, Prebendary of St. Paul's, and Chaplain to Bishop Ridley. He was burned in Smithfield on Monday, July the 1st, 1555, at the early age of thirty-five. Few of the English martyrs, perhaps, are better known than Bradford, and none certainly deserve better their reputation. Strype calls Bradford, Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, the "four prime pillars" of the Reformed Church of England. He was by birth a Manchester man, and to the end of his life retained a strong interest in the district with which he was connected. At an early age his high talents commended him to the notice of men in high quarters, and he was appointed one of the six royal chaplains who were sent about England to preach up the doctrines of the Reformation. Bradford's commission was to preach in Lancashire and Cheshire, and he seems to have performed his duty with singular ability and success. He preached constantly in Manchester, Liverpool, Bolton, Bury, Wigan, Ashton, Stockport, Prestwich, Middleton, and Chester, with great benefit to the cause of Protestantism, and with great effect on men's souls. The consequence was what might have been expected. Within a month of Queen

Mary's accession Bradford was in prison, and never left it until he was burned. His youth, his holiness, and his extraordinary reputation as a preacher, made him an object of great interest during his imprisonment, and immense efforts were made to pervert him from the Protestant faith. All these efforts, however, were in vain. As he lived, so he died.4

On the day of his execution he was led out from Newgate to Smithfield about nine o'clock in the morning, amid such a crowd of people as was never seen either before or after. A Mrs. Honeywood, who lived to the age of ninety-six, and died about 162o, remembered going to see him burned, and her shoes being trodden off by the crowd. Indeed, when he came to the stake the Sheriffs of London were so alarmed at the press that they would not allow him and his fellow-sufferer, Leaf, to pray as long as they wished. "Arise," they said, "and make an end; for the press of the people is great."

"At that word," says Fox, "they both stood up upon their feet, and then Master Bradford took a faggot in his hands and kissed it, and so likewise the stake." When he came to the stake he held up his hands, and, looking up to heaven, said, "O England, England, repent thee of thy sins! Beware of idolatry; beware of false Antichrists l Take heed they do not deceive you!" After that he turned to the young man Leaf, who suffered with him, and said, "Be of good comfort, brother; for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night." After that he spoke no more that man could hear, excepting that he embraced the reeds, and said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth to eternal life, and few there be that find it." "He embraced the flames," says Fuller, "as a fresh gale of wind in a hot summer day." And so, in the prime of life, he passed away.

(6, 7) The sixth and seventh leading Reformers who suffered in Mary's reign were two whose names are familiar to every Englishman, Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London, and Hugh Latimer, once Bishop of Worcester. They were both burned at Oxford, back to back, at one stake, on the 16th of October, I555. Ridley was born at Willimondswike, in Northumberland, on the borders. Latimer was born at Thurcaston, in Leicestershire. The history of these two great English Protestants is so well known to most people that I need not say much about it. Next to Cranmer, there can be little doubt that no two men did so much to bring about the establishment of the principles of the Reformation in England. Latimer, as an extraordinary popular preacher, and Ridley, as a learned man and an admirable manager of the Metropolitan diocese of London, have left behind them reputations which never have been passed. As a matter of course, they were among the first that Bonner and Gardiner struck at when Mary came to the throne, and were persecuted with relentless severity until their deaths.

How they were examined again and again by Commissioners about the great points in controversy between Protestants and Rome,—how they were shamefully baited, teased, and tortured by every kind of unfair and unreasonable dealing,—how they gallantly fought a good fight to the end, and never gave way for a moment to their adversaries,—all these are matters with which I need not trouble my readers. Are they not all fairly chronicled in the pages of good old Fox? I will only mention a few circumstances connected with their deaths.

On the day of their martyrdom they were brought separately to the place of execution, which was at the end of Broad Street, Oxford, close to Balliol College. Ridley arrived on the ground first, and seeing Latimer come afterwards, ran to him and kissed him, saying, "Be of good heart, brother; for God will either assuage the fury of the flames, or else strengthen us to abide it." They then prayed

earnestly, and talked with one another, though no one could hear what they said. After this they had to listen to a sermon by a wretched renegade divine named Smith, and, being forbidden to make any answer, were commanded to make ready for death.

Ridley's last words before the fire was lighted were these,—"Heavenly Father, I give Thee most hearty thanks that Thou hast called me to a profession of Thee even unto death. I beseech Thee, Lord God, have mercy on this realm of England, and deliver the same from all her enemies." Latimer's last words were like the blast of a trumpet, which rings even to this day,—"Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day, by God's grace, light such a candle in England as I trust shall never be put out."

When the flames began to rise, Ridley cried out with a loud voice in Latin, "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit: Lord, receive my spirit," and afterwards repeated these last words in English. Latimer cried as vehemently on the other side of the stake, "Father of heaven, receive my soul."

Latimer soon died. An old man, above eighty years of age, it took but little to set his spirit free from its earthly tenement. Ridley suffered long and painfully, from the bad management of the fire by those who attended the execution. At length, however, the flames reached a vital part of him, and he fell at Latimer's feet, and was at rest. And so the two great Protestant bishops passed away. "They were lovely and beautiful in their lives, and in death they were not divided."

(8) The eighth leading English Reformer who suffered in Mary's reign was John Philpot, Archdeacon of Winchester. He was burned in Smithfield on Wednesday, December the 18th, 1555. Philpot is one of the martyrs of whom we know little comparatively, except that he was born at Compton, in Hampshire, was of good family, and well connected, and had a very high reputation for learning. The mere fact that at the beginning of Mary's reign he was one of the leading champions of Protestantism in the mock discussions which were held in Convocation, is sufficient to show that he was no common man. The relentless virulence with which he was persecuted by Gardiner is easily accounted for, when we remember that Gardiner, when he was deposed from his See in Edward VI.'s time, was Bishop of Winchester, and would naturally regard his successor, Bishop Porter, and all his officials, with intense hatred. A Popish bishop was not likely to spare a Protestant archdeacon.

The thirteen examinations of Philpot before the Popish bishops are given by Fox at great length, and fill no less than one hundred and forty pages of one of the Parker Society volumes. The length to which they were protracted shows plainly how anxious his judges were to turn him from his principles. The skill with which the Archdeacon maintained his ground, alone and unaided, gives a most favourable impression of his learning, no less than of his courage and patience.

The night before his execution he received a message, while at supper in Newgate, to the effect that he was to be burned next day. He answered at once, "I am ready: God grant me strength and a joyful resurrection." He then went into his bed room, and thanked God that he was counted worthy to suffer for His truth.

The next morning, at eight o'clock, the Sheriffs called for him, and conducted him to Smithfield. The road was foul and muddy, as it was the depth of winter, and the officers took him up in their arms to carry him to the stake. Then he said, merrily, alluding to what he had probably seen at Rome, when travelling in his early days, "What, will you make me a Pope? I am content to go to

my journey's end on foot."

When he came into Smithfield, he kneeled down and said, "I will pay my vows in thee, O Smithfield." He then kissed the stake and said, "Shall I disdain to suffer at this stake, seeing my Redeemer did not refuse to suffer a most vile death on the cross for me?" After that, he meekly repeated the 106th, 107th, and 108th Psalms; and being chained to the stake, died very quietly. And so the good Archdeacon passed away.

(9) The ninth and last leading Reformer who suffered in Mary's reign was Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. He was burned at Oxford, on the 21st of March, 1556. Cranmer was born at Aslacton, in Nottinghamshire. There is no name among the English martyrs so well known in history as his. There is none certainly in the list of our Reformers to whom the Church of England, on the whole, is so much indebted. He was only a mortal man, and had his weaknesses and infirmities, it must be admitted; but still, he was a great man, and a good man.

Cranmer, we must always remember, was brought prominently forward at a comparatively early period in the English Reformation, and was made Archbishop of Canterbury at a time when his views of religion were confessedly half-formed and imperfect. Whenever quotations from Cranmer's writings are brought forward by the advocates of semi-Romanism in the Church of England, you should always ask carefully to what period of his life those quotations belong. In forming your estimate of Cranmer, do not forget his antecedents. He was a man who had the honesty to grope his way into fuller light, and to cast aside his early opinions and confess that he had changed his mind on many subjects. How few men have the courage to do this!

Cranmer maintained an unblemished reputation throughout the reigns of Henry VIII. and Edward VI., although frequently placed in most delicate and difficult positions. Not a single man can be named in those days who passed through so much dirt, and yet came out of it so thoroughly undefiled.

Cranmer, beyond all doubt, laid the foundation of our present Prayer-book and Articles. Though not perhaps a brilliant man, he was a learned one, and a lover of learned men, and one who was always trying to improve everything around him. When I consider the immense difficulties he had to contend with, I often wonder that he accomplished what he did. Nothing, in fact, but his steady perseverance would have laid the foundation of our Formularies.

I say all these things in order to break the force of the great and undeniable fact that he was the only English Reformer who for a time showed the white feather, and for a time shrank from dying for the truth! I admit that he fell sadly. I do not pretend to extenuate his fall. It stands forth as an everlasting proof that the best of men are only men at the best. I only want my readers to remember that if Cranmer failed as no other Reformer in England failed, he also had done what certainly no other Reformer had done.

From the moment that Mary came to the English throne, Cranmer was marked for destruction. It is probable that there was no English divine whom the unhappy Queen regarded with such rancour and hatred. She never forgot that her mother's divorce was brought about by Cranmer's advice, and she never rested till he was burned.

Cranmer was imprisoned and examined just like Ridley and Latimer. Like them, he stood his ground firmly before the Commissioners. Like them, he had clearly the best of the argument in all points that were disputed. But, like them, of course, he was pronounced guilty of heresy, condemned, deposed, and sentenced to be burned.

And now comes the painful fact that in the last month of Cranmer's life his courage failed him, and he was persuaded to sign a recantation of his Protestant opinions. Flattered and cajoled by subtle kindness, frightened at the prospect of so dreadful a death as burning, tempted and led away by the devil, Thomas Cranmer fell, and put his hand to a paper, in which he repudiated and renounced the principles of the Reformation, for which he had laboured so long.

Great was the sorrow of all true Protestants on hearing these tidings! Great was the triumphing and exultation of all Papists! Had they stopped here and set their noble victim at liberty, the name of Cranmer would probably have sunk and never risen again. But the Romish party, as God would have it, outwitted themselves. With fiendish cruelty they resolved to burn Cranmer, even after he had recanted. This, by God's providence, was just the turning point for Cranmer's reputation. Through the abounding grace of God he repented of his fall, and found mercy. Through the same abounding grace he resolved to die in the faith of the Reformation. And at last, through abounding grace, he witnessed such a bold confession in St. Mary's, Oxford, that he confounded his enemies, filled his friends with thankfulness and praise, and left the world a triumphant martyr for Christ's truth.

I need hardly remind you how, on the 21st March, the unhappy Archbishop was brought out, like Samson in the hands of the Philistines, to make sport for his enemies, and to be a gazingstock to the world in St. Mary's Church, at Oxford. I need hardly remind you how, after Dr. Cole's sermon he was invited to declare his faith, and was fully expected to acknowledge publicly his alteration of religion, and his adhesion to the Church of Rome. I need hardly remind you how, with intense mental suffering, the Archbishop addressed the assembly at great length, and at the close suddenly astounded his enemies by renouncing all his former recantations, declaring the Pope to be Antichrist, and rejecting the Popish doctrine of the Real Presence. Such a sight was certainly never seen by mortal eyes since the world began!

But then came the time of Cranmer's triumph. With a light heart, and a clear conscience, he cheerfully allowed himself to be hurried to the stake amidst the frenzied outcries of his disappointed enemies. Boldly and undauntedly he stood up at the stake while the flames curled around him, steadily holding out his right hand in the fire, and saying, with reference to his having signed a recantation, "This unworthy right hand," and steadily holding up his left hand towards heaven,5 Of all the martyrs, strange to say, none at the last moment showed more physical Courage than Cranmer did. Nothing, in short, in all his life became him so well as the manner of his leaving it. Greatly he had sinned, but greatly he had repented. Like Peter he fell, but like Peter he rose again. And so passed away the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury.

I will not trust myself to make any comment on these painful and interesting histories. I have not time. I only wish my readers to believe that the half of these men's stories have not been told them, and that the stories of scores of men and women less distinguished by position might easily be added to them, quite as painful and quite as interesting.6 But I will say boldly, that the men who were burned in this way were not men whose memories ought to be lightly passed over, or whose

opinions ought to be lightly esteemed. Opinions for which “an army of martyrs” died ought not to be dismissed with scorn. To their faithfulness we owe the existence of the Reformed Church of England. Her foundations were cemented with their blood. To their courage we owe, in a great measure our English liberty. They taught the land that it was worth while to die for free thought. Happy is the land which has had such citizens I Happy is the Church which has had such Reformers! Honour be to those who at Smithfield, Oxford, Gloucester, Carmarthen, and Hadleigh have raised stones of remembrance and memorial to the martyrs!

III. But I pass on to a point which I hold to be one of cardinal importance in the present day. The point I refer to is the special reason why our Reformers were burned. Great indeed would be our mistake if we supposed that they suffered for the vague charge of refusing submission to the Pope, or desiring to maintain the independence of the Church of England. Nothing of the kind! The principal reason why they were burned was because they refused one of the peculiar doctrines of the Romish Church. On that doctrine, in almost every case, hinged their life or death. If they admitted it, they might live; if they refused it, they must die.

The doctrine in question was the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper. Did they, or did they not believe that the body and blood of Christ were really, that is, corporally, literally, locally, and materially, present under the forms of bread and wine after the words of consecration were pronounced? Did they or did they not believe that the real body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin Mary, was present on the so-called altar so soon as the mystical words had passed the lips of the priest? Did they or did they not? That was the simple question. If they did not believe and admit it, they were burned.7

There is a wonderful and striking unity in the stories of our martyrs on this subject. Some of them, no doubt, were attacked about the marriage of priests. Some of them were assaulted about the nature of the Catholic Church. Some of them were assailed on other points. But all, without an exception, were called to special account about the real presence, and in every case their refusal to admit the doctrine formed one principal cause of their condemnation.

(1) Hear what Rogers said:—

“I was asked whether I believed in the sacrament to be the very body and blood of our Saviour Christ that was born of the Virgin Mary, and hanged on the cross, really and substantially? I answered, ‘ I think it to be false. I cannot understand really and substantially to signify otherwise than corporally. But corporally Christ is only in heaven, and so Christ cannot be corporally in your sacrament.’ “-Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 101, edition, 1684. And therefore he was condemned and burned.

(2) Hear what Bishop Hooper said:—

“Tunstall asked him to say, ‘whether he believed the corporal presence in the sacrament,’ and Master Hooper said plainly ‘that there was none such, neither did he believe any such thing.’ Whereupon they bade the notaries write that he was married and would not go from his wife, and that he believed not the corporal presence in the sacrament; wherefore he was worthy to be deprived of his bishopric.”—Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 123. And so he was condemned and burned.

(3) Hear what Rowland Taylor said:—

“The second cause why I was condemned as a heretic was that I denied transubstantiation, and concomitation, two juggling words whereby the Papists believe that Christ’s natural body is made of bread, and the Godhead by and by to be joined thereto, so that immediately after the words of consecration, there is no more bread and wine in the sacrament, but the substance only of the body and blood of Christ.”

“Because I denied the aforesaid Papistical doctrine (yea, rather plain, wicked idolatry, blasphemy, and heresy) I am judged a heretic.”—Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 141. And therefore he was condemned and burned.

(4) Hear what was done with Bishop Ferrar. He was summoned to “grant the natural presence of Christ in the sacrament under the form of bread and wine,” and because he refused to subscribe this article as well as others, he was condemned. And in the sentence of condemnation it is finally charged against him that he maintained that “the sacrament of the altar ought not to be ministered on an altar, or to be elevated, or to be adored in any way.”—Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 178. And so he was burned.

(5) Hear what holy John Bradford wrote to the men of Lancashire and Cheshire when he was in prison:—

“The chief thing which I am condemned for as an heretic is because I deny in the sacrament of the altar (which is not Christ’s Supper, but a plain perversion as the Papists now use it) to be a real, natural, and corporal presence of Christ’s body and blood under the forms and accidents of bread and wine: that is, because I deny transubstantiation, which is the darling of the devil, and daughter and heir to Antichrist’s religion.”—Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 260. And so he was condemned and burned.

(6) Hear what were the words of the sentence of condemnation against Bishop Ridley:—

“The said Nicholas Ridley affirms, maintains, and stubbornly defends certain opinions, assertions, and heresies, contrary to the Word of God and the received faith of the Church, as in denying the true and natural body and blood of Christ to be in the sacrament of the altar, and secondarily, in affirming the substance of bread and wine to remain after the words of consecration.”—Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 426. And so he was condemned and burned.

(7) Hear the articles exhibited against Bishop Latimer:—

“That thou hast openly affirmed, defended, and maintained that the true and natural body of Christ after the consecration of the priest, is not really present in the sacrament of the altar, and that in the sacrament of the altar remaineth still the substance of bread and wine.” And to this article the good old man replied:—

“After a corporal being, which the Romish Church furnisheth, Christ’s body and blood is not in the sacrament under the forms of bread and wine.”—Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 426. And so he was condemned and burned.

(8) Hear the address made by Bishop Bonner to Archdeacon Philpot:—

“You have offended and trespassed against the sacrament of the altar, denying the real presence of Christ’s body and blood to be there, affirming also material bread and material wine to be in the sacrament, and not the substance of the body and blood of Christ.”—Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 495. And because the good man stoutly adhered to this opinion he was condemned and burned.

(9) Hear, lastly, what Cranmer said with almost his last breath, in St. Mary’s Church, Oxford:—

“As for the sacrament, I believe, as I have taught in my book against the Bishop of Winchester, the which my book teacheth so true a doctrine, that it shall stand at the last day before the judgment of God when the Papist’s doctrine contrary thereto shall be ashamed to show her face.”—Fox in loco, vol. iii. p. 562.

If any one wants to know what Cranmer had said in this book, let him take the following sentence as a specimen:—

“They (the Papists) say that Christ is corporally under or in the form of bread and wine. We say that Christ is not there, neither corporally nor spiritually; but in them that worthily eat and drink the bread and wine He is spiritually, and corporally in heaven.”—“Cranmer on the Lord’s Supper.” Parker Society edition, p. 54. And so he was burned.

Now, were the English Reformers right in being so stiff and unbending on this question of real presence? Was it a point of such vital importance that they were justified in dying before they would receive it? These are questions, I suspect, which are very puzzling to many unreflecting minds. Such minds, I fear, can see in the whole controversy about the real presence nothing but a logomachy, or strife of words. But they are questions, I am bold to say, on which no well-instructed Bible reader can hesitate for a moment in giving his answer. Such an one will say at once that the Romish doctrine of the real presence strikes at the very root of the Gospel, and is the very citadel and keep of Popery. Men may not see this at first, but it is a point that ought to be carefully remembered. It throws a clear and broad light on the line which the Reformers took, and the unflinching firmness with which they died.

Whatever men please to think or say, the Romish doctrine of the real presence, if pursued to its legitimate consequences, obscures every leading doctrine of the Gospel, and damages and interferes with the whole system of Christ’s truth. Grant for a moment that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice, and not a sacrament —grant that every time the words of consecration are used the natural body and blood of Christ are present on the Communion Table under the forms of bread and wine—grant that every one who eats that consecrated bread and drinks that consecrated wine does really eat and drink the natural body and blood of Christ—grant for a moment these things, and then see what momentous consequences result from these premises. You spoil the blessed doctrine of Christ’s finished work when He died on the cross. A sacrifice that needs to be repeated is not a perfect and complete thing.—You spoil the priestly office of Christ. If there are priests that can offer an acceptable sacrifice of God besides Him, the great High Priest is robbed of His glory.—You spoil the Scriptural doctrine of the Christian ministry. You exalt sinful men into the position of mediators between God and man.—You give to the sacramental elements of bread and wine an honour and veneration they were never meant to receive, and produce an idolatry to be abhorred of faithful Christians.—Last, but not least, you overthrow the true doctrine of Christ’s human nature. If the body born of the Virgin Mary can be in more places than one at the same

time, it is not a body like our own, and Jesus was not “the second Adam” in the truth of our nature. I cannot doubt for a moment that our martyred Reformers saw and felt these things even more clearly than we do, and, seeing and feeling them, chose to (tie rather than admit the doctrine of the real presence. Feeling them, they would not give way by subjection for a moment, and cheerfully laid down their lives. Let this fact be deeply graven in our minds. Wherever the English language is spoken on the face of the globe this fact ought to be clearly understood by every Englishman who reads history. Rather than admit the doctrine of the real presence of Christ’s natural body and blood under the forum of bread and wine, the Reformers of the Church of England were content to be burned.

IV. And now I must ask the special attention of my readers while I try to show the bearing of the whole subject on our own position and on our own times. I must ask you to turn from the dead to the living, to look away from England in 1555 to England in this present enlightened and advanced age, and to consider seriously the light which the burning of our Reformers throws on the Church of England at the present day.

We live in momentous times. The ecclesiastical horizon on every side is dark and lowering. The steady rise and progress of extreme Ritualism and Ritualists are shaking the Church of England to its very centre. It is of the very first importance to understand clearly what it all means. A right diagnosis of disease is the very first element of successful treatment. The physician who does not see what is the matter is never likely to work any cures.

Now, I say there can be no greater mistake than to suppose that the great controversy of our times is a mere question of vestments and ornaments—of chasubles and copes—of more or less church decorations—of more or less candles and flowers—of more or less bowings and turnings and crossings—of more or less gestures and postures—of more or less show and form. The man who fancies that the whole dispute is a mere aesthetic one, a question of taste, like one of fashion and millinery, must allow me to tell him that he is under a complete delusion. He may sit on the shore, like the Epicurean philosopher, smiling at theological storms, and flatter himself that we are only squabbling about trifles; but I take leave to tell him that his philosophy is very shallow, and his knowledge of the controversy of the day very superficial indeed.

The things I have spoken of are trifles, I fully concede. But they are pernicious trifles, because they are the outward expression of an inward doctrine. They are the skin disease which is the symptom of an unsound constitution. They are the plague spot which tells of internal poison. They are the curling smoke which arises from a hidden volcano of mischief. I, for one, would never make any stir about church millinery, or incense, or candles, if I thought they meant nothing beneath the surface. But I believe they mean a great deal of error and false doctrine, and therefore I publicly protest against them, and say that those who support them are to be blamed.

I give it as my deliberate opinion that the root of the whole Ritualistic system is the dangerous doctrine of the real presence of Christ’s natural body and blood in the Lord’s Supper under the form of the consecrated bread and wine. If words mean anything, this real presence is the foundation principle of Ritualism. This real presence is what the extreme members of the Ritualistic party want to bring back into the Church of England. And just as our martyred Reformers went to the stake rather than admit the real presence, so I hold that we should make any sacrifice and contend to the bitter end, rather than allow a materialistic doctrine about Christ’s

presence in the Lord's Supper to come back in any shape into our Communion.

I will not weary my readers with quotations in proof of what I affirm. They have heard enough, perhaps too much, of them. But I must ask permission to give two short extracts.

Observe what Dr. Pusey says, in a sermon called "Will ye also go away?" (Parker's, 1867):—

"While repudiating any materialistic conceptions of the mode of the presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, such as I believe is condemned in the term 'corporal presence of our Lord's flesh and blood,' i.e., as though His precious body and blood were present in any gross or carnal way, and not rather sacramentally, really, spiritually—I believe that in the Holy Eucharist the body and blood of Christ are sacramentally, supernaturally, ineffably, but verily and indeed present, 'under the forms of bread and wine;' and that 'where His body is, there is Christ.'"

Observe what Dr. Littledale says, in a tract called "The Real Presence":—

"I. The Christian Church teaches, and has always taught, that in the Holy Communion, after consecration, the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ are 'verily and indeed' present on the altar under the forms of bread and wine.

"II. The Church also teaches that this presence depends on God's will, not on man's belief, and therefore that bad and good people receive the very same thing in communicating, the good for their benefit, the bad for their condemnation.

"III. Further, that as Christ is both God and Man, and as these two natures are for ever joined in His one person, His Godhead must be wherever His body is, and therefore He is to be worshipped in His sacrament.

"IV. The body and blood present are that same body and blood which were conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, ascended into heaven, but they are not present in the same manner as they were when Christ walked on earth. He, as Man, is now naturally in heaven, there to be till the last day, yet He is supernaturally, and just as truly, present in the Holy Communion, is some way which we cannot explain, but only believe." In both these quotations, we may observe, there is an attempt lo evade the charge of maintaining a "gross and carnal presence." The attempt, however, is not successful. It is a very curious fact that the Romish controversialist, Mr. Harding, Bishop Jewell's opponent, said just as much 300 years ago. He said:—

"Christ's body is present not after a corporal, or carnal, or naturally wise, but invisibly, unspeakably, miraculously, supernaturally, spiritually, Divinely, and in a manner by Him known."—"Harding's Reply to Jewell," p. 434. Parker Society edit. In both cases we can hardly fail to observe that the very expressions which our martyrs steadily refused is employed, "present under the forms of bread and wine."

It is clear, to my mind, that if Dr. Pusey and Dr. Littledale had been brought before Gardiner and Bonner three hundred years ago, they would have left the court with flying colours, and, at any rate, would not have been burned.

I might refer my readers to the other published sermons on the Lord's Supper by men of high position in our Church. I might refer them to several Ritualistic manuals for the use of Communicants. I might refer them to the famous book "Directorium Anglicanum." I simply give it as my opinion that no plain man in his senses can read the writings of extreme Ritualists about the Lord's Supper and see any real distinction between the doctrine they hold and downright Popery. It is a distinction without a difference, and one that any jury of twelve honest men would say at once could not be proved.

I turn from books and sermons to churches, and I ask any reflecting mind to mark, consider, and digest what may be seen in any thorough-going Ritualistic place of worship. I ask him to mark the superstitious veneration and idolatrous honour with which everything within the chancel, and around and upon the Lord's table, is regarded. I boldly ask any jury of twelve honest and unprejudiced men to look at that chancel and communion table, and tell me what they think all this means. I ask them whether the whole thing does not savour of the Romish doctrine of the Real Presence, and the sacrifice of the Mass? I believe that if Bonner and Gardiner had seen the chancels and communion tables of some of the churches of this day, they would have lifted up their hands and rejoiced; while Ridley, Bishop of London, and Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester, would have turned away with righteous indignation and said, "This communion table is not meant for the Lord's Supper on the Lord's board, but for counterfeiting the idolatrous Popish Mass."

I do not for a moment deny the zeal, earnestness, and sincerity of the extreme Ritualists, though as much might be said for the Pharisees or the Jesuits. I do not deny that we live in a singularly free country, and that Englishmen, now-a-days, have liberty to commit any folly short of "felo-de-se." But I do deny that any clergyman, however zealous and earnest, has a right to reintroduce Popery into the Church of England. And, above all, I deny that he has any right to maintain the very principle of the Real Presence, for opposing which the Reformers of his Church were burned.

The plain truth is, that the doctrine of the extreme Ritualistic school about the Lord's Supper can never be reconciled with the dying opinions of our martyred Reformers. The members of this school may protest loudly that they are sound churchmen, but they certainly are not churchmen of the same opinions as the Marian martyrs. If words mean anything, Hooper, and Rogers, and Ridley, and Bradford, and their companions, held one view of the Real Presence, and the ultra-Ritualists hold quite another. If they were right, the Ritualists are wrong. There is a gulf that cannot be crossed between the two parties. There is a thorough difference that cannot be reconciled or explained away. If we hold with one side, we cannot possibly hold with the other. For my part, I say, unhesitatingly, that I have more faith in Ridley, and Hooper, and Bradford, than I have in all the leaders of the ultra-Ritualistic party.

But what are we going to do? The danger is very great, far greater, I fear, than most people suppose. A conspiracy has been long at work for unprotestantizing the Church of England, and all the energies of Rome are concentrated on this little island. A sapping and mining process has been long going on under our feet, of which we are beginning at last to see a little. We shall see a good deal more by and by. At the rate we are going, it would never surprise me if within fifty years the crown of England were no longer on a Protestant head, and High Mass were once more celebrated in Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's. The danger, in plain words, is neither more nor

less than that of our Church being unprotestantized and going back to Babylon and Egypt. We are in imminent peril of reunion with Rome.

Men may call me an alarmist, if they like, for using such language. But I reply, there is a cause. The upper classes in this land are widely infected with a taste for a sensuous, histrionic, formal religion.—The lower orders are becoming sadly familiarised with all the ceremonialism which is the stepping-stone to Popery. —The middle classes are becoming disgusted with the Church of England, and asking what is the use of it.—The intellectual classes are finding out that all religions are either equally good or equally bad.—The House of Commons will do nothing unless pressed by public opinion. We have no Pyms or Hampdens there now.—And all this time Ritualism grows and spreads. The ship is among breakers,—breakers ahead and breakers astern,—breakers on the right hand and breakers on the left. Something needs to be done, if we are to escape shipwreck.

The very life of the Church of England is at stake, and nothing less. Take away the Gospel from a Church and that Church is not worth preserving. A well without water, a scabbard without a sword, a steam-engine without a fire, a ship without compass and rudder, a watch without a mainspring, a stuffed carcase without life,—all these are useless things. But there is nothing so useless as a Church without the Gospel. And this is the very question that stares us in the face.—Is the Church of England to retain the Gospel or not? Without it in vain shall we turn to our archbishops and bishops, in vain shall we glory in our cathedrals and parish churches. Ichabod will soon be written on our walls. The ark of God will not be with us. Surely something ought to be done.

One thing, however, is very clear to my mind. We ought not lightly to forsake the Church of England. No! so long as her Articles and Formularies remain unaltered, unrepealed, and unchanged, so long we ought not to forsake her. Cowardly and base is that seaman who launches the boat and forsakes the ship so long as there is a chance of saving her. Cowardly, I say, is that Protestant Churchman who talks of seceding because things on board our Church are at present out of order. What though some of the crew are traitors, and some are asleep! What though the old ship has some leaks, and her rigging has given way in some places! Still I maintain there is much to be done. There is life in the old ship yet. The great Pilot has not yet forsaken her. The compass of the Bible is still on deck. There are yet left on board some faithful and able seamen. So long as the Articles and Formularies are not Romanized, let us stick by the ship. So long as she has Christ and the Bible, let us stand by her to the last plank, nail our colours to the mast, and never haul them down. Once more, I say, let us not be wheedled, or bullied, or frightened, or cajoled, or provoked, into forsaking the Church of England.

In the name of the Lord let us set up our banners. If ever we would meet Ridley and Latimer and Hooper in another world without shame, let us “contend earnestly” for the truths which they died to preserve. The Church of England expects every Protestant Churchman to do his duty. Let us not talk only, but act. Let us not act only, but pray. “He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.”

There is a voice in the blood of the martyrs. What does that voice say? It cries aloud from Oxford, Smithfield, and Gloucester, “Resist to the death the Popish doctrine of the Real Presence, under the forms of the consecrated bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper!”

NOTE.—The following quotations about the doctrine of the “Real Presence” are commended to the special attention of all Churchmen in the present day: —

(1) “Whereas it is ordained in this Office for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper, that the Communicants should receive the same kneeling; (which order is well meant, for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy Receivers, and for the avoiding of such profanation and disorder in the Holy Communion, as might otherwise ensue;) yet, lest the same kneeling should by any persons, either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinacy, be misconstrued and depraved; It is hereby de-elated, That thereby no adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread or Wine thereby bodily received, or unto any corporal presence of Christ’s natural Flesh and Blood. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored; (for that were Idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians;) and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven, and not here: it being against the truth of Christ’s natural Body to be at one time in more places than one.”—Rubric at the end of the Communion Service in the Book of Common Prayer.

(2) “As concerning the form of doctrine used in this Church of England in the Holy Communion, that the Body and Blood of Christ be under the forms of bread and wine, when you shall show the place where this form of words is expressed, then shall you purge yourself from that which in the meantime I take to be a plain untruth.”—“Cranmer’s Answer to Gardiner,” pp. 52, 53, Parker edition.

(3) “The real presence of Christ’s most blessed Body and Blood is not to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament—“Hooker’s Eccles. Pol.,” b. v. p. 67.

(4) “The Church of England has wisely forborne to use the term of Real Presence in

Wycliffe

LIGHT FROM OLD TIMES;

OR, Protestant Facts and Men. WITH AN INTRODUCTION FOR OUR OWN DAYS. BY THE LATE BISHOP JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSI'ELS," "KNOTS UNTIED," ETC., ETC.

“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?”- 1 Corinthians 14:8.

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JOHN WYCLIF.

IT is an old and true saying, that nations sometimes know little about some of their greatest benefactors. If there ever was a man to whom this saying applies, it is John Wyclif, the forerunner and first beginner of the Protestant Reformation in this country. To Wyclif England owes an enormous debt: yet Wyclif is a man of whom most Englishmen know little or nothing.

In drawing up a few pages about this great and good man, the words of the Apostle St. Peter rise up before my mind. He says, “I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance” (2 Peter 1:13). This is exactly what I want to do in this paper. I wish to stir up my readers, and try to make them remember and never forget the man who has been justly called “The Morning Star of the English reformation.”

I. First and foremost, I shall ask you to remember the religious condition of England in the age when Wyclif lived.

I shall make no apology for dwelling briefly on this point. A right understanding of it lies at the very root of my whole subject. Without this it is impossible to form a correct estimate of the man about whom I am writing; of the enormous difficulties he had to contend with; and of the greatness of the work which he did.

John Wyclif was born in the north of Yorkshire, on the banks of the Tees, about the year 1324, in the reign of Edward II., and died in 1384, in the reign of Richard II., more than five hundred years ago. So you will remember that he was born at least a hundred years before the invention of printing, and died about a hundred years before the great German Reformer, Martin Luther, was

born. These two facts alone should never be forgotten.

The three centuries immediately preceding our English Reformation, in the middle of which Wyclif lived, were probably the darkest period in the history of English Christianity. It was a period when the Church of this land was thoroughly, entirely, and completely Roman Catholic-when the Bishop of Rome was the spiritual head of the Church-when Romanism reigned supreme from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland, and ministers and people were all alike Papists. It is no exaggeration to say that for these three centuries before the Reformation, Christianity in England seems to have been buried under a mass of ignorance, superstition, priestcraft, and immorality. The likeness between the religion of this period and that of the apostolic age was so small, that if St. Paul had risen from the dead he would hardly have called it Christianity at all?

Such were the days when Wyclif lived. Such were the difficulties which he had to encounter. I charge my readers not to forget them. The man who could do the work he did, and leave the mark that he left on his generation, must have been no common man. I go further: he must have been a servant of Christ, of rare grace and gifts, and singularly filled with the Holy Ghost. I say he is a man worthy of all honour, and we do well to keep him in remembrance.

II. Let me now turn from Wyclif's time to Wyclif's work.

That Wyclif did a great work in a very dark day-that he made a deep impression on his generation-that he was felt and acknowledged to be “a power” in England both by Church and Parliament, for some twenty-five years, is simple matter of history which no well-read person can deny.

But there is much obscurity about his early life. We know nothing of his first schools and schoolmasters, and can only guess that he may have picked up the first rudiments of his education at Eggleston Priory, on the Tees. But we do know that he went to Oxford between 1335 and 1340, and profited so much by the instruction he got there that he obtained a very high reputation as one of the most learned men of his day. He was made Master of Balliol in 1361, and was afterwards connected with Queen's, Merton, and Canterbury Hall. From that date for about twenty years, when he retired to Lutterworth, Oxford seems to have been his head-quarters, though he evidently was often in London. Lecturing, preaching, writing both for learned and unlearned, arguing, controversy, appear to have been the diet of his life. But we have no minute and systematic account of his life from the pen of any contemporary biographer. How he first obtained his sound theological views-whether he learned anything from Archbishop Bradwardin, who preceded him-whether he was intimate with Fitzralph of Armagh, Chancellor of Oxford, or the famous Grostète, Bishop of Lincoln-who, in short, were his helpers and fellow-labourers, or whether he had none and stood alone-on all these points we know little or nothing. It is useless, however, to complain, as there was no printing in Wyclif's day, and few could read or write. I shall not waste time in guessing, but shall content myself with mentioning four facts which are beyond controversy, and pointing out four reasons why Wyclif's name should always be honoured in England.

(a) For one thing, we should gratefully remember that Wyclif was one of the first Englishmen who maintained the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture as the only rule of faith and practice.

The proof of this is to be seen so continually in his writings, that I shall not attempt to supply quotations. The Bible comes to the front in all his remains.

The importance of this great principle can never be overrated. It lies at the very foundation of Protestant Christianity. It is the back-bone of the Articles of the Church of England and of every sound Church in Christendom. The true Christian was intended by Christ to prove all things by the Word of God, all churches, all ministers, all teaching, all preaching, all doctrines, all sermons, all writings, all opinions, all practices. These are his marching orders. Prove all by the Word of God; measure all by the measure of the Bible; compare all with the standard of the Bible; weigh all in the balances of the Bible; examine all by the light of the Bible; test all in the crucible of the Bible. That which can abide the fire of the Bible, receive, hold, believe, and obey. That which cannot abide the fire of the Bible, reject, refuse, repudiate, and cast away. This is the standard which Wyclif raised in England. This is the flag which he nailed to the mast. May it never be lowered!

All this sounds so familiar to our ears that we do not realize its value. Five hundred years ago, the man who took up this ground was a bold man, and stood alone. Let us never forget that one of the first to set down his foot upon this principle was John Wyclif.

(b) For another thing, let us gratefully remember that Wyclif was one of the first Englishmen who attacked and denounced the errors of the Church of Rome. The sacrifice of the Mass and Transubstantiation, the ignorance and immorality of the priesthood, the tyranny of the See of Rome, the uselessness of trusting to other mediators than Christ, the dangerous tendency of the confessional,-all these and other kindred doctrines will be found unsparingly exposed in his writings. On all these points he was a thorough Protestant Reformer, a century and a half before the Reformation.

Well would it be for England if men saw this subject in the present day as clearly as Wyclif did. Unhappily, nowadays, the edge of the old British feeling about Protestantism seems blunted and dull. Some profess to be tired of all religious controversy, and are ready to sacrifice God's truth for the sake of peace. Some look on Romanism as simply one among many English forms of religion, and neither worse nor better than others. Some try to persuade us that Romanism is changed, and is not nearly so bad as it used to be. Some boldly point to the faults of Protestants, and loudly cry that Romanists are quite as good as ourselves. Some think it fine and liberal to maintain that we have no right to think any one wrong who is in earnest about his creed. And yet the two great historical facts, (a) that ignorance, immorality, and superstition reigned supreme in England 400 years ago under Popery; (b) that the Reformation was the greatest blessing God ever gave to this land,-both these are facts which no one but a Papist ever thought of disputing fifty years ago! In the present day, alas, it is convenient and fashionable to forget them! In short, at the rate we are going, I shall not be surprised if it is soon proposed to repeal the Act of Settlement, and to allow the Crown of England to be worn by a Papist.

If we are to put the clock back, and get behind the Reformation, as some coolly propose, I trust we shall not stop at Henry VIII., or VII., or VI., but go back to consult Wyclif.

(c) For another thing, let us gratefully remember that Wyclif was one of the first, if not the very first, Englishmen who revived the apostolic ordinance of preaching. The “poor priests,” as they were called, whom he sent about the country to teach, were one of the greatest benefits which he

conferred on his generation. They sowed the seed of thoughts among the people which were never entirely forgotten, and, I believe, paved the way for the Reformation.

If Wyclif had never done anything but this for England, I believe that this alone would entitle him to our deep thankfulness. I maintain firmly that the first, foremost, and principal work of the minister is to be a preacher of God's Word.

I say this emphatically, because of the time in which we live, and the peculiar dangers of the Christian warfare in our own land. I believe that the pretended “sacerdotalism” of ministers is one of the oldest and most mischievous errors which has ever plagued Christendom. Partly from an ignorant hankering after the priesthood of the Mosaic Dispensation, which passed away when Christ died; partly from the love of power and dignity, which is natural to ministers, as much as to other men; partly from the preference of unconverted worshippers for a supposed priest and mediator whom they can see, rather than one in heaven whom they cannot see; partly from the general ignorance of mankind before the Bible was printed and circulated; partly from one cause and partly from another, there has been an incessant tendency throughout the last eighteen centuries to exalt ministers to an unscriptural position, and to regard them as priests and mediators between God and man, rather than as preachers of God's Word.

I charge my readers to remember this. Stand fast on old principles. Do not forsake the old paths. Let nothing tempt you to believe that multiplication of forms and ceremonies, constant reading of liturgical services, or frequent communions, will ever do so much good to souls as the powerful, fiery, fervent preaching of God's Word. Daily services without sermons may gratify and edify a few handfuls of believers, but they will never reach, draw, attract, or arrest the great mass of mankind. If men want to do good to the multitude, if they want to reach their hearts and consciences, they must walk in the steps of Wyclif, Latimer, Luther, Chrysostom, and St. Paul. They must attack them through their ears; they must blow the trumpet of the everlasting Gospel loud and long; they must preach the Word.

(d) Last in order, but first in importance, let us ever gratefully remember that Wyclif was the first Englishman who translated the Bible into the English language, and thus enabled it to be understood by the people.

The difficulty of this work was probably something of which we can form no conception at this day. There were probably few, very few, that could help the translator in any way. There was no printing, and the whole book had to be laboriously written in manuscript, and by written manuscript alone could copies be multiplied. To inspect the machinery and apparatus of our blessed Bible Society in Blackfriars, and then to think of the stupendous toil which Wyclif must have gone through, is enough to take one's breath away. But with God's help nothing is impossible. The work was done, and hundreds of copies were circulated. In spite of every effort to suppress the book, and the destruction of it by time, fire, and unfavourable hands, no less than 170 complete copies were found extant when it was reprinted at Oxford some 40 years ago, and no doubt many more are in existence.

The good that was done by the translation of the Bible will probably never be known till the last day, and I shall not attempt to form any conjecture about it. But I shall never hesitate to assert that if there is any one fact more incontrovertibly proved than another it is this, that the possession by a

people of the Bible in their own language is the greatest possible national blessing.

Five hundred years have passed away since the first translator of the English Bible was laid in his grave. I ask any one this day to look at the map of the world and see what a tale it tells about the value of a free and widely circulated Bible.

Which are the countries where the greatest amount of ignorance, superstition, immorality, and tyranny is to be found at this very moment? The countries in which the Bible is a forbidden or neglected book-such countries as Italy and Spain, and the South American States. Which are the countries where liberty, and public and private morality have attained the highest pitch? The countries where the Bible is free to all, like England, Scotland, and the United States. Yes! when you know how a nation deals with the Bible, you may generally know what a nation is. O that the rulers of some nations did but know that a free Bible is the grand secret of national prosperity, and that the surest way to make subjects orderly and obedient is to allow a free passage to the living waters of God's Word! O that the people of some countries did but see that a free Bible is the beginning of all real freedom, and that the first liberty they should seek after is liberty for the apostles and prophets-liberty to have a Bible in every house, and a Bible in every hand! Well said Bishop Hooper, “God in heaven and king on earth have no greater friend than the Bible.” It is a striking fact, that when British Sovereigns are crowned, they are publicly presented with the Bible, and told, “This book is the most valuable thing the world affords.”

This is the book on which the well-being of nations has always hinged, and with which the best interests of every nation in Christendom at this moment are inseparably bound up. Just in proportion as the Bible is honoured or not, light or darkness, morality or immorality, true religion or superstition, liberty or despotism, good laws or bad, will be found in a land. Come with me and open the pages of history, and you will read the proof of these assertions in time past. Read it in the history of Israel under the kings. How great was the wickedness that then prevailed! But who can wonder? The law of the Lord had been completely lost sight of, and was found in the days of Josiah in a corner of the temple.-Read it in the history of the Jews in our Lord Jesus Christ's time. How awful the picture of Scribes and Pharisees, and their religion! But who can wonder? The Scripture was “made void” by man's traditions.-Read it in the history of the Church of Christ in the Middle Ages. What can be worse than the accounts we have of ignorance and superstition? But who can wonder? The times might well be dark, when men had not the light of the Bible.

The plain truth is this, the Bible is the parent of free thought and mental activity. It is a curious fact, that the British and Foreign Bible House and the British Times offices are almost side by side!

Which are the Churches on earth which are producing the greatest effect on mankind? The Churches in which the Bible is exalted. Which are the parishes in England and Scotland where religion and morality have the strongest hold? The parishes in which the Bible is most circulated and read. Who are the ministers in England who have the most real influence over the minds of the people? Not those who are ever crying “Church! Church!” but those who are faithfully preaching the Word. A Church which does not honour the Bible is as useless as a body without life, or a steam engine without fire. A minister who does not honour the Bible is as useless as a soldier without arms, a builder without tools, a pilot without compass, or a messenger without tidings. It is cheap and easy work for Roman Catholics, Neologians, and friends of secular education, to sneer at those who love the Bible; but the Romanist, the Neologian, and the friends

of mere secular education, have never yet shown us one New Zealand, one Tinnevelly, one Sierra Leone, as the fruit of their principles. They only can do that who honour the Bible. These are the works of the Word, and the proofs of its power.

This is the book to which the civilized world is indebted for many of its best and most praiseworthy institutions. Few probably are aware how many are the good things that men have adopted for the public benefit, of which the origin may be clearly traced up to the Bible. It has left lasting marks wherever it has been received. From the Bible are drawn many of the best laws by which society is kept in order. From the Bible has been obtained the standard of morality about truth, honesty, and the relations of man and wife, which prevails among Christian nations, and which-however feebly respected in many cases-makes so great a difference between Christians and heathen. To the Bible we are indebted for that most merciful provision for the poor man, the Sabbath day. To the influence of the Bible we owe nearly every humane and charitable institution in existence. The sick, the poor, the aged, the orphan, the lunatic, the idiot, the blind, were seldom or never thought of before the Bible leavened the world. You may search in vain for any record of institutions for their aid in the histories of Athens or of Rome. Alas, many sneer at the Bible, and say the world would get on well enough without it, who little think how great are their own obligations to the Bible. Little does the infidel think, as he lies sick in some of our great hospitals, that he owes all his present comforts to the very Book he affects to despise. Had it not been for the Bible, he might have died in misery, uncared for, unnoticed, and alone. Verily, the world we live in is fearfully unconscious of its debts. The last day alone, I believe, will tell the full amount of benefit conferred upon it by the Bible. This is the book which John Wyclif was the first to translate, and give to Englishmen in their own mother tongue. I repeat, that if he had done nothing else he would deserve to be gratefully remembered by every English Christian, every English patriot, and every English Churchman.

Such are the four leading reasons for which the memory of John Wyclif ought to be had in honour.

I do not tell you that this great man had no weak points, and held no disputable opinions, and was sound on every theological doctrine. I say nothing of the kind. He lived in a twilight age, and had to work out many a problem in divinity without the slightest help from man. He wrote much, and wrote perhaps hastily; and I do not pretend to endorse all that he wrote. Like Luther and Cranmer, at the beginning he was not clear on all points. But when I consider his solitary, isolated, difficult position, I only wonder that he was as free from error as he was. One fact far outweighs all his alleged defects. That fact is that he was the first translator of the Bible into the English tongue. How he escaped without a violent death, and finally died quietly in his bed at Lutterworth, is a miracle indeed. But it is evident to my mind that God protected him in a miraculous way. “The earth helped the woman.” It was God who raised up John of Gaunt and the Princess of Wales to favour him. It was God who sent the earthquake which broke up a London Synod, when it was about to condemn him. It was God who inclined the University of Oxford to give him support.

The Council of Constance had not yet set the example of burning heretics. The Council of Trent had not yet crystallised and formulated all Popish doctrine. But above all, I see the hand of God over Wyclif-the hand of Him who said, “When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes his enemies to be at peace with him.” Yes! the hand over Wyclif was the crucified hand of Him who said to the apostles, “ I am with you always;” the hand of Him who said to Paul at Corinth, “ Speak,

and hold not thy peace; I am with thee. No man shall set on thee to hurt thee.” He was immortal till his work was done.

Let me now bring this paper to a conclusion by pointing out some practical conclusions to which the whole subject ought to lead us.

(1) Let us then resolve to rally round Wyclif's first principles, and grasp them more firmly than we have done of late years. The supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture, the absolute necessity of watching and resisting the dangerous pretensions of the Church of Rome, the immense importance of preaching God's Word,-these are a basis on which all Protestant Englishmen ought to unite, and work heartily.

(2) Let us learn the astonishing power and influence which one man possesses if he comes forward boldly for Christ, and has the courage of his opinions. One Moses, one Elijah, one John the Baptist, one Paul at Corinth, one Savonarola at Florence, one Luther in Germany, one Zwingle, one Wesley, one Whitefield, one Romaine in London, set thousands thinking and shook a sleeping world. We want more boldness among the friends of truth. There is far too much tendency to sit still, and wait for committees, and number our adherents. We want more men who are not afraid to stand alone, as Wyclif did.

(3) Finally, let us not forget that the Lord God of John Wyclif is not dead but alive. Men change. Something new is the cry of the day. Freer handling of Scripture! Broader and looser theology! This is what many long to see. But we want nothing better than the old Gospel, if we wish to do good. Jesus Christ never changes. At the end of five hundred years He is still the same. He did not fail the Rector of Lutterworth, and He will not fail us if we walk in His steps.

Zeal

PRACTICAL RELIGION. BEING PLAIN PAPERS

ON THE DAILY DUTIES, EXPERIENCE, DANGERS, AND

PRIVILEGES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. BY JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,

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VIII.

ZEAL.

“It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.”—

Galatians 4:18.

ZEAL is a subject, like many others in religion, most sadly misunderstood. Many would be ashamed to be thought “zealous” Christians. Many are ready to say of zealous people what Festus said of Paul: “They are beside themselves,—they are mad.” (Acts 26:24)

But zeal is a subject which no reader of the Bible has any right to pass over. If we make the Bible our rule of faith and practice, we cannot turn away from it. We must look it in the face. What says the Apostle Paul to Titus? “Christ gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14) What says the Lord Jesus to the Laodicean Church? “Be zealous and repent.” (Revelation 3:19)

My object in this paper is to plead the cause of zeal in religion. I believe we ought not to be afraid of it, but rather to love and admire it. I believe it to be a mighty blessing to the world, and the origin of countless benefits to mankind. I want to strike a blow at the lazy, easy, sleepy Christianity of these latter days, which can see no beauty in zeal, and only uses the word “zealot” as a word of reproach. I want to remind Christians that “Zealot” was a name given to one of our Lord Jesus Christ’s Apostles, and to persuade them to be zealous men.

I ask every reader of this paper to give me his attention while I tell him something about zeal. Listen to me for your own sake,—for the sake of the world,—for the sake of the Church of Christ.

Listen to me, and by God's help I will show you that to be "zealous" is to be wise.

I. Let me show, in the first place, what is zeal in religion.

II. Let me show, in the second place, when a man can be called rightly zealous in religion?

III. Let me show, in the third place, why it is a good thing for a man to be zealous in religion?

I. First of all, I propose to consider this question. "What is zeal in religion?"

Zeal in religion is a burning desire to please God, to do His will, and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way. It is a desire which no man feels by nature, —which the Spirit puts in the heart of every believer when he is converted,—but which some believers feel so much more strongly than others that they alone deserve to be called "zealous" men.

This desire is so strong, when it really reigns in a man, that it impels him to make any sacrifice,—to go through any trouble,—to deny himself to any amount,—to suffer, to work, to labour, to toil,—to spend himself and be spent, and even to die,—if only he can please God and honour Christ.

A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives for one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives, or whether he dies,—whether he has health, or whether he has sickness,—whether he is rich, or whether he is poor,—whether he pleases man, or whether he gives offence,—whether he is thought wise, or whether he is thought foolish,—whether he gets blame, or whether he gets praise,—whether he gets honour, or whether he gets shame,—for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing; and that one thing is to please God, and to advance God's glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it,—he is content. He feels that, like a lamp, he is made to burn; and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him. Such an one will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach, and work, and give money, he will cry, and sigh, and pray. Yes: if he is only a pauper, on a perpetual bed of sickness, he will make the wheels of sin around him drive heavily, by continually interceding against it. If he cannot fight in the valley with Joshua, he will do the work of Moses, Aaron, and Hur, on the hill. (Exodus 17:9-13) If he is cut off from working himself, he will give the Lord no rest till help is raised up from another quarter, and the work is done. This is what I mean when I speak of "zeal" in religion.

We all know the habit of mind that makes men great in this world,—that makes such men as Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar, or Oliver Cromwell, or Peter the Great, or Charles XII., or Marlborough, or Napoleon, or Pitt. We know that, with all their faults, they were all men of one thing. They threw themselves into one grand pursuit. They cared for nothing else. They put every thing else aside. They counted everything else as second-rate, and of subordinate importance, compared to the one thing that they put before their eyes every day they lived. I say that the same habit of mind applied to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes religious zeal.

We know the habit of mind that makes men great in the sciences of this world,—that makes such men as Archimedes, or Sir Isaac Newton, or Galileo, or Ferguson the astronomer, or James Watt. All these were men of one thing. They brought the powers of their minds into one single focus. They cared for nothing else beside. And this was the secret of their success. I say that this same

habit consecrated to the service of God becomes religious zeal.

We know the habit of mind that makes men rich,—that makes men amass mighty fortunes, and leave millions behind them. What kind of people were the bankers, and merchants, and tradesmen, who have left a name behind them, as men who acquired immense wealth and became rich from being poor? They were all men that threw themselves entirely into their business, and neglected everything else for the sake of that business. They gave their first attention, their first thoughts, the best of their time, and the best part of their mind, to pushing forward the transactions in which they were engaged. They were men of one thing. Their hearts were not divided. They devoted themselves, body, soul, and mind to their business. They seemed to live for nothing else. I say that if you turn that habit of mind to the service of God and His Christ it makes religious zeal.

(a) Now this habit of mind,—this zeal was the characteristic of all the Apostles. See for example the Apostle Paul. Hear him when he speaks to the Ephesian elders for the last time: “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24) Hear him again, when he writes to the Philippians: “This one thing I do; I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Php_3:13-14) See him from the day of his conversion, giving up his brilliant prospects,—forsaking all for Christ’s sake,—and going forth to preach that very Jesus whom he had once despised. See him going to and fro throughout the world from that time,—through persecution,—through oppression,—through opposition,—through prisons,—through bonds, through afflictions,—through things next to death itself, up to the very day when he sealed his faith with his blood, and died at Rome, a martyr for that Gospel which he had so long proclaimed. This was true religious zeal.

(b) This again was the characteristic of the early Christians. They were men “every where spoken against.” (Acts 28:22) They were driven to worship God in dens and caves of the earth. They often lost every thing in the world for their religion’s sake. They generally gained nothing but the cross, persecution, shame, and reproach. But they seldom, very seldom, went back. If they could not dispute, at least they could suffer. If they could not convince their adversaries by argument, at any rate they could die, and prove that they themselves were in earnest. Look at Ignatius cheerfully travelling to the place where he was to be devoured by lions, and saying as he went, “Now do I begin to be a disciple of my Master, Christ.” Hear old Polycarp before the Roman Governor, saying boldly, when called upon to deny Christ, “Four score and six years have I served Christ, neither bath He ever offended me in any thing, and how then can I revile my King? “This was true zeal.

(c) This again was the characteristic of Martin Luther. He boldly defied the most powerful hierarchy that the world has ever seen. He unveiled its corruptions with an unflinching hand. He preached the long-neglected truth of justification by faith, in spite of anathemas and excommunications, fast and thickly poured upon him.

See him going to the Diet at Worms, and pleading his cause before the Emperor and the Legate, and a host of the children of this world. Hear him saying,—when men were dissuading him from going, and reminding him of the fate of John Huss, “Though there were a devil under every tile on the roofs of Worms, in the name of the Lord I shall go forward.” This was true zeal.

(d) This again was the characteristic of our own English Reformers. You have it in our first Reformer, Wickliffe, when he rose up on his sick bed, and said to the Friars, who wanted him to retract all he had said against the Pope, “I shall not die, but live to declare the villanies of the Friars.” You have it in Cranmer, dying at the stake, rather than deny Christ’s Gospel, holding forth that hand to be first burned which, in a moment of weakness, had signed a recantation, and saying, as he held it in the flames, “This unworthy hand!” You have it in old father Latimer, standing boldly on his faggot, at the age of seventy years, and saying to Ridley, “Courage, brother Ridley! we shall light such a candle this day as, by God’s grace, shall never be put out.” This was zeal.

(e) This again has been the characteristic of all the greatest Missionaries. You see it in Dr. Judson, in Carey, in Morrison, in Schwartz, in Williams, in Brainerd, in Elliott. You see it in none more brightly than in Henry Martyn. Here was a man who had reached the highest academical honours that Cambridge could bestow. Whatever profession he chose to follow, he had the most dazzling prospects of success. He turned his back upon it all. He chose to preach the Gospel to poor benighted heathen. He went forth to an early grave, in a foreign land. He said when he got there and saw the condition of the people, “I could bear to be torn in pieces, if I could but hear the sobs of penitence,—if I could but see the eyes of faith directed to the Redeemer!” This was zeal.

(f) But let us look away from all earthly examples,—and remember that zeal was pre-eminently the characteristic of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself. Of Him it was written hundreds of years before He came upon earth, that He was “clad with zeal as with a cloak,” and “the zeal of thine house hath even eaten me.” And His own words were “My meat is to do my Father’s will, and to finish His work.” (Psalms 69:9; Isaiah 59:17; John 4:34)

Where shall we begin, if we try to give examples of His zeal? Where should we end, if we once began? Trace all the narratives of His life in the four Gospels. Read all the history of what He was from the beginning of His ministry to the end. Surely if there ever was one who was all zeal, it was our great Example,—our Head,—our High Priest,—the great Shepherd of our profession, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If these things are so, we should not only beware of running down zeal, but we should also beware of allowing zeal to be run down in our presence. It may be badly directed, and then it becomes a curse;—but it may be turned to the highest and best ends, and then it is a mighty blessing. Like fire, it is one of the best of servants;—but, like fire also, if not well directed, it may be the worst of masters. Listen not to those people who talk of zeal as weakness and enthusiasm. Listen not to those who see no beauty in missions, who laugh at all attempts at the conversion of souls,—who call Societies for sending the Gospel to the world useless,—and who look upon City Missions, and District Visiting, and Ragged Schools and Open Air Preaching, as nothing but foolishness and fanaticism. Beware, lest in joining a cry of that kind you condemn the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Beware lest you speak against Him who has “left us an example that we should follow His steps.” (1 Peter 2:21)

Alas I fear there are many professing Christians who if they had lived in the days when our Lord and His Apostles walked upon earth would have called Him and all His followers enthusiasts and fanatics. There are many, I fear, who have more in common with Annas and Caiaphas,—with Pilate and Herod,—with Festus and Agrippa,—with Felix and Gallio,—than with St. Paul and the

Lord Jesus Christ.

II. I pass on now to the second thing I proposed to speak of. When is a man truly zealous in religion?

There never was a grace of which Satan has not made a counterfeit. There never was a good coin issued from the mint but forgers at once have coined something very like it. It was one of Nero's cruel practices first to sew up Christians in the skins of wild beasts, and then bait them with dogs. It is one of Satan's devices to place distorted copies of the believer's graces before the eyes of men, and so to bring the true graces into contempt. No grace has suffered so much in this way as zeal. Of none perhaps are there so many shams and counterfeits abroad. We must therefore clear the ground of all rubbish on this question. We must find out when zeal in religion is really good, and true, and of God.

(1) If zeal be true, it will be a zeal according to knowledge. It must not be a blind, ignorant zeal. It must be a calm, reasonable, intelligent principle, which can show the warrant of Scripture for every step it takes. The unconverted Jews had zeal. Paul says, "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." (Romans 10:2) Saul had zeal when he was a persecuting Pharisee. He says himself, in one of his addresses to the Jews, "I was zealous toward God as ye all are this day." (Acts 22:3)—Manasseh had zeal in the days when he was an idolater. The man who made his own children pass through the fire,—who gave up the fruit of his body to Moloch, to atone for the sin of his soul,—that man had zeal.—James and John had zeal when they would have called down fire on a Samaritan village. But our Lord rebuked them.—Peter had zeal when he drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. But he was quite wrong.—Bonner and Gardiner had zeal when they burned Latimer and Cranmer. Were they not in earnest? Let us do them justice. They were zealous, though it was for an unscriptural religion.—The members of the Inquisition in Spain had zeal when they tortured men, and put them to horrible deaths, because they would not forsake the Gospel. Yes! they marched men and women to the stake in solemn procession, and called it "An Act of Faith," and believed they were doing God service.—The Hindoos, who used to lie down before the car of Juggernaut and allow their bodies to be crushed under its wheels:—had not they zeal?—The Indian widows, who used to burn themselves on the funeral pile of their deceased husbands,—the Roman Catholics, who persecuted to death the Vaudois and Albigenses, and cast down men and women from rocks and precipices, because they were heretics;—had not they zeal?—The Saracens,—the Crusaders,—the Jesuits,—the Anabaptists of Munster—the followers of Joanna Southcote,—had they not all zeal? Yes! Yes! I do not deny it. All these had zeal beyond question. They were all zealous. They were all in earnest. But their zeal was not such zeal as God approves,—it was not a "zeal according to knowledge."

(2) Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be a zeal from true motives. Such is the subtlety of the heart that men will often do right things from wrong motives. Amaziah and Joash, kings of Judah, are striking proofs of this. Just so a man may have zeal about things that are good and right, but from second-rate motives, and not from a desire to please God. And such zeal is worth nothing. It is reprobate silver. It is utterly wanting when placed in the balance of God. Man looks only at the action: God looks at the motive. Man only thinks of the quantity of work done: God considers the doer's heart.

There is such a thing as zeal from party spirit. It is quite possible for a man to be unwearied in promoting the interests of his own Church or denomination, and yet to have no grace in his own heart,—to be ready to die for the peculiar opinions of his own section of Christians, and yet to have no real love to Christ. Such was the zeal of the Pharisees. They “compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he was made, they made him two-fold more the child of hell than themselves.” (Matthew 23:15) This zeal is not true.

There is such a thing as zeal from mere selfishness. There are times when it is men’s interest to be zealous in religion. Power and patronage are sometimes given to godly men. The good things of the world are sometimes to be attained by wearing a cloak of religion. And whenever this is the case there is no lack of false zeal. Such was the zeal of Joab, when he served David. Such was the zeal of only too many Englishmen in the days of the Commonwealth, when the Puritans were in power.

There is such a thing as zeal from the love of praise. Such was the zeal of Jehu, when he was putting down the worship of Baal. Remember how he met Jonadab the son of Rechab, and said, “Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.” (2 Kings 10:16) Such is the zeal that Bunyan refers to in “Pilgrim’s Progress,” when he speaks of some who went “for praise” to mount Zion. Some people feed on the praise of their fellow-creatures. They would rather have it from Christians than have none at all.

It is a sad and humbling proof of man’s corruption that there is no degree of self-denial and self-sacrifice to which men may not go from false motives. It does not follow that a man’s religion is true because he “gives his body to be burned,” or because he “gives his goods to feed the poor.” The Apostle Paul tells us that a man may do this, and yet not have true charity. (1 Corinthians 13:1, etc.) It does not follow because men go into a wilderness, and become hermits, that therefore they know what true self-denial is. It does not follow because people immure themselves in monasteries and nunneries, or become “sisters of charity,” and “sisters of mercy,” that therefore they know what true crucifixion of the flesh and self-sacrifice is in the sight of God. All these things people may do on wrong principles. They may do them from wrong motives,—to satisfy a secret pride and love of notoriety,—but not from the true motive of zeal for the glory of God. All such zeal, let us understand, is false. It is of earth, and not of heaven.

(3) Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be a zeal about things according to God’s mind, and sanctioned by plain examples in God’s Word. Take, for one instance, that highest and best kind of zeal,—I mean zeal for our own growth in personal holiness. Such zeal will make a man feel incessantly that sin is the mightiest of all evils, and conformity to Christ the greatest of all blessings. It will make him feel that there is nothing which ought not to be done, in order to keep up a close walk with God. It will make him willing to cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye, or make any sacrifice, if only he can attain a closer communion with Jesus. Is not this just what you see in the Apostle Paul? He says, “I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”—“I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark.” (1 Corinthians 9:27; Php_3:13-14)

Take, for another instance, zeal for the salvation of souls. Such zeal will make a man burn with desire to enlighten the darkness which covers the souls of multitudes, and to bring every man, woman, and child he sees to the knowledge of the Gospel. Is not this what you see in the Lord Jesus? It is said that He neither gave Himself nor His disciples leisure so much as to eat. (Mark 6:31) Is not this what you see in the Apostle Paul? He says, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22)

Take, for another instance, zeal against evil practices. Such zeal will make a man hate everything which God hates, such as drunkenness, slavery, or infanticide, and long to sweep it from the face of the earth. It will make him jealous of God’s honour and glory, and look on everything which robs him of it as an offence. Is not this what you see in Phinehas, the son of Eleazar?—or in Hezekiah and Josiah, when they put down idolatry?

Take, for another instance, zeal for maintaining the doctrines of the Gospel. Such zeal will make a man hate unscriptural teaching, just as he hates sin. It will make him regard religious error as a pestilence which must be checked, whatever may be the cost. It will make him scrupulously careful about every jot and tittle of the counsel of God, lest by some omission the whole Gospel should be spoiled. Is not this what you see in Paul at Antioch, when he withstood Peter to the face, and said he was to be blamed? (Galatians 2:11) These are the kind of things about which true zeal is employed. Such zeal, let us understand, is honourable before God.

(4) Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be a zeal tempered with charity and love. It will not be a bitter zeal. It will not be a fierce enmity against persons. It will not be a zeal ready to take the sword, and to smite with carnal weapons. The weapons of true zeal are not carnal, but spiritual. True zeal will hate sin, and yet love the sinner. True zeal will hate heresy, and yet love the heretic. True zeal will long to break the idol, but deeply pity the idolater. True zeal will abhor every kind of wickedness, but labour to do good even to the vilest of transgressors.

True zeal will warn as St. Paul warned the Galatians, and yet feel tenderly, as a nurse or a mother over erring children. It will expose false teachers, as Jesus did the Scribes and Pharisees, and yet weep tenderly, as Jesus did over Jerusalem when He came near to it for the last time. True zeal will be decided, as a surgeon dealing with a diseased limb; but true zeal will be gentle, as one that is dressing the wounds of a brother. True zeal will speak truth boldly, like Athanasius, against the world, and not care who is offended; but true zeal will endeavour, in all its speaking, to “speak the truth in love.”

(5) Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be joined to a deep humility. A truly zealous man will be the last to discover the greatness of his own attainments. All that he is and does will come so immensely short of his own desires, that he will be filled with a sense of his own unprofitableness, and amazed to think that God should work by him at all. Like Moses, when he came down from the Mount, he will not know that his face shines. Like the righteous, in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, he will not be aware of his own good works. Dr. Buchanan is one whose praise is in all the churches. He was one of the first to take up the cause of the perishing heathen. He literally spent himself, body and mind, in labouring to arouse sleeping Christians to see the importance of missions. Yet he says in one of his letters, “I do not know that I ever had what Christians call zeal.” Whitefield was one of the most zealous preachers of the Gospel the world has ever seen. Fervent in spirit, instant in season and out of season, he was a burning and shining light, and turned

thousands to God. Yet he says after preaching for thirty years, “Lord help me to begin to begin.” M’Cheyne was one of the greatest blessings that God ever gave to the Church of Scotland. He was a minister insatiably desirous of the salvation of souls. Few men ever did so much good as he did, though he died at the age of twenty-nine. Yet he says in one of his letters, “None but God knows what an abyss of corruption is in my heart. It is perfectly wonderful that ever God could bless such a ministry.” We may be very sure where there is self-conceit there is little true zeal.

I ask the readers of this paper particularly to remember the description of true zeal which I have just given. Zeal according to knowledge,—zeal from true motives,—zeal warranted by Scriptural examples,—zeal tempered with charity,—zeal accompanied by deep humility,—this is true genuine zeal,—this is the kind of zeal which God approves. Of such zeal you and I never need fear having too much.

I ask you to remember the description, because of the times in which you live. Beware of supposing that sincerity alone can ever make up true zeal,—that earnestness, however ignorant, makes a man a really zealous Christian in the sight of God. There is a generation in these days which makes an idol of what it is pleased to call “earnestness” in religion. These men will allow no fault to be found with an “earnest man.” Whatever his theological opinions may be,—if he be but an earnest man, that is enough for these people, and we are to ask no more. They tell you we have nothing to do with minute points of doctrine, and with questions of “words and names,” about which Christians are not agreed. Is the man an earnest man? If he is, we ought to be satisfied. “Earnestness” in their eyes covers over a multitude of sins. I warn you solemnly to beware of this specious doctrine. In the name of the Gospel, and in the name of the Bible, I enter my protest against the theory that mere earnestness can make a man a truly zealous and pious man in the sight of God.

These idolaters of earnestness would make out that God has given us no standard of truth and error, or that the true standard, the Bible, is so obscure, that no man can find out what truth is by simply going to it. They pour contempt upon the Word, the written Word, and therefore they must be wrong.

These idolaters of earnestness would make us condemn every witness for the truth, and every opponent of false teaching, from the time of the Lord Jesus down to this day. The Scribes and Pharisees were “in earnest,” and yet our Lord opposed them. And shall we dare even to hint a suspicion that they ought to have been let alone?—Queen Mary, and Bonner, and Gardiner were “in earnest” in restoring Popery, and trying to put down Protestantism, and yet Ridley and Latimer opposed them to the death. And shall we dare to say that as both parties were “in earnest,” both were in the right?—Devil-worshippers and idolaters at this day are in earnest, and yet our missionaries labour to expose their errors. And shall we dare to say that “earnestness” would take them to heaven, and that missionaries to heathen and Roman Catholics had better stay at home?—Are we really going to admit that the Bible does not show us what is truth? Are we really going to put a mere vague thing called “earnestness,” in the place of Christ, and to maintain that no “earnest” man can be wrong? God forbid that we should give place to such doctrine! I shrink with horror from such theology. I warn men solemnly to beware of being carried away by it, for it is common and most seductive in this day. Beware of it, for it is only a new form of an old error,—that old error which says that a man “Can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.” Admire zeal. Seek after

zeal. Encourage zeal. But see that your own zeal be true. See that the zeal which you admire in others is a zeal “according to knowledge,”—a zeal from right motives,—a zeal that can bring chapter and verse out of the Bible for its foundation. Any zeal but this is but a false fire. It is not lighted by the Holy Ghost.

III. I pass on now to the third thing I proposed to speak of. Let me show why it is good for a man to be zealous.

It is certain that God never gave man a commandment which it was not man’s interest as well as duty to obey. He never set a grace before His believing people which His people will not find it their highest happiness to follow after. This is true of all the graces of the Christian character. Perhaps it is preeminently true in the case of zeal.

(a) Zeal is good for a Christian’s own soul. We all know that exercise is good for the health, and that regular employment of our muscles and limbs promotes our bodily comfort, and increases our bodily vigour. Now that which exercise does for our bodies, zeal will do for our souls. It will help mightily to promote inward feelings of joy, peace, comfort, and happiness. None have so much enjoyment of Christ as those who are ever zealous for His glory,—jealous over their own walk,—tender over their own consciences,—full of anxiety about the souls of others,—and ever watching, working, labouring, striving, and toiling to extend the knowledge of Jesus Christ upon earth. Such men live in the full light of the sun, and therefore their hearts are always warm. Such men water others, and therefore they are watered themselves. Their hearts are like a garden daily refreshed by the dew of the Holy Ghost. They honour God, and so God honours them.

I would not be mistaken in saying this. I would not appear to speak slightingly of any believer. I know that “the Lord takes pleasure in all His people.” (Psalms 149:4) There is not one, from the least to the greatest,—from the smallest child in the kingdom of God, to the oldest warrior in the battle against Satan,—there is not one in whom the Lord Jesus Christ does not take great pleasure. We are all His children,—and however weak and feeble some of us may be, “as a father pitieth his children, so does the Lord pity them that love and fear Him.” (Psalms 103:13) We are all the plants of His own planting;—and though many of us are poor, weakly exotics, scarcely keeping life together in a foreign soil,—yet as the gardener loves that which his hands have reared, so does the Lord Jesus love the poor sinners that trust in Him. But while I say this, I do also believe that the Lord takes special pleasure in those who are zealous for Him,—in those who give themselves body, soul, and spirit, to extend His glory in this world. To them He reveals Himself, as he does not to others. To them He shows things that other men never see. He blesses the work of their hands. He cheers them with spiritual consolations, which others only know by the hearing of the ear. They are men after His own heart, for they are men more like Himself than others. None have such joy and peace in believing,—none have such sensible comfort in their religion.—none have so much of “heaven upon earth” Deuteronomy 11:21),—none see and feel so much of the consolations of the Gospel as those who are zealous, earnest, thorough-going, devoted Christians. For the sake of our own souls, if there were no other reason, it is good to be zealous,—to be very zealous in our religion.

(b) As zeal is good for ourselves individually, so it is also good for the professing Church of Christ generally. Nothing so much keeps alive true religion as a leaven of zealous Christians scattered to and fro throughout a Church. Like salt, they prevent the whole body falling into a state of

corruption. None but men of this kind can revive Churches when ready to die. It is impossible to over-estimate the debt that all Christians owe to zeal. The greatest mistake the rulers of a Church can make is to drive zealous men out of its pale. By so doing they drain out the life-blood of the system, and hasten on ecclesiastical decline and death.

Zeal is in truth that grace which God seems to delight to honour. Look through the list of Christians who have been eminent for usefulness. Who are the men that have left the deepest and most indelible marks on the Church of their day? Who are the men that God has generally honoured to build up the walls of His Zion, and turn the battle from the gate? Not so much men of learning and literary talents, as men of zeal.

Bishop Latimer was not such a deeply-read scholar as Cranmer or Ridley. He could not quote Fathers from memory, as they did. He refused to be drawn into arguments about antiquity. He stuck to his Bible. Yet it is not too much to say that no English reformer made such a lasting impression on the nation as old Latimer did. And what was the reason? His simple zeal.

Baxter, the Puritan, was not equal to some of his contemporaries in intellectual gifts. It is no disparagement to say that he does not stand on a level with Manton or Owen. Yet few men probably exercised so wide an influence on the generation in which he lived. And what was the reason? His burning zeal.

Whitefield, and Wesley, and Berridge, and Venn were inferior in mental attainments to Bishops Butler and Watson. But they produced effects on the people of this country which fifty Butlers and Watsons would probably never have produced. They saved the Church of England from ruin, And what was one secret of their power? Their zeal.

These men stood forward at turning points in the history of the Church. They bore unmoved storms of opposition and persecution.—They were not afraid to stand alone. They cared not though their motives were misinterpreted.—They counted all things but loss for the truth's sake.—They were each and all and every one eminently men of one thing:—and that one thing was to advance the glory of God, and to maintain His truth in the world. They were all fire, and so they lighted others.—They were wide awake, and so they awakened others.—They were all alive, and so they quickened others.—They were always working, and so they shamed others into working too.—They came down upon men like Moses from the mount.—They shone as if they had been in the presence of God.—They carried to and fro with them, as they walked their course through the world, something of the atmosphere and savour of heaven itself.

There is a sense in which it may be said that zeal is contagious. Nothing is more useful to the professors of Christianity than to see a real live Christian, a thoroughly zealous man of God. They may rail at him,—they may carp at him,—they may pick holes in his conduct, they may look shy upon him,—they may not understand him any more than men understand a new comet when a new comet appears;—but insensibly a zealous man does them good. He opens their eyes. He makes them feel their own sleepiness. He makes their own great darkness visible. He obliges them to see their own barrenness. He compels them to think, whether they like it or not—"What are we doing? Are we not no better than mere cumberers of the ground?" It may be sadly true that "one sinner destroyeth much good;" but it is also a blessed truth that one zealous Christian can do much good. Yes: one single zealous man in a town,—one zealous man in a congregation,—one

zealous man in a society,—one zealous man in a family, may be a great, a most extensive blessing. How many machines of usefulness such a man sets a going! How much Christian activity he often calls into being which would otherwise have slept! How many fountains he opens which would otherwise have been sealed! Verily there is a deep mine of truth in those words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians: “Your zeal hath provoked very many.” (2 Corinthians 9:2)

(c) But, as zeal is good for the Church and for individuals, so zeal is good for the world. Where would the Missionary work be if it were not for zeal? Where would our City Missions and Ragged Schools be if it were not for zeal? Where would our District-Visiting and Pastoral Aid Societies be if it were not for zeal? Where would be our Societies for rooting out sin and ignorance, for finding out the dark places of the earth, and recovering poor lost souls? Where would be all these glorious instruments for good if it were not for Christian zeal? Zeal called these institutions into being, and zeal keeps them at work when they have begun. Zeal gathers a few despised men, and makes them the nucleus of many a powerful Society. Zeal keeps up the collections of a Society when it is formed. Zeal prevents men from becoming lazy and sleepy when the machine is large and begins to get favour from the world. Zeal raises up men to go forth, putting their lives in their hands, like Moffatt and Williams in our own day. Zeal supplies their place when they are gathered into the garner, and taken home.

What would become of the ignorant masses who crowd the lanes and alleys of our overgrown cities, if it were not for Christian zeal? Governments can do nothing with them: they cannot make laws that will meet the evil. The vast majority of professing Christians have no eyes to see it: like the priest and Levite, they pass by on the other side. But zeal has eyes to see, and a heart to feel, and a head to devise, and a tongue to plead, and hands to work, and feet to travel, in order to rescue poor souls, and raise them from their low estate. Zeal does not stand poring over difficulties, but simply says, “Here are souls perishing, and something shall be done.” Zeal does not shrink back because there are Anakims in the way: it looks over their heads, like Moses on Pisgah, and says, “The land shall be possessed.” Zeal does not wait for company, and tarry till good works are fashionable: it goes forward like a forlorn hope, and trusts that others will follow by and bye. Ah! the world little knows what a debt it owes to Christian zeal. How much crime it has checked! How much sedition it has prevented! How much public discontent it has calmed! How much obedience to law and love of order it has produced! How many souls it has saved!

Yes! and I believe we little know what might be done if every Christian was a zealous man! How much if ministers were more like Bickersteth, and Whitefield, and M’Cheyne! How much if laymen were more like Howard, and Wilberforce, and Thornton, and Nasmith, and George Moore! Oh, for the world’s sake, as well as your own, resolve, labour, strive to be a zealous Christian!

Let every one who professes to be a Christian beware of checking zeal. Seek it. Cultivate it. Try to blow up the fire in your own heart, and the hearts of others, but never, never check it. Beware of throwing cold water on zealous souls, whenever you meet with them. Beware of nipping in the bud this precious grace when first it shoots. If you are a parent, beware of checking it in your children;—if you are a husband, beware of checking it in your wife;—if you are a brother, beware of checking it in your sisters,—and if you are a minister, beware of checking it in the members of your congregation. It is a shoot of heaven’s own planting. Beware of crushing it, for Christ’s sake. Zeal may make mistakes.—Zeal may need directing.—Zeal may want guiding, controlling, and

advising. Like the elephants on ancient fields of battle, it may sometimes do injury to its own side. But zeal does not need damping in a wretched, cold, corrupt, miserable world like this. Zeal, like John Knox pulling down the Scotch monasteries, may hurt the feelings of narrow-minded and sleepy Christians. It may offend the prejudices of those old-fashioned religionists who hate everything new, and (like those who wanted soldiers and sailors to go on wearing pigtails) abhor all change. But zeal in the end will be justified by its results. Zeal, like John Knox, in the long run of life will do infinitely more good than harm. There is little danger of there ever being too much zeal for the glory of God. God forgive those who think there is!! You know little of human nature. You forget that sickness is far more contagious than health, and that it is much easier to catch a chill than impart a glow. Depend upon it, the Church seldom needs a bridle, but often needs a spur. It seldom needs to be checked, it often needs to be urged on. And now, in conclusion, let me try to apply this subject to the conscience of every person who reads this paper. It is a warning subject, an arousing subject, an encouraging subject, according to the state of our several hearts. I wish, by God's help, to give every reader his portion.

(1) First of all, let me offer a warning to all who make no decided profession of religion. There are thousands and tens of thousands, I fear, in this condition. If you are one, the subject before you is full of solemn warning. Oh, that the Lord in mercy may incline your heart to receive it!

I ask you, then, in all affection, Where is your zeal in religion? With the Bible before me, I may well be bold in asking. But with your life before me, I may well tremble as to the answer. I ask again, Where is your zeal for the glory of God? Where is your zeal for extending Christ's Gospel through an evil world? Zeal, which was the characteristic of the Lord Jesus; zeal, which is the characteristic of the angels; zeal, which shines forth in all the brightest Christians: where is your zeal, unconverted reader?—where is your zeal indeed! You know well it is nowhere at all; you know well you see no beauty in it; you know well it is scorned and cast out as evil by you and your companions; you know well it has no place, no portion, no standing ground, in the religion of your soul. It is not perhaps that you know not what it is to be zealous in a certain way. You have zeal, but it is all misapplied. It is all earthly: it is all about the things of time. It is not zeal for the glory of God: it is not zeal for the salvation of souls. Yes: many a man has zeal for the newspaper, but not for the Bible,—zeal for the daily reading of the Times, but no zeal for the daily reading of God's blessed Word. Many a man has zeal for the account book and the business book, but no zeal about the Book of Life and the last great account,—zeal about Australian and Californian gold, but no zeal about the unsearchable riches of Christ. Many a man has zeal about his earthly concerns, his family, his pleasures, his daily pursuits; but no zeal about God, and heaven, and eternity.

If this is the state of any one who is reading this paper, awake, I do beseech you, to see your gross folly. You cannot live for ever. You are not ready to die. You are utterly unfit for the company of saints and angels. Awake: be zealous and repent!—Awake to see the harm you are doing! You are putting arguments in the hands of infidels by your shameful coldness. You are pulling down as fast as ministers build. You are helping the devil. Awake: be zealous, and repent!—Awake to see your childish inconsistency! What can be more worthy of zeal than eternal things, than the glory of God, than the salvation of souls? Surely if it is good to labour for rewards that are temporal, it is a thousand times better to labour for those that are eternal. Awake: be zealous and repent! Go and read that long-neglected Bible. Take up that blessed Book which you have, and perhaps never use. Read that New Testament through. Do you find nothing there to make you zealous,—to make

you earnest about your soul? Go and look at the cross of Christ. Go and see how the Son of God there shed His precious blood for you,—how He suffered and groaned, and died for you,—how He poured out His soul as an offering for sin, in order that you, sinful brother or sister, might not perish, but have eternal life. Go and look at the cross of Christ, and never rest till you feel some zeal for your own soul,—some zeal for the glory of God,—some zeal for extension of the Gospel throughout the world. Once more I say, awake: be zealous, and repent!

(2) Let me, in the next place, say something to arouse those who make a profession of being decided Christians, and are yet lukewarm in their practice. There are only too many, I regret to say, in this state of soul. If you are one, there is much in this subject which ought to lead you to searchings of heart.

Let me speak to your conscience. To you also I desire to put the question in all brotherly affection, Where is your zeal?—Where is your zeal for the glory of God, and for extending the gospel throughout the world? You know well it is very low. You know well that your zeal is a little feeble glimmering spark, that just lives, and no more;—it is like a thin “ready to die.” (Revelation 3:2) Surely, there is a fault somewhere, if this is the case. This state of things ought not to be. You, the child of God,—you, redeemed at so glorious a price, you, ransomed with such precious blood, you, who are an heir of glory such as no tongue ever yet told, or eye saw;—surely you ought to be a man of another kind. Surely your zeal ought not to be so small.

I deeply feel that this is a painful subject to touch upon. I do it with reluctance, and with a constant remembrance of my own unprofitableness. Nevertheless, truth ought to be spoken. The plain truth is that many believers in the present day seem so dreadfully afraid of doing harm that they hardly ever dare to do good. There are many who are fruitful in objections, but barren in actions;—rich in wet blankets, but poor in anything like Christian fire. They are like the Dutch deputies, recorded in the history of last century, who would never allow Marlborough to venture anything, and by their excessive caution prevented many a victory being won. Truly, in looking round the Church of Christ, a man might sometimes think that God’s kingdom had come, and God’s will was being done upon earth, so small is the zeal that some believers show. It is vain to deny it. I need not go far for evidence. I point to Societies for doing good to the heathen, the colonies, and the dark places of our own land, languishing and standing still for want of active support. I ask, Is this zeal? I point to thousands of miserable guinea subscriptions which are never missed by the givers, and yet make up the sum of their Christian liberality. I ask, Is this zeal? I point to false doctrine allowed to grow up in parishes and families without an effort being made to check it, while so-called believers look on, and content themselves with wishing it was not so. I ask, Is this zeal? Would the apostles have been satisfied with such a state of things? We know they would not.

If the conscience of anyone who read this paper pleads guilty to any participation in the short-comings I have spoken of, I call upon him, in the name of the Lord, to awake, be zealous, and repent. Let not zeal be confined to Lincoln’s Inn, the Temple, and Westminster;—to banks, and shops, and counting houses. Let us see the same zeal in the Church of Christ. Let not zeal be abundant to lead forlorn hopes, or get gold from Australia, or travel over thick ribbed ice in voyages of discovery, but defective to send the Gospel to the heathen, or to pluck Roman Catholics like brands from the fire, or to enlighten the dark places of the colonies of this great land. Never were there such doors of usefulness opened,— never were there so many opportunities for

doing good. I loathe that squeamishness which refuses to help religious works if there is a blemish about the instrument by which the work is carried on. At this rate we might never do anything at all. Let us resist the feeling, if we are tempted by it. It is one of Satan's devices. It is better to work with feeble instruments than not to work at all. At all events, try to do something for God and Christ,—something against ignorance and sin. Give, collect, teach, exhort, visit, pray, according as God enables you. Only make up your mind that all can do something, and resolve that by you, at any rate, something shall be done. If you have only one talent, do not bury it in the ground. Try to live so as to be missed. There is far more to be done in twelve hours than most of us have ever yet done on any day in our lives.

Think of the precious souls which are perishing while you are sleeping. Be taken up with your inward conflicts if you will. Go on anatomizing your own feelings, and poring over your own corruptions, if you are so determined. But remember all this time souls are going to hell, and you might do something to save them by working, by giving, by writing, by begging, and by prayer. Oh, awake! be zealous, and repent!

Think of the shortness of time. You will soon be gone. You will have no opportunity for works of mercy in another world. In heaven there will be no ignorant people to instruct, and no unconverted to reclaim. Whatever you do must be done now. Oh, when are you going to begin? Awake! be zealous, and repent.

Think of the devil, and his zeal to do harm. It was a solemn saying of old Bernard when he said that "Satan would rise up in judgment against some people at the last day, because he had shown more zeal to ruin souls than they had to save them." Awake! be zealous, and repent.

Think of your Saviour, and all His zeal for you. Think of Him in Gethsemane and on Calvary, shedding His blood for sinners. Think of His life and death,—His sufferings and His doings. This He has done for you. What are you doing for Him? Oh, resolve that for the time to come you will spend and be spent for Christ! Awake! be zealous and repent.

(3) Last of all, let me encourage all readers of this paper who are truly zealous Christians.

I have but one request to make, and that is that you will persevere. I do beseech you to hold fast your zeal, and never let it go. I do beseech you never to go back from your first works, never to leave you first love, never to let it be said of you that your first things were better than your last.—Beware of cooling down. You have only to be lazy, and to sit still, and you will soon lose all your warmth. You will soon become another man from what you are now. Oh, do not think this a needless exhortation!

It may be very true that wise young believers are very rare. But it is no less true that zealous old believers are very rare also. Never allow yourself to think that you can do too much, that you can spend and be spent too much for Christ's cause. For one man that does too much I will show you a thousand who do not do enough. Rather think that "the night cometh, when no man can work "(John ix. 4),—and give, collect, teach, visit, work, pray, as if you were doing it for the last time. Lay to heart the words of that noble-minded Jansenist, who said, when told that he ought to rest a little, "What should we rest for? have we not all eternity to rest in?"

Fear not the reproach of men. Faint not because you are sometimes abused. Heed it not if you are sometimes called bigot, enthusiast, fanatic, madman, and fool. There is nothing disgraceful in these titles. They have often been given to the best and wisest of men. If you are only to be zealous when you are praised for it,—if the wheels of your zeal must be oiled by the world's commendation, your zeal will be but short-lived. Care not for the praise or frown of man. There is but one thing worth caring for, and that is the praise of God. There is but one question worth asking about our actions; "How will they look in the day of judgment?"

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