

THE ULTIMATE PRINCIPLE OF PROTESTANTISM.

(From a Lecture by Rev. R. W. Dale, of Birmingham, delivered in Exeter Hall, London, Feb. 9, 1874.)

The direct access of the soul to God is the ultimate principle of Protestantism. I shall illustrate very briefly how this principle underlies the great doctrine of justification by faith. Luther was right in speaking of this doctrine as a critical doctrine; by accepting or rejecting which it is determined whether a Church shall stand or fall. The deepest question in controversy between ourselves and Rome, between all whom we say are drifting towards Rome, and trying to carry this nation with them, lies here. Those who disclaim the name "Protestant" denounce this doctrine. Yes; clergymen of the Established Church of this country which we once used to call Protestant, denounce the doctrine of justification by faith, not only as false, but as immoral. We stand by it as the bulwark of Protestantism. What is it that comes between a man and God, when once the heart is restless to find Him? It is the remembrance of the sins which have provoked the Divine anger—anger so terrible that it is spoken of in Holy Scripture as the wrath of God—anger which is not inconsistent with love; for our anger against sin is most intense, when those whom we love are guilty of it. Nor is it the remembrance only of the sin of former years which fills the heart with terror. There is the consciousness of present inability to resist temptation, and to love and serve God perfectly. Direct access to God! That may be possible to angels, possible to a few elect saints after years of discipline, of watching, and fasting, and prayer; but as yet it is not possible to us. Far on in the future there seems to shine a faint glory, which may perhaps some day be ours, if only we have strength and endurance to travel along the rugged way of pain, and suffering, and self-denial; but as yet, and for ourselves, access to the light in which God dwells is impossible. It was revealed to Luther as it had been revealed to St. Paul, that the Divine mercy transcends all the measures of human life; and he declared that, at once, for Christ's sake, the weakest and guiltiest of our race may receive absolution from the very lips of God, and, by Christ, have access unto that grace wherein all saintly souls have stood. God is nigh at hand, and not afar off. This was the Gospel which Luther preached, and it came to the heart of Europe like the light of morning after a dark and desolate night, and made those who received it glad with an unutterable joy. Penances, ascetic discipline, the scourging of the body, and the worse scourging of the soul, a cheerless life of tears and conflicts ungladdened by the glory which shines from faith in God—these, he said, are not necessary before God shall be at peace with you, and justify you from all your sins. You can come to God at once. Only trust in Him, and at once the chains of that guilt shall fall from you as the chains of Peter fell at the touch of the angel, and you shall pass out of the gloom in which you have been imprisoned into the clear light and perfect freedom of the kingdom of heaven.

At a recent baptismal service in the Warburton Avenue Baptist Church, Yonkers, a passage of scripture was chanted after each of the persons baptized. The following are the texts used on the occasion:

BAPTISMAL TEXTS.

- 1. In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea; and there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.
2. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him; but John forbade him, saying I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?
3. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.
4. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.
5. I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; and ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.
6. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;
7. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.
8. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
9. And as they went on their way they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?
10. And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

to God Himself. Let a sinful man have faith enough to return to God, and to commit himself to God's infinite love, and I can leave him in God's presence and in God's hands, with the full assurance that God will teach him, and incline him to forsake sin. This is my conception of Protestantism. It is because Romanism and Ritualism, which is but Romanism—Romanism without its logic, without its dignity, without its great traditions, it is, I say, because Romanism and Ritualism attempt to bar the immediate access of the soul to God, that I plead with you to be loyal to the Protestant faith. It is a faith which appeals to all that is noblest and most heroic in your nature. It vindicates the glorious prerogatives which have been conferred upon you by the grace of Christ; it invests the Christian life with transcendent dignity, and inspires it with irresistible power. But, to understand Protestantism aright, we must constantly retain a vivid apprehension that it is a struggle to maintain the inalienable rights which are the inheritance of all who have entered the kingdom of heaven. We must use, in our conflict with freedom, only those weapons which are proper to a spiritual struggle and a struggle for spiritual freedom.

Protestantism is the natural ally of justice, of equal rights, of the largest freedom. It rejects with loathing and with scorn the instruments of oppression—the manacles and the fetters which were forged in other days, to enslave the consciences of mankind. Let us have faith in truth; let us have faith in God. Let us ask for nothing from human governments but liberty to preach the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. Let us not rely on the patronage of thrones or on the legislation of Parliament. Let us reject for ourselves the deceptive, and perilous, and corrupting support that comes from alliance with political power; and let us protest against inflicting upon those who are opposed to us any political disabilities. Let us ask for freedom, and nothing more. If we ask for it we shall have it. The great movements of modern society are all on our side. All over Europe there is a revolt against the restraint which tyrannical governments, at the instigation of a corrupt Church, have imposed on the consciences of mankind. Italy has achieved her emancipation. Spain, France, Austria are struggling for it. The majestic form of liberty, cast for centuries into a deep sleep by the incantations and spells of the priesthood, is beginning to move. Her eyes are unclosing, she is rising to her feet—

And soon wherever the priests are strong, And the right oppressed by wrong, Shall be heard a trumpet sound That shall tell the nations around, On the hill where the heroes have trod, On the shrines of the saints of God, In the halls of kings, in the martyr's prison, When the slumber is broke, and the sleeper arisen, That the reign of the priest and the tyrant is o'er, And that man rejoices in freedom once more.

11. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and eunuch; and he baptized him.
12. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
13. If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.
14. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
15. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
16. Jesus said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.
17. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.
18. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.
19. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.
20. As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.
21. I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.
22. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy: to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

your faith is also vain. . . For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. . . Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I profess by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it use if the dead rise not? 1 Cor. xv.

It is clear from the foregoing that the apostles arguments throughout are aimed, at those in the Corinthian church who said "there is no resurrection of the dead." And all will admit that the two questions of verse 29 ought to help out his argument; ought to be something akin to his next question, "why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" And so in truth this proves to be the case. The apostle's argument is clearly to this effect: "What shall the apostles do, who are being immersed in sufferings on behalf of the dead, ('in Adam,' and 'in trespasses and sins,') while preaching to them the gospel, and striving to save some;—what shall the apostles do, if the dead rise not, and there be consequently, no future life, and no recompense of reward for all their sufferings? If the dead rise not. O ye Corinthian deniers of the resurrection, why are the apostles being immersed in sufferings on behalf of the dead? What fools we are! Why stand we in jeopardy every hour? Why have I fought with beasts at Ephesus? Why was I stoned to death? Why do I suffer everything in preaching Christ, if there is to be no resurrection of the dead?"

Paul had previously told them of the unparalleled sufferings he and the other true apostles of Christ were undergoing. "I think," he says, "that God hath set us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." Read 1 Cor. iv. 9-13, and we get an idea of the immersion with which they were "being immersed," in fulfillment of their divine Master's words, "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." And for or on behalf of whom did they thus suffer? The dead, unquestionably. Not the literally dead, of course; but men as good as dead, men dead "in Adam," and who could only be quickened or made alive "in Christ." "Let the dead bury the dead." The whole world is by nature dead; as much so as the condemned malefactor who has but a few days to live, or the struggling man whom the sea is ready to swallow up. And let us picture to ourselves men at the imminent risk of their own lives, and without promise or hope of praise or reward in this life plunging into a raging sea, or rushing into a house in flames, to save perishing fellow creatures, and we may have some conception of the God-like philanthropy which animated the apostles, and of the sufferings which Paul referred to in his phrase, "immersed on behalf of the dead!"

But the apostles did that sort of thing continually. Their immersion was no isolated act of brave philanthropy; but their daily, yea, hourly experience. I protest by your (Corinthians') rejoicing in Christ Jesus, I die daily. We stand in jeopardy every hour. They were being immersed on behalf of the dead every hour of their ministry.

Ah! it was no ordinary suffering, such as was common to the faithful of primitive times, that constituted the immersion our Lord and Paul spoke of and experienced. Our Lord's was made up of his individual persecutions, reproaches, scourgings, and shameful and ignominious death. Theirs of beatings, imprisonments, stonings, defamations, and afflictions ending only with their life. In their flesh was filled up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ on behalf of his body the Church: on behalf of men and women dead, until quickened and begotten by the Gospel of Christ administered by his faithful apostles.

The Corinthians knew, had seen something of this, and yet among them were fools who said, "There is no resurrection of the dead." What power in the apostle's questions,— "What shall they do which are being immersed on behalf of the dead, if the dead rise not?" Why are they then being immersed on behalf of the dead? Alas for Paul! alas for his fellow apostles!

—the off-scouring of all things in the world's estimation—if in their life-time only they had hope in Christ! And, alas for us! had they not been baptized for us! What would Christ's doctrine and sacrifice have availed to us, or even to the dead of his own age, had there been no apostles to go forth and preach, and write, and suffer! All honour to the Son of God, who died for us and rose again! All honour, too, to his apostles, who laid down their lives on our behalf! Both were God's servants; both finished the work given them to do; both were pre-eminent in sufferings, both shall be pre-eminent in glory; the throne, and the seats on the right hand and on the left, shall be theirs throughout the ages of the ages! May we have grace to enable us to profit by their labors! They have shown us the salvation promised, and how great it is: may we not neglect it!

Halifax, N. S. J. R. LITWOW.

Religious Intelligence.

BRANTFORD, ONTARIO.—REV. W. H. PORTER writes: May 26th, 1874.—Dear Bro. Selden,—We are still enjoying somewhat of the Divine favor among us. Several have been added to the First Church, and also to the Tabernacle in Brantford, since I last wrote to you. On Sabbath last, we had unusually large congregations, and baptism in the evening. Others have also requested the ordinance. After the baptism on Sabbath evening a young woman came up the aisle to me, and said, "O Mr. Porter, I am so happy; to-day has been the happiest day of my life. I have sought the Saviour and found him and I wish to be baptized, and unite with the Church." Truly the fields seem white, and God is granting us a very goodly and precious harvest.

The Churches of Ontario, as well as those of the Lower Provinces have been greatly blessed, as you have noticed. Dr. Davidson, of Guelph, a former Pastor of this Church, has baptized over 100, and still they come. I expect he baptized again yesterday. Bro. Stewart, another former Pastor of this Church, and lately the Editor of the Canadian Baptist, is now settled with the Church at Hamilton, and the prospect of brighter days for the Baptist cause in that city, seems exceedingly hopeful. I had the pleasure of attending his installation services, and could not but observe the warmth and cordiality of the Church in receiving him.

At St. Catharines also the cause is looking up, under the labors of Bro. Perrin. Last week we attended the installation services of Bro. Bates, lately of Woodstock, who has taken charge of the St. George Church, situated about 8 miles from Brantford. This church has been in a very low condition, on account of an unfortunate recent pastorate, but its prospects seem to be brightening. Brother Munro of Alexander St. Church, Toronto, and I exchanged pulpits a week ago Sabbath, and I had the privilege of witnessing something of the increased and increasing interest, that is manifested in the Baptist cause in Toronto, as I did last Summer, also at Montreal.

The old idea of Conservatism, in both these cities, has given place to more liberal plans, and, as in Yarmouth, within the last few years, churches are multiplying all around. Instead of the old, mother church in Toronto being crippled, or weakened by the policy, she seems to be renewing her age, and the great heart of Dr. Castle, the Pastor, is being enlarged, by the addition of many members to the church, and now by the prospect of a new stone church edifice to be one of the finest in the city. Bro. Munro still labors successfully, and is popular with his people. A large number of Ministerial students from the Institute at Woodstock, are now labouring in our Mission fields, ten of the students at the Union University at Toronto, are also having the Baptist ministry in view.

The Spring has been backward and cold here, but summer is nigh, and with it, the pleasant annual gatherings of the dear brethren at home. May the Lord's blessing be upon them.

Cow Bay, C. B., May 29th, 1874.—Dear Brother,—I have at length reached my appointed post of duty. I reached Sydney on Sunday at noon by the Neptune. Called on Bro. Harrington, who shewed us great kindness. He then took us to Rev. George Armstrong who gave us a right hearty welcome, and afterwards introduced us to several of the brethren and friends. We were glad of the opportunity of know-

ing the off-scouring of all things in the world's estimation—if in their life-time only they had hope in Christ! And, alas for us! had they not been baptized for us! What would Christ's doctrine and sacrifice have availed to us, or even to the dead of his own age, had there been no apostles to go forth and preach, and write, and suffer! All honour to the Son of God, who died for us and rose again! All honour, too, to his apostles, who laid down their lives on our behalf! Both were God's servants; both finished the work given them to do; both were pre-eminent in sufferings, both shall be pre-eminent in glory; the throne, and the seats on the right hand and on the left, shall be theirs throughout the ages of the ages! May we have grace to enable us to profit by their labors! They have shown us the salvation promised, and how great it is: may we not neglect it!

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