

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE RELIGION.

A lecture by the HONORABLE BURNTHORN MCGRAVE (of Antigua) written, and delivered nine times by request, in Nova Scotia, now published, in sympathy with the Evangelical Alliance, as a sequel or continuation to Lord Bacon's Essay "Of Unity in Religion."

(Concluded.)

But I might be asked why then have you divided Religion into objective and subjective, and made two parts of it when after all it is only one thing? I may give two reasons. This is not unfrequently the plan of the Chemist or Natural Philosopher when he desires to discover and exhibit clearly the nature of anything. He first resolves it into its separate elements by analysis; and then he puts together again the constituent parts, and recomposes them, and exhibits the original compound matter. This reason applies merely to my treatment of the matter of my lecture. A much better reason for my discriminating between objective and subjective religion, is, that such a discrimination is frequently presented to us in God's word. In the parable of the ten virgins, all had lamps—all had nominal or formal christianity; all had objective religion. But five of them were wise; and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them; but the wise were prepared with oil as well as with lamps. You remember the result. Now this oil—what was it? It is certain that the lamps could not continue to burn without the oil. And mark the record—that the wise openly declined to spare any of their oil, and referred the others to them that sold oil. Thus the wise repudiated any idea of self-sufficiency in their supply; and directed others to the same source from which they had obtained theirs. Therefore we are taught that we need to be provided with oil as well as with lamps—that we require Christ's grace in each heart, not less than his propitiation for the sins of the whole world;—in other words that there is a need of subjective, as well as of objective religion. The same teaching appears as clearly in another parable which I must quote in our Lord's own words (Math. vii. 24) "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell and great was the fall of it." Thus are we not only authorised, but compelled, to distinguish between objective and subjective religion; and we are at the same time led, by our Lord's comparison, to notice that the difference between actually doing and merely hearing his will, has its origin in a difference at the commencement. Of these two men, neither was utterly idle or slothful; each built for himself his house: nor are we told of any conspicuous difference in the external structure of the two houses. The marked difference was in the ground chosen—the one built on shifting sand: the other built upon rock. A doubt surely that rock was Christ? Again he says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" and, as if to check a merely material (material as opposed to spiritual) presumption on this passage, our Lord added within a few verses in the same chapter, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life (John vi. 63.) The truth is, that we need Christ's life not less than his death. Nay—is not the scripture argument, one a fortiori? that 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." And that life of His barren philosophical idea of Jesus, as our great exemplar, communicated to us verbally, and leaving us helpless to imitate him—but a portion of His own life imparted to us by the power of the Holy Spirit. For we are warned that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." Therefore we cannot rest safely in an unrealised objective religion: we cannot stop short of individual vital godliness—unless we are indifferent to the fearful risk of losing all. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trem-

bling" is the scripture precept with reason given: Why? "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

There is another declaration of our Lord's which bears upon this point which I cannot omit, although it will require some minutes to enter into it thoroughly. When he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

Now our English word observation is a very equivocal word; and to my mind introduces obscurity if not contradiction into this passage. For we must all remember that our Lord repeatedly charges us to watch. His plan order is, "Watch therefore for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," and his encouragement is "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." But, in one sense, observation is watching—looking out. And as it follows quickly in the context, that "as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the son of man be in his day"—it is evident that that kingdom (or display of our Saviour's kingdom) cannot come without observation—for the very first meaning of the word observation is "the act of observing." Nor does the marginal alternative clear up the difficulty—for the margin instead of observation suggests "outward shew."—The Greek word I find means treacherous observation or cunning scrutiny, and more particularly it means "superstitious observance." The verb is not that which is used by our Lord in any of his injunctions: it is used in Mark of the Pharisees—they watched Jesus whether he would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse him, and it is applied by Paul to the Galatians—"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years."—Not with this sort of observation, therefore cometh God's kingdom in any sense. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you." This is the declaration to which I would give the closest attention. The word behold is precisely the same as the word Lo! The word kingdom means first, sovereignty, or reign, i.e., royal power. And the other words are more literally "inside of you."

Thus the passage in its plainest translation stands, "Lo! God's reign is inside of you." We are also told early in the Gospels, that Jesus our Lord preached "the Gospel of the kingdom of God" that Jesus came into Galilee heralding the glad tidings of God's sovereign rule. Surely then this gospel of the kingdom was the good news of God's reign within us. And in strict consistency with this view writes St. Paul, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." This "power of God unto salvation"—this work of God within the soul—this "kingdom of God within you" is our subjective religion. Nor are our inferior words inappropriate if thoughtfully used. All language is imperfect; and the weakest building is building upon our own words: for we must not forget that "the letter killeth."

Our very word religion has by general understanding an almost directly opposite meaning to that of the Latin word religio whence it comes. The word religio among the Romans signified primarily and technically the sum of ceremonies and institutions established in honour of the gods—not including the idea of a code of doctrines and precepts. And I have been writing to little purpose if I have not shown that that meaning was not what christians mean by "religion." Our word religion has such a settled and sound meaning by conventional usage, that I fear to disturb it by any attempt at precise definition. We gather its true force from that passage in James, which teaches us how comprehensive, how penetrating, how active a thing it is—in which the Greek word for religion is rather "worship" "veneration." If we desire for a moment to avoid the Latin word, the passage would run, "If any man among you seem to be devout, and brideth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's worship is vain. Worship pure 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." This passage embodies religion "subjective." This is that religion to which the whole Epistle of James urges us with a conclusive vehemence. Be ye doers of the word (he warns us) and not hearers, only deceiving your own selves. A fruitless faith he compares to empty words of kindness

which give, not those things that are needful to the body. Not such is the faith that Christ gives. We have shown you from many scriptures that Christ gives us of his Spirit. We almost tremble to say that He has even promised to give us more.

St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians (his first letter to them, when they were not an advanced church) says to them, "but we have the mind of Christ." And writing to the Philippians he says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Let me not seem presumptuous in thus asserting that a part of our salvation consists in *likenedness* to Christ, or in our receiving of the mind of Christ as well as of His spirit. St. Peter says, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." And when we remember that the carnal mind (i.e., our own mind by nature) is enmity against God: for it is not subject (mark the Apostle's use of this word) to the law of God: neither indeed can be, we see the necessity in order to please God of our obtaining from Christ another mind. For (writes St. Paul to Timothy) "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind." And such exhortations as these, "Be of one mind"—"that ye stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel"—"that ye may with one mind glorify God," "that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"—are hardly applicable, unless we understand them of the mind of Christ imparted to his people. St. Paul states plainly of himself "so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God." Knowledge and judgment are usually deemed operations of the mind. But without insisting on any metaphysical distinctions between mind and spirit—it is plain that "the renewing of the mind" is a part of that salvation which we receive from Christ by the power of His Spirit; that this is needed to fulfil that part of the grand precept which enjoins upon us that we should love the Lord our God, with all our mind, and that this, as well as all the rest of our salvation, is acquired by receiving Christ himself into the heart by faith. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Great, very great—high, very high are our christian privileges, if we would only realise them. "Power to become the sons of God!" Can that be offered to us and can we be indifferent to its reception? The mind of Christ! Is that attainable and are we careless about it? And what is it that obstructs us? What is it that stands between us and these royal endowments? What hinders us from entering into this kingdom? Scripture is very clear upon this point and answers "unbelief." "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief;" and by contrast "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Now the causes of unbelief are many and various, many as the corruptions of the human heart, various as the distractions of earthly cares and pleasures. But there are two strongholds of unbelief, (or *unpersuadedness*) which I shall touch upon—as spoken of in scripture. They have opposite characteristics, they are built of contrary materials, and in common reason they ought to destroy one another: but they do not, on the contrary, they seem to be very firm unless broken down by the Holy Spirit of God. The one is that sort of objection, to the acceptance of a free gospel, which arises out of men's pride, because the terms are so easy. The very facility of the required acceptance creates a difficulty. This sort of repugnance is exquisitely illustrated in the story of Naaman: "Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper."

You remember that Naaman's wife had a captive Jewish maiden who waited on her, that this little maid said to her mistress, "would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy." That this was told to Naaman, and that he applied to the king of Israel, that the King of Israel was distressed: that Elisha sent to the King, and that Naaman came to Elisha. You remember Elisha's order, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times and the flesh shall come again to thee and thou shalt be clean." Then broke out the proud indignation of Naaman. The passage is too long, we press on to the end of it. "And his servants came near unto him and said, My Father, if the prophet had bid thee do

some great thing wouldest Thou not have done it? How much rather then when he said to thee, wash and be clean." The subsequent wisdom of Naaman is recorded, "Then went he down" and the reward, "and he was clean." Wise enough to listen to the little maid of Israel—wise to be counselled and convinced by the unanswerable appeal of his own servants, the warrior was healed. But we see how nearly his pride defeated the injunction. Accustomed to achieve great things, it was no easy matter for the man to submit to anything so simple, though he was a leper. And thus it is hard for some otherwise gifted men to enter in the kingdom of heaven. Another objection, of *unpersuadedness*, is of a totally opposite character. It says incredulously, "Who shall ascend into heaven?"—that is to bring Christ down from above—"or who shall descend into the deep?" that is to bring up Christ again from the dead." This sort of unbelief argues from the difficulty of the thing, that it is impossible. This is the profound folly of scepticism—the folly of the conceited child that because it cannot see or understand how some thing is performed infers therefore that its parents cannot do it—that it cannot be done. Such indolent errors, "not knowing the power of God."

While the former objection slights the command as too easy, this objection magnifies the difficulty of salvation, and rejects it as impossible. Doubters of this kind are referred by St. Paul to the visible works of God, that they thence infer his invisible Almightiness. They are reminded that he sendeth us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. Every returning spring is an annual resurrection in nature. Every harvest is a constant miracle of development and multiplication from bare grain. Thus the invisible things of God are said to be clearly seen—being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The only answer therefore to such questions appears from revelation to be that by the infinite grace of the same Almighty God in whom we live and move and have our being (who giveth us all things richly to enjoy) Christ, his incarnate word, is very nigh unto them, as unto us, even in their mouth and in their heart (if they will receive him.) "that is the word of faith." We cannot give them faith, but we can point them to the Son of God—to the Lord our righteousness. We can tell them that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We can assure them on God's authority that he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and we can warn them that he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." For as all our objective religion points to Christ so, all our subjective religion rests upon him.

Christ, "the sun of righteousness" is the centre of our whole objective system of Christianity, and Christ the Lord our righteousness is the foundation and source of all godliness. Christ is in several passages stated to be everything that is essential to our salvation. He is the way—that is, the road—as well as the truth, and the life. He is the vine. He is the chief corner stone. Even clashing metaphors are in the same passages applied properly to our Redeemer—who fulfils them all, in strict and exact relation to his people. Christ is the good shepherd: and Christ is the door of the fold. He is the true manna—the living bread that came down from heaven: and He is the fountain of living water. Surely, according to the teaching of the Holy Ghost, Christ is all our salvation.

The single aim or purpose of my lecture (originally designed as an essay) has been to lead my own mind, and unmaturing minds like my own to "the simplicity that is in Christ."

Our minds are given us to think with, and still are prone to wander in thinking—Till from the pillow of the thinker lying—In weakness comes the teaching then best taught, That the true crown for any soul in dying, Is Christ, not genius; and is faith, not thought. "I ought not to close without an explanation to ministers of "the glorious gospel," that my essay was intended to deduce from Scripture, with rather formal closeness, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." In partial apology, I have not thought that its subject would be less interesting, that it could not be new—that it could not be anything, but most familiar to them. It is perhaps superfluous, but safer for my younger friends, that I should add that subjective religion in its personal and practical importance is never separa-

ted, from objective religion in Holy Scripture—although I have divided it (or dissected it) for consideration. Scripture invariably urges that vital godliness should follow on the hearing of our objective religion. "God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," is the piercing and profound utterance of our Lord Himself.

And St. Paul says, "O foolish Galatians who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth? before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you." Here we see that St. Paul considered that the obedience of faith ought instantly to follow from the knowledge of the truth.

Indeed in the early Church—when an avowal of faith involved contempt and persecution—objective religion was not likely to be held by Christians without a desire at least for subjective religion. Believers then went more boldly to the root of the matter; and accordingly we find St. Paul asking converts at Ephesus "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" and further asking them "Unto what then were ye baptized?" These converts were afterwards "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them—by miraculous proof apparent to others—and they spake with tongues and prophesied."

Now, although the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are not poured out on believers—we have still every reason from scripture to aver that the comfort of the Holy Ghost, with its sanctifying power, is still imparted to believers in the name of Jesus Christ. "How then shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" As Christ is received into the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost—Scripture draws no distinction between receiving Christ actually and receiving the Holy Ghost. "Ye are the temple of the living God," says St. Paul, and the promise quoted by him is "God hath said I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." Practical piety grows out of this principle because "the love of God" (that is, I think God's love to us) "is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given." It is certainly affirmed that "we love Him because He first loved us," and it is also asserted that the love of Christ (i.e., again, Christ's love) constraineth us because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead." In another passage, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Thus God's own free love is the basis of all piety. The great manifestation and proof of His love toward us, is, His Son given and manifested to take away our sins—even Christ Jesus "declared to be the Son of God with power." And we can become "the children of God, any of us, only by faith in Christ Jesus."

For the Christian Messenger.

FROM REV. R. S. MORTON.

MILLVILLE, AYLESFORD, FEB. 21st 1873.

Dear Bro. Selten,—

If I were a voice, and could speak to the Ministers and members of all the Baptist Churches belonging to our Convention, I might say to them, with reference to their recent efforts to sustain and enlarge their Home and Foreign Missionary operations, Well done! a noble enterprise, indeed, and nobly have you begun to act in it. But, I would say, beware of reaction; it is one thing to begin, it is quite another thing to persevere until the end desired is attained. This Missionary enterprise, has for its end, the evangelization of all the heathen nations, and the salvation of all redeemed sinners, throughout the whole world; no spasmodic effort will accomplish all this. But patient continuance in self-denying effort on the part of all Christians, will at length through the promised aid of the Holy Spirit, surely bring about this glorious result. Be encouraged then, to go on, and increase your efforts for the salvation of your fellow creatures. Never let your hands be slack, nor fear to lay your all upon the altar for God. Remember the words of Jesus, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." And here I wish to say a word to my brethren in Nova Scotia about our French Mission. I have noticed but a very trifling sum, acknowledged as received for that mission, since the time of the meetings of the Associations last summer, although we were informed through the Christian Messenger, that the treasury was empty, some time ago. Dear brethren in your commendable