

Sunday Reading.

A Dream of Death.

I dreamed one night of dying, I thought that my restless soul Was pluming its wings for flying Whens eternal pleasures roll. Like cold clay, dark and senseless, Seemed my body now to me, Yet my soul was not defenceless, Only struggling to be free. I had left the body, nearly, One slight bond only did bind, And my heav'nly form was clearly To my wond'ring view outlined. It had a duplicate member For each part of my mortal frame, 'Twas golden and pure like amber, And buoyant as flashing flame! I knew 'twas not a body, Yet truly I felt no loss, For I knew I should soon be free From all that was dark and gross! I now began to question My heart concerning its hope; Had God my supreme affection, Or should I in darkness grope? But my soul was so full of gladness I could not tarry to doubt, I could not yield to sadness, My fears were all put to rout! Just then I awoke from slumber, And knew 'twas only a dream; Yet as a treasure I number This hope that thus it will seem. I do not so dread the leaving Of this earthly house of clay, For through Christ, without grieving, I know I shall hail that day! THOS. PEARL BRIGGS. Cambridge, August, 1883.

Uncomfortable People.

We all know them; they are in every community, in every church, in many families. They are always uncomfortable themselves, and they inflict discomfort on everybody else. A really aggressive and well-developed specimen will overshadow a town like a benyas tree, yielding, the whole year through, all manner of fruit bitter to the taste, and not to be digested without serious injury. These people supply an ample source of friction; they bring out the latent possibilities of general unpleasantness in a locality: they sow seeds of discord not only in the fallow ground but by the wayside, and are followed by abundant harvests of the kind that are sown with joy but reaped with tears. There are the doubters, for instance What a wonderful power of creating obstacles they possess! Give them a perfectly clear field and they will fill it in an incredibly short time with innumerable hindrances, difficulties and discouragements. They go about like an unorganized fire brigade, extinguishing the fires of zeal and enthusiasm that occasionally get started in every community; a whole reservoir of cold water is always at their disposal, to pour itself on any new plan looking to the general improvement. If any want to start a library in a town which has plenty of possible readers and very few books, they are sure that you will waste your money and strength; the people are not awake to their deficiencies, and you cannot rouse them; it will cost a great deal, and you cannot raise the money. If you want to organize a rational temperance work in a place that keeps a hundred doors open to drunkenness seven days in every week—counting the back doors—they are appalled by the magnitude of the liquor interest; you are sure to be beaten! the same thing was tried at Bushville, and the saloons are fuller than ever; you cannot create public sentiment to support you; you are likely to have your barn burned for your trouble. Perhaps you are a minister, and your strength and zeal outrun the work of your own parish; you want to organize and extend your church activities, and you call a meeting and extend your plans. Straightway the cold water man gets up and deluges your enterprise; he points out the fact that some of the "pillars" are getting old and need rest; that charity begins at home, and would do well to stay there instead of gadding hither and yon; that Mr. Strikehard, your energetic predecessor, started a prayer meeting at Gentretown and had to give it up for lack of support; the crops are poor, money tight, and nobody feels like adding to his expenses! It is only a step from the doubters to the critics; a doubter who gets a really good start generally ends as a critic if the course of natural development is arrested by some work of grace. The critic is a superior person who lives for the benefit of his fellowmen, and gives them from time to time the blessings of his larger wisdom and clearer intellect.

He is far above the weakness of disliking to hurt people's feelings; it is a principle with him—and, alas! how often with her—to speak the truth whenever that somewhat rare form of utterance is particularly unpleasant. If there is a weak place in the morning sermon the critic puts his finger upon it with unerring skill, born not of mental training but of a remarkable sensitiveness to the mistakes of others; if there is a defect in the minister's character which leads him to neglect an occasional tea party for the sake of an extra hour in his study, the critic knows it at once, and so does the whole community in the shortest possible time. There is a curious superstition among some semi-savage tribes that an adversary may be put out of the way by making an image of him and sticking it full of pins. The critic is a person who retains by some occult process of nature this tradition of his ancestry, and goes about sticking pins into people and enterprises with an astonishing success in the way of producing pain. If your library is already under way, he is sure your directors are putting in immoral books, or infidel books, or encouraging people to waste their time on novels; if you have started your prayer-meeting in some neglected suburb, he knows that the church members who drive two or three miles on stormy nights to look after it are trying to make capital out of their piety; if some lay member of the church has the gift and opportunity to do a little good in some new way, the critic sees at once that the apparently zealous worker is full of personal ambition; that he wants the front seat in the sanctuary and loves nothing so much as the sound of his own voice; if you open a new street the critic instantly points out that you have run it in the wrong direction; if you build a sewer he proves to you that you have employed an incompetent man and that the work will need to be done over again; if you get up an entertainment for the benefit of six starving orphans he wonders how people who know so little about music can venture to sing in public. Then there are the talkers; these form a large and important class in every community. They are not all gossips, for many of them have no malicious purpose, but they are endlessly discussing everything and everybody, and they create the atmosphere in which all manner of myths and traditions grow by a sort of spontaneous generation. The talkers are omniscient and omnipresent; they know everything and tell it everywhere. They are like the rivers of Damascus which flow about every house; and like the rain, they impart their news without discrimination to the just and the unjust. If you are about to paint your house they get as many variations on the theme as a skillful organist will get out of an old fashioned fugue; they wonder if you can afford it; they surmise that you are about to have visitors; they "calculate" that you are going to take summer-boarders. If you set up a modest establishment in the shape of a horse and phaeton, they are sure your salary has been raised, or that your wife's mother has left a legacy. In short, whatever you do or leave undone, these tireless people take as a text, and overlay it, as the old monks illuminated the manuscripts, with all manner of curious, far fetched and unearthly devices. If one could see the threads of talk which these people weave and spin over a whole community, he would stand appalled at the waste of a power of imagination which, properly directed, might have created or equipped—Zola. —Christian Union.

Difficult Questions in Mission Work.

In the early years of the mission, difficult problems arise which must be discussed and settled. Until this is done the infant church is likely to be hampered. There are usages, some of which, though utterly at variance with the spirit of the gospel, are not always fully condemned by the letter of the gospel. These usages have to be considered, and the bearing of Christianity upon them has to be pointed out little by little as they are able to hear it. Among these I may mention foot-binding. The Bible does not speak of such maltreatment of the human members, any more than it does of tight-lacing; yet we must oppose foot-binding. At the first introduction of Christianity it would have been absurd to have expended our chief energy in a reform of this kind. Other things far more weightily claimed prior attention. Besides, it is necessary to have some strength of numbers, so as to have some solid body of opinion, and no little grounding in the essentials of faith and obedience and spiritual discernment, in order to back up and support those of the church

members who are ready to break up this barbarous practice.

When this subject was first pressed upon the attention of the church a dozen years ago, nobody was ready for it. Everybody said that was a local custom they could not dispense with. From time to time we battered away, producing impressions, but not achieving success. We are content to break up the practice in a few cases to begin with. But it was hard to find that "few." It was not possible to win over the parents of the small number of girls that were in our school. Still we could see that a sentiment was forming. Some few men and women were won over to oppose foot-binding. Three years ago the ladies of the mission took the matter up, thinking the time had come. The school was to be opened only to those whose parents would pledge themselves not to bind their feet. Two years earlier such a rule would have emptied the school; but now it only checked temporarily, and in a little while all the places were taken by children whose parents had given the desired pledge. A year later a rally was held at the Bible-woman's house. The Bible-women themselves, under the guidance of Miss Field and Miss Norwood, agreed to set themselves against the practice. This is chiefly a woman's work. Husbands have very little influence in the matter, so a real beginning was made towards the abolition of foot-binding. At the out-stations the influence is not ascendant; but it is so here, and in due time it will be felt at all our stations. Another problem that always comes up in new missions is that of polygamy. In some missions cases of this are frequent and troublesome. With us instances have been rare. The common opinion among us is, that, where an applicant for membership has two wives, one of them should be put away. This seems to us Scriptural. It may seem very easy to dispose of a case in this way. It is so theoretically, but practically it is more embarrassing than one would imagine. The only case of this that I have had in my own experience came up some years ago. The applicant for membership had two wives. What should he do? "Put away one of them, of course," we replied. Very well, which one should it be? "The last one of course, was the answer. Now, it so happened that the first wife had no children, but the second one had. Was the mother to be put away, and were the children also to be put away? Was the mother to be separated from her own children, or was the father to be separated from his children? These were weighty questions. We pondered them well, and adhered to our decision. The husband must put away the second wife and make provision for her support. The conclusion was painful; but there seemed no other way. The case was delayed a long time, waiting for him to decide before he could be baptized. At last she was put away; and we felt that we had done right, though pained at heart. Not long after the discarded wife—A H—came to me to talk about the case. Her protestations and her arguments came from a deeply moved spirit. She had pondered the subject well, and knew how to state it from her own point of view. It is worth while to see what that point was. "But, teacher, he is my husband, and I am his wife. You say that he ought not to have taken me, but he did take me before he knew your new religion. He is the father of my children. I have a right to look to him for companionship and for protection. You make my children illegitimate. You should not do that: you have no right to injure my children that way. You have no right to put me in the position of a disreputable woman, for he lawfully married me according to the usage of China. I had a husband; now I have no husband. I had a home; now I have no home. If I go and marry another man, I shall break the law. I had one to whom I could go as the father of my children; now I can go to my children's father no longer, nor may I dare to speak to him."

Could any one have heard A H as she said this, and seen how her soul was stirred with an idea that she had been wronged, he would have decided with me that cases of this kind are not so easily disposed of as may seem. One is constrained to study anew the New Testament teaching on the case of a man who is the husband of more than one wife. If a man should marry a second wife after he becomes a church member, the question would not be delayed one minute. I only hope we will not have another such case as that of A H. Perhaps the better way in a similar instance might be to decline to administer baptism. The applicant could be treated in all other respects as an honest believer. Let those who think this is an easy question to decide, ponder it well in the light of the Scripture. As for me I should not wish ever again to listen to such pathetic upbraidings as those of poor A H.

The Threefold Growth.

By A. J. CONDON, D. D., BOSTON, MASS.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, etc.—COL. II. 6, 7.

God never demands growth of us except on the ground of an already existing faith. It is those who have been planted together with Christ who are required "to grow up in all things into Him." It is those who have received the Lord Jesus who are required to walk in Him—that is, to continue and complete the life already begun in Him.

This continuance is considered under three heads: rooting, upbuilding and abounding.

1. The Christian's downward growth—"Rooted in Him." All of strength and fruitfulness in us depends on the depth with which we strike down into the life and love of God. When the Apostle summons us to the vast endeavor of measuring and grasping the love of God, he begins with the downward growth. We can only reach loftily upward and broadly outward as we strike deeply downward. Much depends on being rooted in Christ.

1. Our fruitfulness. A fruitfulness that continues in spite of surrounding drought and barrenness and death. Trials and hardships, etc., compel us to go down, to burrow in the darkness of solitary communion, to take hold on the secret resources of the Almighty. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers, etc."

2. Our strength. See the oak smitten by the whirlwind, its branches shattered, and yet itself is standing unmoved in its rooted strength. A godless man cannot be steadfast in affliction. He has no hidden hold on God by faith and prayer. Props cannot take the place of roots.

3. Our purity. "Consider the lilies how they grow."—in the midst often of decaying rubbish and black mud, yet themselves as white as an angel's wing. So ought a Christian to be in this world—pure amid surrounding impurity. But how can he be? He must reach down into God and feed on Him. God can sanctify wholly.

II. The Christian's upward growth—"Built up in Him." The tree builds itself from the heart, and so must the Christian from within—from the root and principle of the divine life he gets when he is grafted in Christ—every part is developed out of the central source of life. Abiding in Christ this growth goes on day and night. By fastening our creeping affections on Christ who is in heaven, He will lift us up. If the question is, what shall I do to grow in grace? we point to Jesus on the throne and say, "Seek to come unto the measure of the stature of the perfect man."

III. The Christian's outward growth—"Abounding therein with thanksgiving." This is the branching out into all service and fruitfulness and praise. God's gifts are bestowed in exceeding abundance, that that abundance may flow out in abounding blessings to others. The great end of our faith and obedience is not to get our own souls saved merely, but to fit us for saving other souls. We get life for personal salvation and abundant life for the blessing and enrichment of others. The whole comprehensive secret of the blessed life is contained in the words: "Abide in Me," and this can be effected by the diligent, humble, prayerful study of the word of God. The heart in the word and the word in the heart. Christ in us and we in Christ. Such is the secret of communion of growth and fruitfulness.

Life is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles and kindnesses and small obligations, given habitually, are what win and preserve the heart, and secure comfort.—Sir H. Davy.

If you are a real man do a real man's work and say nothing about it; but if you are only a rooster, why, of course, you can't help crowing at nothing.

Whenever you commend, add your reasons for doing so; it is this which distinguishes the approbation of a man of sense from the flattery of sycophants and admiration of fools.—Steels.

Consecration.

By REV. J. DENOVON.

Christianity is consecration to Christ, growing out of identity with Him in the covenant of grace and all the spiritual results of that covenant.

Christian Baptism, that initiatory rite by which we formally enter the Church of Christ, is an ordinance in which this idea of Consecration is most impressively symbolized; it is (1) Our deliberate personal profession of faith in the man Jesus of Nazareth as being the true Christ of God, as being all He pretended to be, performing successfully all He undertook, having a just right to all He claimed, and being trustworthy for all He promised—in short that He was "God manifest in the flesh;" (2) it is a solemn declaration of our identity with Him in His earthly life and its righteousness, in His sacrificial death and its results, in His resurrection and its fruits, in His everlasting life and its high responsibilities; it is therefore (3) our voluntary confession, our deliberate and most solemn assertion that we believers are no longer ourselves, independent moral agents having virtue and vice of our own, rights, faculties and a future of our own, will, purpose and plan of our own; that we are not ourselves but members in particular of Christ's mystical body, integral and component parts of "THE CHRIST," the Divine Unit of redeemed and regenerate Humanity—all our rights and hopes and destiny being involved in those of Christ, and all our planning and willing absolutely and unconditionally subordinated to the indwelling will of Christ. Henceforth the life we live is not our own nor for ourselves. Our Adamic life and all its sins were doomed by law and ended in the accursed death of the cross, our flesh was consigned to the grave, and the life we now live is resurrection life, life in Christ by which body, soul and spirit are in a condition of consecration. "FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST." "I LIVE, YET NOT I."

This stupendously solemn Doctrine is the doctrine symbolized in and proclaimed by Christian Baptism—"Know ye not that all we who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. So reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ." Such passages as these have no uncertain sound, no twofold or doubtful meaning; and they at once suggest the question, How much of the believer is baptized—buried in Christ-death and raised to Christ-life? And the only answer is, all the man from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, his brain with all its capacity of thought and purpose, his heart with all its power of loving and hating and desiring, his nervous system with all its sensibility and energy, his five senses with all their faculties of perception, his tongue with all its talent, his limbs with all their skill and strength—his plans, hopes, abilities and possessions, all that his signature or ingenuity or prospects are worth—these all are "baptized into Christ," these all "put on Christ." This, and nothing less than this is the measure, and the meaning of true Christian Baptism. Partial baptism—baptism applied by a few trembling drops to a small portion of the person—is at once a symbolic heresy and an insult to high heaven, against which the entire spirit and history of Jesus Christ is a protest.

Now, if these premises be scripturally sound—it follows that in every baptized man or woman we behold a part of the Christ, a living organism belonging and consecrated to Jesus Christ. The regenerating Spirit of grace divine dwelling within them has so far and so effectively asserted His authority over the heart and mind as to have compelled the body to this act of formal confession. After this confession the body goes back into the world in charge of the indwelling Holy Ghost ("know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost?") to illustrate practically this injunction of the Apostle, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as

instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

As every soldier of the British Army is bound by his oath and the livery he wears to loyalty even unto death, even so every believer has been by his baptism marked corporeally as the devoted military partizan of Jesus Christ. Baptism meaneth nothing at all if it meaneth not the utter severance of a man from sin's guilt, from the bondage and the control of carnal motives and desires, from worldly aims and ends by death, and his resurrection beyond death to newness of life—"a life that is everlasting and totally devoted to God in Christ. This is consecration—this destination of a human being in all his affections and in all his mental and bodily powers to a sacred use. As the ancient temple on Mount Moriah was holy, even so is the believer's body; as the apparatus of levitical ministrations was holy, even so are all the believer's corporeal and intellectual faculties; as the innermost sanctuary was specially holy when the high-priest stood there alone before God with sacrificial blood and fragrant incense, even so does the believer's spirit stand within the innermost chamber of the affections glowing with love and prostrate in adoring faith, offering to Jehovah spiritual worship acceptable through the virtues of "the blood of sprinkling."

Consecration is no less apparent in the only other symbolic ordinance of the Christian Church—the Lord's Supper. In the use of this precious and significant ordinance the solemn declaration of Consecration made in Baptism at the commencement of Christian life is periodically reiterated throughout the entire future experience on earth.

The Lord's Supper declares, (1) Our communion with the Lord Christ in His judicial and sacrificial death. Partaking of the elements of this ordinance we virtually declare that His death under law and unto sin was ours; and that we ourselves of course are not merely dead to all judicial penal obligation, but are forever done with sin even as Christ Himself is. "How shall we that died to sin live any longer therein?"

(2) Our present life is CHRIST-LIFE, in communion with all His redeemed ones; that is spiritual vitality derived from Him and sustained by continual supply from Him as the great Heart and Head of the regenerated organization from whom they are all sustained and nourished. Such life as this must necessarily be holy, not merely in nature, but in action. To deny this is to deny that Christ by His almighty spirit is working in us to will and to do of the good will of God; and "this is the will of God even our sanctification;" and this is the character and limit of such sanctification—"Whether ye eat or drink or whatever ye do, do all for the glory of God."

(3) The Lord's Supper declares we are looking expectantly for Jesus Christ's return. "This do till He come," saith the Apostle. Our attitude at the Lord's Table ought ever to be that of holy love gazing upward wishfully for "the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Now is it self-apparent that these three ideas, illustrated and shown forth in the Lord's Supper are calculated to promote (if anything can) entire and intense consecration, and that a consecration not of soul only, but of body also, for it is the believer's body which partakes of the bread and wine, and the physical blood and tissues and nervous system are thus associated with the Christ and symbolically consecrated to Him.

To those who use these two symbolic ordinances of the Church (both so eminently significant of entire consecration) and still live carnal and worldly, vain and selfish lives we are compelled to attribute a moral perversity of heart and spiritual blindness of mind which are at once amazing and deplorable. Utter ignorance of the obvious scriptural significance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper is the only reason or apology which can be offered for the wide-spread un-Christian-likeness of professed Christians. As in my first sentence I stated, permit me to repeat, Christianity is consecration to Christ, and that made manifest by imitation of Him.