

Our Contributors.

Your Hindrances and Your only help.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

Among the army of readers of this paper may be many who expect to become Christians before they die, and yet have not done so. Let me have a frank word with you. If I inquire why you have never begun the Christian life, you might answer that there are hindrances in your way. Of course there are. All the best things are costly, and God does not promise to carry you to heaven in a palace car. A cheap religion is more worthless than certain flimsy goods that are sold for a trifle.

One obstacle that may deter you is that you are disgusted with the inconsistent conduct of some who profess to be Christians. You say, "I don't care to be what they are," and you are perfectly right in feeling so. Jesus Christ does not ask you to be frivolous, or cowardly, or selfish, or anything else that is unworthy. He asks you to trust him, and follow him, and copy him, and not to be studying the faults of your fellow-creatures. Every good thing is counterfeited, and there is a counterfeit piety sometimes found in the cases of shallow, self-deceived professors. Study your own faults, my dear friend, and face your own sins! Those sins will destroy your soul if they are not repented of. Unless you are "born again" you will be condemned alongside of those whom you are now condemning. This flimsy excuse will not "hold water." No other person's failure will excuse your failure.

Perhaps you are held back by a foolish fear of ridicule. This dread of a sneer or scoff has a great influence upon some minds. I knew of a person who, on his way into an inquiry room, encountered the contemptuous laugh of one or two frivolous associates, and was frightened back. The best people will not sneer at you, that's certain. When, then, allow the short-lived sneers of sinners to cheat you out of your soul? The best way to live down ridicule is to live up a noble, godly character. You are mistaken if you suppose that you will risk loss of anybody's respect by maintaining a sincere, fearless, useful Christian life. You are frightened by a bugbear.

Perhaps no such small hindrances as these may be in your path. You may desire to be a Christian and yet find that the real difficulties are not outside of you or around you, but in your own heart. You say, "My heart is obstinate and wicked, and I cannot make to myself a new heart." Blind Bartimeus could not restore sight to his eyes, but Jesus Christ could do it, and he did it just as soon as Bartimeus came to him in simple faith and with the honest prayer on his lips, "Lord, let me receive my sight!" The first step in the religious life is obedience to Christ. Your mistake is that you are trying to do what only divine power can effect, and neglecting to do what the Saviour asks you to do. He invites you to turn from your sins and obey him, and he promises you the help of his almighty Spirit to change your heart.

This brings me to the main point,

which I would lovingly press upon your attention. There is no book for you now like the Word of God. Open your Bible at the fifteenth chapter of Isaiah and you will find this verse: "For the Lord God will help you. Therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." This passage—which has the ring of a bugle—will both encourage you and keep you from self-trust in the vital matter of your salvation. Self-reliance is a good thing in the right place; but self-reliance in a battle with the world and the lusts of the flesh and the devil and the innate depravity of the heart means self-destruction. Some persons set out, like John Bunyan's "Mr. Presumption," with the self-confident cry, "Oh, I can do it." Such vain boasters have not yet been under fire or measured swords with their enemies. The secret of the failure of more than one attempt to live a Christian life has been self-confidence. God's Book declares, "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool." My friend, you cannot trust yourself too little, and you cannot trust Jesus Christ too much. The real question with you just now is, "Shall I trust myself—or my Lord and Saviour?" Your soul has no self-lifting power or self-renewing power. You can no more find your way to heaven without Christ's light and grace than you can find your way through the Mammoth Cave without a guide and a lantern. Christ says, "I am the Light," and Christ says, "Ye must be born anew," and born of the Spirit. In Jesus Christ is your only help.

If you seek that help sincerely you will surely obtain it. You are learning some lessons now that will be of great service to you. You are learning what a sinful thing your heart is and what a weak creature you are in yourself, and also the value and power of true prayer. Christ says to you, "In me is thy help," and he never breaks his word. This loving assistance will come to you in many ways. He will pour his grace into your heart as streams of water pour into the bottom of a well and fill it up. Christ will put good thoughts into your heart. He will not only forgive your past sins, but give you strength to fight temptations. He will give you supernatural help, and when you encounter lions in your way you will find, like Daniel, that the lions are harmless. Then, my friend, lay hold of Jesus Christ with the entire grasp of your soul and do just what he bids you. Let conscience speak out. Instead of resisting the blessed Spirit, work with the Spirit. No one ever yet cast himself entirely on Christ, with a readiness to hear Christ's voice and to do Christ's will, and was left to perish.

Bind this blessed text like a frontlet between your eyes. Write it on the palms of your hands. It will give you security; you will "never be confounded." It will give you steadfastness; Christ will give you backbone to do your duty and to face any hindrances. It will give you a serenity of soul; you will "never be ashamed," and in the face of sneer or scoff, of man or devils,

you will have strength to stand by your colors. Tens of thousands have had just your hindrances and others like them, and Jesus Christ has brought them off more than conquerors. Don't, I beg of you, draw back, for that way lies hell! Before you may be conflict and self-denial and struggle, but with Jesus comes victory!

What Others Say.

CANADA AND BRITAIN.

(1) It is certain that Canada desires no arrangement which now or hereafter will draw her from her place as an integral part of the British Empire. (2) It is also certain that, other things being equal, she would prefer to extend any benefits she may have to confer to the motherland, whose markets have long been open to her products. (3) At the same time Canada desires to maintain the most cordial terms with her great neighbor and realizes that trade relations of mutual benefit form a strong guarantee of friendship and peace.—*Toronto Presbyterian.*

SMILE vs. SMIRK.

A principal of one of the Chicago public schools recently was transferred to another school because, according to the daily papers, he was guilty of not smiling. We wonder how many pastors are transferred from one church to another for the same reason? A man who cannot smile, but frowns continually, would be sure to fail as teacher or pastor. On the other hand, the man who smirks is almost as bad. The smile after all must come from the soul and be absolutely genuine. God blesses the smile, but we imagine the devil smiles when Christians smirk.—*Baptist Standard.*

THE PREACHER'S AIM.

A preacher who aims at nothing should not be surprised if he hits nothing. An arrow shot at a venture may kill a king, but it is much more likely to fall unheeded to the ground. The preacher should shoot to kill. There is too much random work in the ministrations of the pulpit. A nail cannot be driven home by hammering all around it. Generalizations make no converts. Preaching must be personal, definite, Nathan's "Thou art the man" brought David to his knees. The preacher may not "name" men in his congregation, as does the speaker in the house of commons, but he should so preach that the individual man will take the sermon to himself.—*The Examiner.*

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