The Lord and the Pennies

It has been aptly said that, as a rule, Christian people save their pennies "for the Lord and the organ-grinders." No doubt pennies are used to a large extent in small transactions outside of charity and worship. But it is past question that they are largely used in the "worship and work of the Lord." Now we do not despise a penny when it is consecrated to God, and represents the ability of the giver; but we are profoundly assured that there is no proper relation between the mass of pennies which find their way into the offering plates and the well-dressed worshippers (?) from whose ample hands they are dropped into the plates. From a little child, and from the hands of the poor, a penny may have some significance as an act of worship; but from the hands of an able-bodied man, a well-dressed woman, a young man, with a silver-headed cane and gold watch, who has just thrown away the stubb of a cigar or the end of a cigarette, a penny dropped into the offering plate at a church service is an abomination in the sight of God and man. Yet the number of those who contribute a penny on the Sabbath day to the "worship and work" of Christ, is in excess of those who contribute more than that sum. We have been at some pains to verify this statement by a careful inquiry in the facts as shown by the collections taken in various churches and religious assemblies.

The instinct of meanness is more apt to show itself in connection with a church collection than in any other place. There are men who will almost quarrel with a neighbor for the privilege of paying his car-fare, who will press a friend to accept a cigar, or some other courtesy of like value, who will persistently select the pennies from the other loose change in their pockets in order to put them in the collection plate. And these are not "worldly" men, but professing Christians. There are scores and hundreds of young men who spend from ten to twenty-five cents every day for cigarettes and cigars, who never think of putting more than a penny into the weekly collection plate. There are men who are not considered mean or illiberal in other things, who are careful that their children are sent off to Sabbath-school, and are equally careful to see that each little "tot" is duly provided with a "*penny*." To furnish them with a *penny*, every other coin in the pocket will be scratched over till a sufficient number are found. It never seems to have suggested itself to the man that a ten cent piece, or at least a nickel, might answer as well as a penny. A penny seems to represent the idea of worship to their minds, and perhaps their hearts, better than any other piece of money. Out of a thousand pieces of money offered on the Lord's day, in a well-known church, somewhat famous for its activity, more than half the number is, pretty sure to be pennies. It is true that the larger proportion comes from the evening congregation, who are welcome to occupy the pews and seats put at their disposal without reserve, and which they are not slow to accept. Nevertheless, a goodly part of them come from the regular worshippers.

It has long been a baffling question to us why it is that this streak of meanness comes out of men and women so habitually in connection with the service of God's house. Dollars for personal pleasures, little extravagances and indulgences, and pennies and nickels for God Surely it must be either that the heart is closed with ingratitude or else it is pure (bad) habit and thoughtlessness.

It may be well to raise the question as to the meaning of the collection at all. Why do we take collections in our churches, and with what spirit and intent does the offerer give his penny or his pound? There are two thoughts involved in a collection; or, shall we say, two motives? One is, that the public worship of God may be maintained and the benevolent work of the church carried forward. The other is, that an offering of money is a method of expressing thanksgiving to God for his abundant mercies, especially his abounding and continuous temporal mercies. Men and women are not asked to *contribute* their money on the same principle that they are demanded to *pay* their money upon entering a place of amusement or in consideration of service rendered, of goods delivered. The offerings made in the house of God are supposed to be "free will offerings," springing from a sense of religious obligation or gratitude.

Let us first consider the offering as representing the obligation resting on men to support the cause of Christ and the benevolent work of the church. Is it possible that that obligation can be measured and confessed by a penny? We speak now of the average church-goer's ability. Nor do we forget that many of the offerers are among the number who have hired seats and thus contributed to the support of the church. But, after all said and done in that direction, can it be said in fairness that a penny does represent an honorable portion of obligation? If this obligation does not imply something more than that which a penny represents, we must be mistaken as to the general character and worth of Christianity.

But, in the second place, the offerings on the Sabbath day ought to represent a worshipful thanksgiving to God for all his goodness to us in temporal as well as spiritual things. Is it conceivable that a man who is thankful at all can give any expression to his thanksgiving by selecting a penny out of his loose change and deliberately offering that to God? We are not speaking of poor widows or little children, who are dependent upon others to give them their pennies, but of the average well-dressed church-goer. The man who comes to church with a $5 hat on his head, with from $50 to $150 worth of clothes on his back, with a gold watch and chain in his vest; the woman with a $10 bonnet on her head, a $150 seal-skin sack on her back, and clothes besides, representing from $50 to $200; the young man who spends from $1 to $3 per week at the theatre, or other entertainments, who sports a gold or silver-headed cane and encases his hands in kid gloves; the young lady who, with flowers and feathers, gloves and ribbons, jewels of gold and jewels of silver, is a creature fair and lovely to look at, and who, no doubt, takes delight in being seen in fine array at the church services—these are the people who pour out their pennies (one at a time) into the collection plates. What does it mean? If it is the offering of an unbeliever, who does not recognize obligation and has nothing to be thankful for, but only does it because he is ashamed to have the plate pass him, well and good; and equally well, and *even better than good, if he gave nothing;* but, if it is the offering of a Christian man or woman, who has been bought with the priceless blood of Christ, and is intended to express either obligation or thanksgiving, then God help these robbers and mockers who rob and mock God with their pennies.—*Independent.*

What Is It to Believe on Christ

BY REV. ARTHUR T. PIERSON, D. D.

H. Thane Miller, Esq., the blind evangelist of Cincinnati, a leader in the work of Young Men's Christian Associations, told a most pathetic story of his household life, before the "International Convention," at Milwaukee.

His darling son departed May 25, 1882, at the age twenty-five. The father returning home from a journey, hurried to his house, knowing that son to have been already dangerously ill for nine days. At the train he parted with friends who covenanted with him and each other to pray that the son might be spared, or might, if taken, leave behind him clear witness that he had gone to his glorified mother and to Jesus.

While these friends were "yet speaking in prayer," the anxious father, crossing his threshold, hastened to his dying boy's bedside.

"Father," said he, "come lie down here by me. Mother always said I would be a Christian before I died; and I feel sure that her prayers will be answered. And now, I do not see the way; it is all very dim; and I want you, father, as simply and briefly and plainly as you can, to tell me just what it is to be a Christian."

Thane Miller says he never felt as he did then the need of being taught of God. He whispered an earnest prayer for divine help and then, as simply as he could, pointed the dear boy to the Lamb of God. Presently he heard whispered by those lips a prayer, so full of humble confession, penitence and faith, that there could be no doubt he had found the way and he was walking in it; and from that day that chamber of anguish was transfigured into a gateway of heaven.

This experience suggests a question of vital importance to us all; "How shall I, in the simplest, briefest way, tell a soul just what it is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to be saved?"

To get at the very heart of the subject, let us suppose you are at the bedside of a dying sinner, whose only hope of salvation lies in your being able to tell him at once in simplest words, how to perform the saving act of faith. Many a person is told to "believe" who is not conscious of not believing, and who has no appreciation of the difference between belief and faith. How may the matter be so put before an inquiring soul so as to help to the immediate appropriation of saving grace? Time may not be left for the study of the Word of God, or for anything but the briefest prayer. How shall this last moment be improved to the saving of a soul?

Faith differs from belief, because it is an act of trusting. Belief is the assent of the mind to a fact or truth put before us in the form of a proposition or statement; as though I should say, "Christ died for sinners." Faith is the consent of the whole mind, heart, conscience and will to the fact or truth of the Christian religion, as represented in the person of Christ. Hence we read, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The little word "on" carries the idea that such a way of believing bring me nearer to the person of Jesus, and makes me not only accept what he says, but to lean on him; resting not only on his words, but his work for me. Here is not only believing but trusting.

Faith differs from belief, because it is an act of taking. God not only puts before me a truth to be believed, but a personal Saviour to be taken to myself. Faith is that by which I apprehend and then appropriate, first perceive and then receive him. I see Christ to be my possible Saviour and take him to be my actual Saviour.

How do I take him? By giving myself! the only way in which one person can "take" another. So a lone orphan takes one who offers to be a father; so a wife takes a husband; so a soldier takes a general, or a subject a king; by giving ourselves away to another we take another to ourselves. No act can be simpler; and and in fact it is its simplicity at which we stumble.

Faith thus differs from belief, because in thus trusting and taking Jesus it becomes a tie of union. It makes me one with Jesus and him one with me forever. All my sins become his, to bear for me; all his righteousness becomes mine, to wear as a white garment. I lose myself in him. I take his name and call myself a Christian. I lose my life in him, and my will in his will. I look at this world and the world to come through his eyes, and become part of his body, a member obeying him as my Head. To guide a soul to Christ, we must first then get clearly in mind that the central thing about faith is this act of trusting, taking, tying to Christ. A child in years or in mind can understand this. Let even the dying sinner lay his hand in mine, as Christ's messenger to him, and "Lord Jesus, I trust thee, I take thee, as my Saviour and Lord, I give myself wholly to thee forever."

If that be the deep cry of a soul, even in the last hour, who can doubt that the answering "gift of God is eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord?"—*N. Y. Observer.*

Help Your Pastor,

Has not he a right to your assistance, and just as strong a claim on you as you can have on him for pulpit instruction and pastoral oversight? Before you ever utter another croak about the condition of things in the church, turn your eye-glass from the pulpit to the pews, and see whether the causes of spiritual dearth may not lie quite as much with the people as with their minister. Granting that you ought to help your pastor, how can you do it?

There are scores of ways in which you can strengthen his hands and cheer his heart. First of all, do unto him as you would that others do unto you; put yourself in his place. He cannot always strike twelve in his sermons, any more than you can always make a shrewd bargain, or finish a piece of work quite up to your promise. You do not like to be unreasonably censured: no more does he; and when you are scolding your minister, you are discrediting a servant of your Lord, and obstructing his work. Supposing him to be a conscientious pastor and doing his best, he has a right to your generous appreciation. If you have just ground for criticisms, take them to his study, and not to your neighbors' houses. You may help him by the first method, provided that you go in a frank, fraternal spirit.

2. For a better purpose than for criticisms, you may visit him or ask him to your own house—and that is to devise plans of doing good. Partners in business consult often; you are a spiritual partner with your minister. It is your church as much as it is his; it really belongs to him who owns you both. Just as clearly is it your duty to labor for the master as it is his duty. Put your heads and hearts together, and devise plans for usefulness and the best methods to make them successful. If he sets on foot a feasible plan for quickening church-life, aiding the Sabbath-school, increasing the prayer-meeting, or reaching the unconverted, then back him.

3. A minister who is really worthy of the name, can stand an empty purse better than an empty pew or an empty prayer-meeting. It is a disgrace to a church that he should be allowed to suffer from either, but the spiritual emptiness affects the most keenly. Perhaps your pastor is wondering what has become of you on the evenings of your devotional meetings. The better man or woman you are, the more you are missed; the worse you are, the more you need to go. It may be that your pastor is disheartened by the emptiness of your seat on the Sabbath. He has prepared carefull a discourse for your benefit; you lost it; both he and you suffer from that absence. For one I am ready to confess that I have never made any converts to the truth in an empty pew, and never have delivered a sermon loud enough to awaken a parishioner who was dozing at home, or strolling off to some other church. If a good reason keeps you at home, send a substitute; invite a friend who seldom hears the Gospel to go and occupy your seat. Your pastor gets a hearer, and the hearer may get what will save his soul.

4. Follow up the appeals, invitations and counsels of the pulpit with your own efforts for the conversion of sinners. The pastor is trying to draw souls to Jesus; pray do not draw the other way. If one of your family, or one of your Sabbath-school class comes from the sanctuary thoughtful and tender, then aim to deepen that impression. Draw with your minister; follow up his efforts with your own. But the downward pull of your trifling talk, and unkind criticisms, or your inconsistent conduct, may be an overmatch for the upward lift of his discourse. Co-operate with Christ's ambassador in the grandest and most vital work that man or angel can covet, the work of saving immortal souls. Who doubts that if all our church members preached Christ as faithfully in practice and in personal efforts as our average ministers preach him in the pulpit, the spiritual droughts would give place to the glorious harvests?

5. A single sagacious and earnest helper is a rich blessing to a pastor. But several scores of them are still better. If he leans all the time on Aaron and Hur, then the rest of the flock get lazy themselves, and censorious towards the two men who occupy the leading position; and what shall the minister do when Aaron is sick, or Hur is absent on business? That is not a healthy church in which all the work, all the giving, and all the praying, are done by half a dozen, even though the men are Calebs, and the women are Tabithas. It is the pull of the whole church that brings the blessing.

This touches the very core of the question, "How shall I help my pastor?" Pray for him, pray with him, and practice as you pray. Peter's powerful discourse at Pentecost was preceded by a powerful prayer meeting. Saturday evening wrestlings with God in a certain church brought heart-breaking sermons on the next morning, until a revival shook the whole congregation. What your minister wants is spiritual power. That is God's gift; help him to plead for it. The mightiest minister who ever trod this earth since Christ's ascension, was not ashamed to say. "Brethren, pray for us."—*Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler.*

"Though It Be a Cross."

The great congregation is waiting before the Lord in his house. The minister reads with solemn emphasis the weighty words of a familiar hymn. A multitude of voices take up the words and the melody, and the thrilling burst of inspiring song fills the room:

> "Nearer my God to thee,
> E'en though it be a cross
> That raiseth me."

These are the words they sing—words full of passionate desire after the living God, and breathing a spirit of loving devotion and complete submission. How many of the singers know and feel what they are saying to the Lord? Do they know that to be raised up nearer to God on a cross is painful? Do they count the cost of crucifixion in their desire to be lifted near to the heart of the loving One?

Here are the youthful, the gay, the merry, who hardly know what a cross or a sorrow means. Their laughing lips have never tasted the cup of wormwood and gall. Their shining eyes have seldom been dimmed with other tears than those of joy. What can they know of that path of pain by which chastened souls rise nearer to God? O, it is a terrible thing to say, "Even though it be a cross that raiseth me!" Perhaps they would turn back with a shudder if they saw the cross before them.

Here are also mature christians who have borne the burden and heat of the day. They have suffered with Christ in the fellowship of love and service. Do even they realize what they are singing? Nearer to God—nearer at any cost of sacrifice and—nearer through sorrow's sharpest discipline. Are they "able to drink of that cup" which the Master pressed to his pallid lips in the days of his agony?

There can be no doubt that infinite fellowship with God is worth infinitely more than any thing and all that it can cost. It would be worth purchasing even at the cost of life itself. In prisons, and exile, in tortures and deaths, have multitudes rejoiced in the blessedness of that wonderful fellowship with which God so richly overpays our poor human sacrifices and losses and pains. Nothing is worth keeping that hinders the soul's approach toward God. The best things become dross when they shut out the true riches from the heart.

Then let the beautiful heart-song be sung. There is no way of approach to God so dark that he will not light it with joy. There is no cross of crucifixion so cruel that he cannot make it more than tolerable, and the higher it is the nearer it will lift the sufferer toward God. Never can we doubt his great love to us, or fear the outcome of his discipline.

> Still all my song shall be,
> Nearer my God to thee.

—*Evangelical Messenger.*

—Twelve years ago, on Eromanga, one of the New Hebrides, there were only a dozen church-members; now there is not a heathen on the island.

Supremely Happy.

"Supremely happy!" These were the dying words of a very distinguished man whose name will long be remembered with honor throughout the British Empire—the late Lord Lyndhurst.

The son of an American painter, John Singleton Copley rose to eminence as an English lawyer and statesman. He possessed intellectual gifts of a high order and was a brilliant orator. Lord Brougham spake of him as "immeasurably superior to all his contemporaries, and indeed to almost all who had gone before him." Mr. Gladstone testifies, "Of all the intellects I have ever known, his, I think, worked with the least friction." His talents won for him conspicuous and enduring influence. He became Chief Baron of the Exchequer, also Master of the Rolls. Three times he filled the highest seat in the legal profession, holding the Great Seal as Lord Chancellor of the Realm. For more than thirty years he was supreme in the House of Lords; and, even after he had passed his eightieth year, his speeches displayed marvellous freshness, unabated vigor of mind. A more successful, splendid career is not chronicled in the history of our nation, and it was achieved by plodding industry, high character and pure intellect.

Have we, then, in these the elements of happiness? Is there in the story?—thus far told—the secret of that death-bed rapture which found expression in the words "supremely happy?"

Not so. It was only in the closing years of his long life that this gifted man found true happiness, and it was found in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Well nigh four-score years had been spent ere he seriously studied the evidences of Christianity and reached a firm conviction of the truth of revelation. Thence he was a humble believer in Christ, a loyal disciple of the divine Master, an earnest confessor of the faith.

"Because Jesus Saved Me."

There was once a little girl, whose name was Lucy, playing upon the banks of a mill race. By and by Lucy lost her balance and fell into the stream and was about to drown. Just then an old gentleman, whom Lucy called "Uncle Henry," happened to be near, and seeing her danger, sprang into the water to save her life. Lucy at once threw her arms around his neck, and clung to him until she was safe again upon the shore.

Some years afterward, when little Lucy had grown up to be a woman, almost, a revival of religion began in the church she attended. During the meeting Uncle Henry found her one day in great distress of mind, and said to her, "Lucy, what's the matter with you?" when she replied, "O, Uncle Henry! I feel that I am lost, for I am such a great sinner." "Well," said he, "Lucy, don't you mind the time you were about to drown, and how you clung to me and I saved you? Now cling to Jesus just like you did to me, and he will save you."

Lucy, however, was not willing, just then, to cast her helpless soul on Jesus, but left the church that day with a burdened heart. Howbeit, Uncle H.'s words, "Cling to Jesus and he will save you," kept sounding in her ears. The next day she came to church her face was beaming with joy, and she was singing praises to the Lord, and her first words when she saw Uncle H. were, "O, Uncle Henry, I am so happy." "What makes you so happy, Lucy?" said he. "Because," answered Lucy, "Jesus saved me."

Now, dear children, cling to Jesus just like little Lucy did, and he will save you. —*A. J. McCoy.*

Something Has Gone Wrong.

"Why, that's not four o'clock! I'm certain that it cannot be so late," exclaimed Minnie, starting from the seat on which she had been amusing herself with a book, while her work lay neglected beside her. "I looked at the great clock not ten minutes ago, and I'm sure that the long hand had not reached quarter past three."

"Oh, did you not know that something was the matter with the great clock?" replied her aunt, who, with her bonnet and shawl on, had just come down stairs, prepared to accompany her on her walk. "Since yesterday it has gone quite wrong; it strikes one hour, and points to another. I think that the hands must be loose."

"Something has gone wrong indeed!" cried the child, with impatience, "and I will never trust it again!"

She looked up and saw a quiet smile on the face of the lady.

"Aunt, what are you thinking of?" she asked, quickly.

Her aunt glanced down at the unfinished seam, from which the needle and thread hung dangling down.

"Did you not promise to have that ready before four! said she.

"Yes," replied Minnie, looking a little ashamed; "but—but—"

"But there is somebody, I fear besides the great clock, whose hands are at fault; who is swift to promise, and slow to perform—whose words say one thing, and actions say another. Shall I repeat your words, Minnie, and say, Something has gone wrong indeed, and I will never trust her again?"

Dear young reader, keep this in mind, that our words and our actions should agree together, as the hands of a good clock with the chime of its bell. Never make a promise rashly; but, if once made, let no pleasure, no feeling of indolence, tempt you for a moment to break it. Let no one ever be able to say in speaking of the word which you had given, but not kept, "something has gone wrong indeed, and I will never trust him again."—*Children's Record.*

After Many Days.

An old woman of eighty wished to become a Christian. But there was difficulty in the way, So she asked several friends to come with the minister and talk with her. She admitted the truth of all they said, but something held her back.

Said the minister: "Why not give yourself now, within ten minutes!

O, she could not!

"Why not?"

She wanted time she said; it was too sudden. Ten minutes! O no! she must have time to think about it.

"You are old," said the minister; "how long have you been thinking about it already?"

She paused a moment, and then said slowly: "Fifty years."

"Fifty years!" cried the minister! "and yet you want more time! Isn't fifty years enough?"

That was a new way of looking at it. Fifty years, indeed!

"What shall I do?" she eagerly asked.

"Do nothing," was the answer; but leave all with God. Let us pray to him to lift the burden."

So they prayed; and suddenly, when she no longer pleaded for time, light came through the darkness, the burden rolled away, and like a little child, the old woman entered the kingdom.—*Congregationalist.*

Christian Mothers.

Much is said and written about the value of a mother's influence, for either good or evil, but it is a subject which can never be exhausted. The following incidents are given by a writer of the *Christian Advocate:*

A young man was about leaving his home for a boarding-school. Though carefully trained, he had not as yet given his heart to God. The pastor of the family had presented his young friend with a copy of the Bible. His mother reminded him of the many times they had read the word of God together, and told him that not a day would pass without her earnest prayers in his behalf. These few loving words, spoken just as he departed, made an indelible impression. During the first month of the term he entered upon a Christian life—a life that has been spent ever since in God's service. Never can he forget those words. Looking back into the years—long since gone—he has a blessed vision of her face; he seems, even still, to enjoy her presence. Oh, who can measure the influence of a Christian mother in molding the character of her children!

The Rev. Mr. Leland, professor in a theological seminary, Columbia, S. C., once remarked that ninety-nine of the one hundred students in that institution testified that their earliest religious convictions came just in that way. Two hundred and fifty young men, in a recent convention, gave a similar testimony. It was an impressive sight when almost the entire number, rising to their feet, acknowledged the wonderful power of that religious instruction which had been imparted by their Christian mothers. Very recently a theological student said, in our hearing, that "the knowledge of a mother's daily intercessions in his behalf was a stimulus to study such as words could never properly reveal."

The Unruly Member.

A lady contributor discourses eloquently in *The Christian at Work* upon this "thorn in the flesh" of the church to which she belongs. Of course, the unruly member of whom she speaks belongs to a Presbyterian church—we never knew of any such person belonging to a Baptist church.

We have a man in our church who might most properly be classed as an unruly member. So fond is he of leading off in party strife and debate, that if he himself constituted the church—its preacher, elders, deacons, trustees and members—he would get up a division and take sides immediately. When he first united with the church—not ours, for he brought a letter to us—he states that it was expressely stipulated that he should have the privilege of dancing and card-playing if he wished. Not that he then knew how or cared to do either, but that he might be free to have his own way if he chose. Gough tells of a man who, in always arraying himself in opposition to all others, fell back on old Noah as a precedent, saying, "Since the time of Noah minorities have been eminently respectable." I have often thought our unruly member must have been that man.

If the church, as a body, gets up a scheme of work—be it a series of meetings, Christmas-tree, sociables, prayer-meetings or church visitation, or a plan to pay off the church debt or build a new house of worship—he always arrays himself against the proposed plan, in one or all of its details, in a strong minority of one; for his wife doesn't always side with him, and even if for peace sake she does, the wife of such a man would never be allowed to consider herself but a small fractional part of the "one" that man and wife are said to be.

Our church is, as a body, devoted to their pastor, and consequently our unruly member, from constitution and principle, is against him; and, not content with speaking slightingly of him, he even starts a scandal, that he may work up a public sentiment against him among outsiders. What shall we do with him? Is there any church lacking backbone and needing a leader? Such men never die, so he would make a first-class ruling elder, chosen for life. You can have him, for the asking. Speak all at once, O needy, desirous churches, for there is enough of "rule or ruin" in our unruly member for a dozen of you.

—No ship drifts into the harbor. The ocean of life has many a hidden current, many a hidden storm; and he who would win port at last must stand to his helm, while his ship drives on through opposing currents and against contrary winds. The perils of the voyage are very real; the sailor sails on a sea that is strewn with wrecks. Here drifts a battered hulk which was once a gallant ship; but now, helm and compass lost, she is driven on by wind and wave to the terrible shores, from whose cruel rocks and savage breakers she shall not escape. There float the spars and cordage of a richly laden bark—too richly laden—which has sunk into the depths in the very midst of her course. In this sea nothing drifts except to the shores of destruction; and few ships come into port which have not batteled long with the angry head-winds. Pleasant weather there may be in the voyage of life, but never weather so pleasant that the hand may leave the helm, or the eye the compass. Where there is least peril of storm, there may be the most peril of being carried away from the right course by an unnoticed current. Keep, then, the eye upon the compass, the hand upon the rudder. That is the only sure way of arriving at the desired haven. To let go the helm and to allow the ship to drift before the winds and waves, may seem to be the easiest, the most natural, even the most enjoyable thing to do; but a voyage which is conducted on that mistaken principle is sure, sooner or later, to end on the cruel rocks, on the treacherous sands, or in the devouring sea.—*S. S. Times.*

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