

The Religious Intelligence

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That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ—PETER.

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Religious Selections.

The Twofold Promise.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It has often been the privilege of the writer, in visiting the families of the poor, to see this twofold promise verified in a most impressive manner.

I called, one day, upon two aged Christian women, in different neighborhoods,—strangers to me, and to each other. The first lived in one of those plain buildings designed for renting to several families. Her room was small, but cheerful. Pots of flowers stood near the window, through which the morning sunlight was streaming. The curtains were snowy white, and piles of books and papers were neatly arranged upon the bureau and table. The lady herself I found to be exceedingly deaf, so that it was difficult to converse with her. Nevertheless, she appeared very cheerful; and on my inquiring whether she did not find her deafness a great deprivation, she replied, "Why, yes;—that is, it was at first. I did so miss hearing the sermon on Sundays; but now I feel better about it. I go to church, and there I have the prayer-book, and can follow the prayers and hymns, and can hear the singing some; and I love to go. Besides, I feel so glad that I am not blind. I would a great deal rather be deaf than blind!"

Further conversation convinced me that not only in this, but in her other trials, she truly enjoyed the presence and support of the great Comforter.

On the afternoon of the same day, in a house of similar class, up two flights of dark and narrow stairs, I found the other aged woman. Her room, though an attic chamber, was neat and comfortable. She was herself totally blind. Her voice was pleasant, and when she grasped my hand I felt that I was welcome; yet when I looked at her pale face and sightless eyes, I was for the moment saddened, and hardly knew what to say.

"Have you been long blind?" I asked.
"Oh! yes, many years."
She then told me the touching story of her sickness, which resulted in the loss of her sight, and assured me that her peace was like a river, as it had been for the most part, ever since; and when I asked her, somewhat doubtfully, "Are you not sad when you think you shall never see again?" she replied, cheerfully, "Why, no, I don't think of it much. In my dreams I never seem to be blind, and folks say they think I should want to dream all the time; but I tell them, no; I have a great deal to be thankful for. On Sunday a little girl leads me to church; and I can hear the prayers, the hymns, and every word of the sermon. When my Christian friends call, though I can not see them, I can hear all they say; and I am so glad I am not deaf. I would a great deal rather be blind than deaf!"

I was struck with these beautiful examples of the power and value of religion. Here were two aged saints, of whom this was almost the sole earthly possession. To the one, the voices of friends, the cheering laugh, of childhood, the singing of birds, and the thousand melodies of nature, are all hushed. On every noonday has fallen the stillness of midnight, yet with her there are no wants and no murmurs. The Lord wills it, and his will has become hers. Therefore, her soul makes music for itself, singing ever with sweet content, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

To the other the light of the sun is for ever darkened, and with it all the glory with which it irradiates this beautiful world. The faces of her friends are hid from her sight. Here is a night to which there comes no earthly morning. Yet he who in the beginning commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in her heart. The windows are shut, but the house is lighted. She is not only patient in her tribulation, but she glories in it, as thereby enabled to render a more perfect service in the sanctuary of God; while she anticipates the hour when the scales will fall from her eyes, and in a "temple not made with hands" she shall behold for herself the King in his glory.

And this, dear reader, is the religion which is offered in the gospel to you. It is the "pearl of great price," which, once attained, can never be lost, or in any way alienated from its possessor. He who believes in a crucified Saviour, and rests in his promises, makes friends who will never be estranged, acquires possessions the title to which will never be weakened,—he lays up treasure where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

Dear Reader, have you made this provision for the future? Have you by faith in Jesus appropriated the twofold promise, and are you finding godliness profitable in the life that now is, and confidently expecting that it will be profitable in the life which is to come? If not, surely a sad prospect is before you. Granting that your life, which is but as a vapor, may be lengthened out for many years, old age with its infirmities is still approaching, and will soon be upon you. Earthly friends, though they remain faithful to the last, will die. Earthly possessions, sources of happiness when properly used, are unreliable and often vanish in the using.

There is a time coming, when, instead of look-

ing hopefully forward into the future and expecting worldly joys and pleasures, you will be viewing them as past. "Those that look out of the windows shall be darkened,—the doors shall be shut in the streets,—desire shall fail." What, dear reader, will you do then?

Oh, how abject is the poverty of an aged, infirm, impenitent man! In contrast with the condition of these afflicted but happy Christians, whose story has been here told, how pitiable the state of those who are similarly afflicted, but who are without these consolations of the gospel!

Impenitent reader, let this appeal come home to you. However light-hearted and joyous you may appear to others, are you truly happy? Is your soul at peace? Have you no craving desires unsatisfied? Can you think of your present character, and look forward to the future with hopefulness, calmness, and assurance? Is there not, rather, a "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation?"

Pause then, in your course, and consider well the question,—"What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Confess your sin with an humble heart, and seek forgiveness through the blood of Christ. Then you will find peace,—peace with your own conscience,—peace with the world,—peace with God,—solid peace, such as the world can not give and can not take away.

"Hail, sacred gospel! heavenly light! whereby we live with comfort, and with joy; and die; And view, beyond that gloomy scene, the tomb, A life of endless happiness to come."

Joy in the Sanctuary.

There was to be preaching at a school-house somewhat more than a mile from the village on Thursday evening. It was appointed mainly for the benefit of the families who were employed in the manufacturing establishment in the vicinity. Before sunset Mrs. Holmes, a widow well advanced in life, was seen walking slowly as she was wont in consequence of her lameness, in the direction of the school-house. All who saw her well knew whether her feet were tending.

She was going, after the fatigues of a day spent in incessant labour, to refresh her body and spirit by listening to the Word, and uniting in prayer with such of the people of God as might assemble.

"Mr. Holmes is on her way to the meeting," said Mrs. Ellis. "If there is a person in the world who enjoys going to meeting, it is Mrs. Holmes."

"A great many persons make their religion consist in going to meeting," said Mr. Sanders, who was by no means remarkable for strict attendance on public worship.

"That is not the case with Mrs. Holmes," said Mr. Ellis. "She carries her religion with her at all times."

"She can't practise it at all times," said Mr. Ellis.

"Because she can't be praying, and singing psalms, and talking piously all the time. She must save a part of the time, and be elsewhere than at meeting."

"In order to lead a religious life, it is not necessary that one should always be praying and singing. There are many other duties to be performed. When I said Mrs. Holmes always carried her religion with her, I meant that she always aimed to do right—to please God in all things."

"That is all very well," said Mr. Sanders, preparing to take his leave, for he was not fond of conversing on religious subjects.

It will be seen that he had very inadequate ideas of the nature of religion. He thought that religion consisted in the performance of certain so-called religious duties, such as prayer and praise, whereas it consists, so far as duties are concerned, in the subjection of the whole life, that is, of all the acts of life, to the will of God.

"Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Mrs. Holmes did indeed find great enjoyment in the public and social worship of God. She had few earthly sources of comfort. She was dependent upon the labour of her own hands for support. She had a son who lived at a great distance from her and manifested but little affection for her. Her joy was not in earthly things, but in the sanctuary. There she met with God. There she received strength to endure. There she felt that she had friends and kindred. Alas for those to whom God's sanctuary is not a source of joy!

Only Believe.

Sinner would you now be saved? Then only believe; that is all. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The direction now is, not,—take up the subject of religion in earnest, study the scriptures, take time for serious reflection and prayer, do some preparatory work; but simply believe now, this very hour, on the Lord Jesus Christ, and instantly you shall be saved. The jailer closed in at once with the condition and assurance, and was saved, and so may you. It is simply to take Christ Jesus at his word, and trust yourself to him, believing that he is both able and willing to save you.

If there was any doubt either as to his ability or willingness you might wish some show of reason delay; but can you doubt either? His ability, can you question this? Is he not able to save you no matter how enormous your guilt? Nothing is too hard for him. He has "all power in heaven and earth." "His blood cleanseth from all sin." "He is able to save them

to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Is there anything beyond the uttermost? While on earth in his lowly estate, he recalled the dead to life, in support of his claim to be the Saviour of the world—and spoke peace and pardon to murderers and harlots and adulterers and blasphemers who believed on him; and so he will speak pardon to you the moment you believe.

And can you question his willingness? Did ever a syllable drop from his sacred lips calculated to raise a doubt of his willingness to save the vilest of the vile? What has he actually done to save sinners? He laid aside the glories of his divine nature, left the hallelujahs of the bright worlds of bliss, took upon himself poor fallen human nature, was born of a woman, spent a life of toil and weariness, and was so poor that he had not where to lay his head—agonized in the garden of Gethsemane—suffered himself to be bound, scourged, spit upon, and at last to be nailed to the cross—there to die as an atonement for sin. O would he have done all this for the salvation of sinners, and yet reject any poor sinner who would come to him for mercy?

Your warrant to believe on him is, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Then only believe; give up cavilling—doubting—distrusting. He does say, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." And "him that cometh"—no matter who he is, how vile he is, and how much he deserves hell,—"him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

With the simplicity of a little child then, just believe that Christ means what he says, and trust your soul to him. Take him at his word; he cannot deny himself, and your salvation is absolutely sure, no matter how enormous your crimes or aggravated your guilt.

Do not stop now to study out the mysteries of redemption, and to understand every thing about the plan; you have not an hour to lose; you do understand the offer; here it is—an instant full, free, pardon for all your sins however numerous, for Jesus' sake.

Stay not till you are better; the atonement of Christ satisfies God—He says so,—that is enough,—leave it there,—only believe he can and will save you, and trust yourself to him. You are on a sinking wreck,—a boat approaches and offers you rescue;—a boat seems safe, you believe that it is safe, and actually trust yourself to it—you go on board; and while on board you do nothing; simply hold on—that is all—you trust to the boat to keep you from sinking and to take you to shore. Just so, sinner, you must venture on Christ, and trust him to save you just as you are, with all your guilt and villainy—saying with a fixed and determined purpose,

"Just as I am, and waiting not To rid my soul of one dark blot, To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God I come."

In his blessed word we read—"He every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters." "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "Whoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely." "Behold now is the accepted time—behold now is the day of salvation."

Are these things so? Then sinner only believe; that is all; trust Christ now that he will do what he says, and you are a saved sinner, no matter who you are or what you are. Infinite truth and Almighty power stand pledged for your salvation, if you only believe. Now sinner, before you lay down this trust, simply trust Christ that he will do what he has said—that is all.

Great Occasions Wanted.

There are many who may be said to stand all the day idle, not because God has not told them to work in his vineyard; but because they are waiting for great occasions. They would work provided some high occasion worthy of their abilities or position should offer.

They do not follow the example of Christ. He never waited for eminent occasions. The greater portion of his recorded efforts were put forth under ordinary circumstances. He did not want higher occasions than the Father gave him.

Those who wait for great occasions seldom, if ever accomplished anything for Christ. They are not quite ready for the occasion, though they are waiting for it. Their spirit were not in tune in consequence of not having been active. The occasion was past before they were ready to put forth exertion.

A plain pains man removed into a very sparsely settled portion of the country. He had been remarkable for his religious activity when he lived at the East. After he had resided in his lonely dwelling for a year or two, a friend from his former place of residence, as he was on his way to the far West, stopped with him for the night.

"I presume," said the visitor, "you don't find opportunities for doing as much in a religious way as you did when you lived in D. You had a great many calls for your services there."

"I don't think," replied the host, "that any one who desires to do good will ever find any lack of opportunities. I have not been idle, for a moment in consequence of a lack of opportunity. I have been idle but never from necessity. God tells every man to work in his vineyard, and he always takes care that he shall have plenty to do. It is with the Christian as it is with the farmer. If he has a mind to

work, he can always find enough to do. A man must not pick and choose what he will do, and refuse to work unless he can find something to do which is just to his taste. He must do what God throws in his way."

To men of this spirit all occasions are great occasions—great because appointed by the infinite God, great in consequence of the eternal interests involved.

The true laborer in God's vineyard is not the man who is waiting for great occasions and for interesting work, but the man who seeks to know and to do the duty of the present day and the present hour.

Singular Preservation.

A few years ago, a gay lady in New England had occasion to go to a neighboring town, where she had often been before. Near the town was a stream which she had to go near and which at this period was high. With a view of shewing her courage to a young person whom she had taken with her as a companion, she went into the water with her horse, who unhappily went a different way to what she had designed and in a very little time she was thrown into the water.—had already sunk once or twice to the bottom, and felt that she was within a few moments of an eternal world, and that without being prepared for so great a change.

It so happened, that a young man in a neighbouring town had felt a powerful impression on his mind that morning, that he would visit this same town. He had no business to do, but forcibly feeling the importance of going there, he invited a young man to accompany him. Arriving at the side of the stream just as the young ladies were about to cross it, they saw it was improbable that they could find it, yet as the ladies went, they determined to follow.

By the time the young lady was thrown from her horse, the young men had nearly reached the opposite shore; but perceiving her danger, one of them immediately followed her on his horse and in the last moment of life, as it then appeared, she caught hold of the horse's leg; he thus secured her, and snatching hold of the other drowning young lady, she was saved also. After the use of proper remedies, they recovered; and the young gentlemen now perceiving the design of their coming from home, and that it was answered, returned back.

The impressions made on the mind of this young lady were permanent, and she was led to reflect on the sins she had committed against God, to pray for the pardon of her guilt, and to devote herself to the Divine service.—She embraced the mercy of the Lord, and believed in the Redeemer, who alone saves from the pit of destruction.

In the same town with herself lived a young gentleman, who had often spent his hours in vain conversation with her. On her return home, he went to congratulate her on her escape, and to his surprise, found she attributed her deliverance to the power of God, and urged him to seek that grace which they had both neglected. Her serious conversation was blessed to his conversion, and he became a faithful minister of Jesus Christ.

The Blessedness of obeying Parents.

The earthly parent is, for many years, the vicegerent of the heavenly one; so that the habit of honouring father and mother is a natural beginning to the obedience due to the Maker himself. Nor, under Christian teaching, can it often stop short of even Christian piety. The ordinary degrees of the lower grace may not always lead to the higher; but a hearty and persistent regard to the duties enjoined by the Fifth Commandment must always issue in hearty obedience to the Divine Author. A will broken in under this visible rule of the parent, can never long resist the highest commands of the God who has appointed it.

Here we see one of the most beautiful and beneficent provisions for our escape from the sin of our fallen nature. The child, before it can know its Creator, is made submissive to its authority in this delegated form, and thus trained to sentiments and habits that simply need direction to give them the character of religious feeling and piety itself. The transformation will require a hearty choice of the Supreme Parent as our own; but this is an act much more easily performed where the lower submission is the habit of one's life.

How deeply parents are concerned in this topic we need hardly say. For them to secure hearty obedience from their children is all but to ensure the true blessedness of these beloved ones for time and eternity. We, as parents, often determine the destinies of our children very early perhaps, in many cases, before they leave the nursery. Of what infinite importance that we should be and do all that may contribute to their hearty honouring us and affectionately obeying our just commands! And how cruel to make ourselves dishonourable by vice and folly—thus leaving the child's early virtue no place for its natural growth!—[Parish Visitor.]

Christ's Confidence of His Ultimate Triumph.

This, then, is the state of the case, as a mere matter of history: A young man destitute of resources, of patronage, and of influence, commits himself to an enterprise which, so long as he lives, is not appreciated or even understood. He is persecuted and scorned, deserted by his friends, be-

trayed by one of his disciples, falsely accused, and condemned to a disgraceful and torturing death. But, alone, with death before him, and without one earthly support, he calmly believes that the enterprise shall triumph, and that he shall reign in the minds and hearts of men!

Can this have been only human? Was there ever a manifestation of mere humanity like this? Can anything short of the union of divinity with this humanity account for the acts and states of Christ's mind?

This is not all: the narrative offers some additional facts. At the Last Supper Jesus told his disciples, as they sat around him, that the time of his death was near at hand. Were his confidence and courage shaken by the prospect? Did no fear disturb him—fear of the effect which his death might produce on the opinion of the world? Did no feeling of uneasiness rise within him as if, after all, he might fail? At all events, was he not anxious that the ignominious termination of his course might be concealed after he was gone? No, he was not; but with perfect composure he made provision that not only his death itself, but all its agony and its shame, should never be forgotten while the world lasted. "He took bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, This is my body broken for you; this do in remembrance of me." In like manner he took the cup, saying, This is my blood shed for you; this do in remembrance of me."

Was ever scenery like this! Can anything more touching, more sublime than this, be conceived? Was it ever heard of before or since that a person in the position of a malefactor took pains to preserve the memory of his disgraceful death? Jesus Christ, about to be crucified as a felon and a slave, commanded and provided that the fact should be remembered to the end of time—did so in the full confidence that he should at last triumph. And the fact has been remembered. This is the mystery—if he be not all that he claimed to be—this is truly more miraculous than anything ever so called more inexplicable on all natural principles. The fact has been remembered for eighteen hundred years, it is remembered at this day; and it has been and is remembered, not as a form, a time-honored custom, but minds have been won to Christ—human hearts have been and are inviolably attached to him.

Christ's assurance of triumph is a historical fact; his actual triumph for nearly two thousand years is no less historically certain; the two combined lead to one conclusion only. It is this—he was, as he claimed to be, divine; his religion is divine, the only religion which contains the indubitable proof, and presents to the world a real incarnation of divinity—God in man.—[Young's "Christ of History."]

The Test of Faith.

Do you fetch your joys from earth or heaven? From things unseen or seen? Things future or present? Things hoped for or things possessed? What garden yields you your sweetest flowers? Whence is the food that your hopes and comforts live upon? Whence are the cordials that revive you, when a frowning world doth cast you into a swoon? Where is it, that you repose your soul for rest, when sin or sufferings have made you weary? Deal truly, it is in heaven or earth? Which world do you take for your pilgrimage, and which for your home? I do not ask where you are, but where you dwell! Not where are your persons, but where are your hearts? In a word, are you in good earnest when you say you believe a heaven and hell? And do you speak, and think, and pray, and live as those that do indeed believe these things? Do you spend your time, and choose your condition of life, and dispose of your affairs, as a man that is serious in his belief? Speak out: do you live the life of faith on things unseen, or the life of sense on the things you behold? Deal truly, for your endless joy or sorrow doth much depend upon it. The life of faith is the certain passage to the life of glory; the life of sense on things here seen, is the certain way to endless misery.—[Baxter.]

The Open Door.

The daughter of a poor widow had left her mother's cottage; led astray by others, she had forsaken the guide of her youth, and forgotten the covenant of her God. She had entered upon that path of sin which leads down so quickly to the chambers of death.

Pervent, believing prayer, was now the mother's only resource, nor was it in vain. He who heareth the cry of the afflicted, heard the cry of that poor widow.

Touched by the sense of her sin, and anxious to regain that peace to which she was now a stranger, late one night the daughter returned home. It was near midnight, and she was surprised to find the door unlatched. "Never, my child," said the mother, "by night or by day, has the door been fastened since you left. I knew you would come back some day, and I was unwilling to keep you waiting for a single moment."

How does this simple story set before us the tender compassion and love of our Father in heaven, and his readiness to receive back his wandering ones! "Thou Lord art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." Psalm lxxvi, 5. Reader are you far from God? Does your own heart tell you that you have sinned against him? Are you afraid to think of his presence? Do you fear to meet him as your Judge? Do you fear that your iniquities will shut you up under the everlasting condemnation? O, remember now, at this moment, God sets

before you an open door! It is wide open both by night and by day. He will not keep you waiting a single moment, and his voice is heard calling to you, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i, 18. O, despite not the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God. Come back to him, trusting only in the name and blood of Jesus. Delay not till the day of grace is past, and the door of mercy is closed forever. It will be too late then: "When once the master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity."

The Rich Worldling.

How apt are many at the sight of a rich worldling, to envy him for what he hath; but for my part, I rather pity him for what he wants. He hath a talent, but it wants improvement; he hath a lamp, but it wants oil; he hath a soul but it wants grace; he hath the creature, but wants the Creator. In his life he floateth upon a torrent of vanity, which empties itself into an ocean of vexation; and after death, then "take this unprofitable servant bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness."—Where now is the object of your envy? It is not his silver that will now anchor him, nor his gold that shall land him. If he be worth envying, who is worth pitying? If this be happiness, then give me misery. Rather may I be poor with a good conscience, than rich with a bad one.

THE USE OF RICHES.

The good which is in riches lieth altogether in their use; like the woman's box of ointment, if it be not broken and poured out for the refreshment of Jesus Christ in his distressed members, they lose their worth. The covetous man may therefore truly write upon his rusting hoards, "these are good for nothing." He is not rich who lays up much, but lays out much; for it is all one, not to have as not to use. I will therefore be the richer by a charitable laying out, while the worldling shall be the poorer, by his covetous hoarding up.

Yet I will not Forget thee.

A man became embarrassed, through the agency of another, in his pecuniary affairs.—There was danger that the comfortable farmhouse and its adjoining acres, which were designed to support him in the decline of life, would be taken from him to satisfy the demands of the creditors of another. In his distress, he thought of one with whom he was very intimate in early life. They were boys together, went to school together, approached manhood together. They were regarded by all as most intimate friends. When one left to make a fortune in the great city, men said: How will the other get along without him?

For a time after their separation, they kept up a correspondence; but B's letters became gradually less frequent, and at length ceased altogether, as did also his visits to his native place. In his distress, as was said above, Mr. C. thought of his early friend. He resolved to go to the city to his early friend, and lay the case before him, feeling sure that he would render him the necessary aid.

He found him in his stately mansion. He was coldly received—so coldly, that he did not make known his errand, but returned with an aching heart to his home. His friend had forgotten him.

There is one who never forgets those who loves. He loves them with an everlasting love. Nor time nor change of circumstances can cause him to forget.—[N. Y. Observer.]

Taking God's Name in Vain.

His different is the estimate which God places upon certain sins from that which man places upon them. No instance of this, perhaps, is more marked than that of profanity. It is difficult to make a worldly man feel that there is anything seriously wrong in taking God's name in vain. In regard to other sins, such a man is sensitive enough. Circulate a report of him that he steals, for instance, and that he lies. How soon his blood is up. He is ready to prosecute you for slander, or he may even make an assault upon you. But report of him that he swears in conversation! He may think you officious perhaps, in meddling with his personal habits at all, as he would if you were to report of him that he was not cleanly, or that he halted in his gait, or that he was awkward, or not good looking. But as to being seriously angry at all, he would think it absurd. Men of the world sometimes, indeed, consider profanity vulgar. They condemn it, as the world condemns bad grammar. It is something showing want of cultivation. But that is about the extent of their convictions on the subject.

How differently is this matter regarded in the Scriptures. Among the first commands of the decalogue is an express prohibition against profaning God's name. So, also the very first petition which Christ puts into the mouth of his disciples is a prayer that God's name may be hallowed. Before we pray for daily food, before we pray for the pardon of our sins, before