

CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION.

Malachi writes: "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord harkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels."

In reading this wonderful announcement on the last page of the Old Testament, we feel as Bunyan did, when in his dream he saw Christian and Hopeful, welcomed by angels in the celestial city. "Which, when I had seen I wished myself among them." Who would not wish to be among those to whom God listens, whose names he writes in a book of remembrances, and whom he calls his jewels? Who, then, are those highly favored ones, and why are they thus favored? They fear the Lord and they talk to one another about him. They are Christians, and they are social Christians. They fear the Lord; that is the definition of a true believer, all through the Old Testament. Three times it is said of Job that he feared God and eschewed evil. The pious Obadiah said to Elijah, "I, thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth." David says in the Psalms: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; that his goodness is laid up for them that fear him; that the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him; that his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." The idea of piety, then, is reverential love for God and filial trust in him. We do not love him as we love a human friend, or a child. He is our Maker and our King. Godly fear mingles with our love. Though he is merciful, yet he is holy, and we tremble before him lest we grieve a heart that is as pure and sensitive to evil, as it is long-suffering and slow to anger.

These saints of the olden time, having this fear of God in their hearts, "thought upon his name," and "spake often one to another." What did they speak about? Was it not what they thought about? Did not their meditations control their conversation? Such is the law of all frank and cordial social intercourse. We talk to one another of the things that we think about—that we are interested in. Talleyrand's cynical aphorism that the object of conversation is to conceal our thoughts is a libel upon human nature and upon God who made us in his own image. The prophet Zechariah says, "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor." And the Apostle Paul repeats the exhortation in his epistle to the Ephesians. Our Saviour himself said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Then it was because the hearts of these God-fearing men were full of God that they spake of him to one another, and spake often. They could not help it. It was as natural as for children when they meet to speak of the mother they love. When the fountain is full the stream will flow.

Then we see why God listens to the conversation of them that fear him. Their talking so often about him shows how irrepresible is their love for him. And he knows that conversation will quicken that love, as when coals of fire are brought together each blazes more brightly.

We have a beautiful illustration of God's interest in the conversation of his disciples in the xxiv. chapter of Luke. On the second day after the crucifixion Cleopas and a Christian friend went to a village called Emmaus, and as they walked side by side they talked about their dead and buried Lord. Where Jesus was we know not. But that conversation attracted him. He drew near and went with them. He drew near because the topic they were discussing drew him. And he talked with them, and opened to them the Scriptures, until their hearts burned within them. What Christ did when on earth, the Holy Spirit will still do in his name. If we want to have our hearts burn within us, if we want to have our love and faith kindled to a glow of holy rapture we should speak often one to another. Christian conversation opens the Scriptures. Bringing together views of truth, the results of our individual study and meditation, is as when a company go into a cavern or mine with torches, each has the advantage of the other's lights, and what would have been comparatively dim, if one were alone, is bright and brilliant when so many are together.

It is sometimes said that conversation is one of the lost arts. Instead of discussing great themes and great common interests when we meet, we only repeat stereotyped remarks about the weather, or canvass the latest local scandal or newspaper report. We toss the old topics to and fro with monotonous iteration, as players pitch and catch the same ball, hour after hour. There is too much truth in this criticism. And it is emphatically true of Christian conversation. We have cranks and bunnies in many of our congregations, and floating about from

church to church, who give us any amount of pious talk, Christian cant, and the froth of a shallow religious sentimentalism. But of men and women who can talk about Christ modestly, earnestly and lovingly, so as to interest and edify, alas, how few there are! If such only are to be made up as jewels in that day, small indeed will be the diadem representing this generation!

Our religion should reveal itself in our conversation both negatively and positively. First of all a Christian will avoid all irreverence. He will not make sacred things common. He will not repeat those silly jests in which Scripture words and phrases are travestied. Then, he will avoid all insincerity. He will speak, always, truth with his neighbor. He will not tell what are called "white lies" in business or in social life. And above all he will speak "the truth in love." He will be charitable. He will have not only an honest but a benevolent motive in all that he says. If he talks with a neighbor or a stranger it will be, not as a mere pastime, but with the desire and prayer that he may be able to say something that will do him good.

But the grace of God in the heart should not merely keep us from being irreverent, untruthful and uncharitable in our social intercourse. It should give us a positive influence and power. We all ought to be witnesses for God—living epistles—declaring by word as well as by deed, by loving admonition and exhortation as well as by example, the truth as it is in Jesus. The gospel was extended in apostolic times, not by ordained ministers only, but by laymen. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." Acts viii. 4. The apostles remained in Jerusalem. It was their converts, both men and women, who carried the new religion all over the east. There was a great deal of such evangelistic work as that of Aquilla and Priscilla, who took Apollos home with them, "and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." They did this because their hearts were full of love for Christ and for the souls of men. One reason, we fear, and alas, the great reason, why there is so little real Christian conversation in our day is that there is so little Christianity. But if we cultivate the habit of talking with one another about even the little we have, it will grow; the hearts of our brethren will be quickened and God will be honored. And then he will write our names in his book of remembrance and prepare a setting for us among his jewels.—*Interior.*

AS THE FATHER HATH SENT ME.

The death of our Lord on Calvary was not more tragic than his life was beautiful. His life was rendered beautiful especially by his unwavering devotion to the work which his Father committed to his hands. His life was one of incessant labor and toil. No one can read the record which God has given to us of his Son without feeling that there was an urgency about his work which never relaxed from the time of his public entrance upon it until he cried on the cross, "It is finished!" His death and resurrection open up to us the possibility of heaven; but his life shows us the worthy way which we, as his disciples, are to live on the earth. Jesus began his work in his early childhood, nor did he cease it until he laid his life down in voluntary sacrifice upon the cross. As a little boy, he said to his sorrowing parents when they found him in the Temple, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" From thence onward till he came forth to take up his public testimony and ministry, "he was subject to his parents." We do not need to draw on our imagination to persuade us that during those years he was as intent on pleasing his Father in heaven as he was in doing the will of his earthly parents. The same sublime spirit animated him in all his public life. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day." It was his "meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him." By this we know that, beside the high and heavenly sense of duty which energized his will, there was also a gladness of service in it all. He counted not his bodily comfort anything in comparison with doing his Father's will and in bringing the light of life to poor, darkened souls. While he lived he went about doing good; nor did he stay his hand from service to all who had need of his ministrations, either to body or soul, until he said in his last prayer, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He was the heavenly embodiment of that apostolic injunction: "Be instant in season, out of season." All seasons were reasonable to him; in labors abundant during the day; in prayers often during the night.

It is said by some that our Lord's life cannot be, in any practical sense, an example for us, since it is impossible for us to "follow in his foot-

steps." But, while we are amazed at the singleness of mind and heart with which he gave himself to his Father's business, and must see that in a measure it is impossible for us to serve God as he did, it is nevertheless true that he has told us in the most solemn way that, if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross and come after me." Moreover, almost his last words to his disciples before his ascension were in the form of a commission: "As the Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you." We may not avoid the responsibility of this command. That will be a suicidal policy which shall lead us to escape from a literal interpretation of these words. We may not indeed die as an atonement for the sins of the world; but we are not to count our lives dear to ourselves in the following of the will of God. We may not be able to heal the sick or raise the dead; but we may visit the sick and care for the dying; we may communicate the Word of Life to those who are dead in trespasses and in sins; and thus, with the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and the full Word of God in our hearts and on our lips we may even do greater works than he did. We may not turn water into wine, or a few loaves and fishes into bread and meat for a multitude; but we may bring what we possess and lay it at the Master's feet, and, taking it, as it were, from his hands, divide it in such a way that a multitude may be fed. We may be careful not to rob the laborer of his hire and a due proportion of the increase of his labor. We may do good, and communicate of our abundance. We may look, every man, upon our neighbor, for neighbor's good rather than for our profit. We may cultivate unselfishness and put the salvation of a soul above the accumulation of thousands of dollars for selfish purposes. We may learn to live in heaven while we are serving God on the earth. In a word, we may strive by communion with Christ, to catch his spirit and perpetuate it on earth. We may learn to be content with an inheritance reserved in heaven for us, and give our time and talent and all the increase of our fields to the spread of the Gospel and to the salvation of a lost world; for we are to light this world as he lighted it; we are to salt it with his word and spirit, and save it from its own corruption by the introduction of a stream of heavenly life and service.

Alas, after all that is being done, how little is being done, and how much there is to do on every hand. We are not unmindful of the great aggregate of accomplished work for Christ in the world; but we cannot be blind to the fact that, in proportion to the vast numbers of professing disciples, and the almost boundless means for doing good that remains in their hands, we are but feeblely carrying out the great command by which we are to replace and multiply the spiritual force of Christ's personal presence in the world. When we think of the nine hundred millions of dollars expended every year in our own land for rum, and the less than five millions given annually to the spread of the Gospel beyond the immediate fields covered by the home Churches, and remember at the same time that the great bulk of the wealth of this country is in the hands of Christ's professing disciples, we cannot but feel that we are largely recreant to our solemn trust. When we recall the fact that there are ten saloons going day and night the year round, (doing the Devil's work) where there is one church or mission station (closed four-fifths of the time), it does seem that we are not alive to our Lord's solemn words: "As the Father hath sent me into the world, so send I you." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. So shall ye be my disciples." We have done something, both as individuals and as organized bodies of believers; but can we truly say that, according to his word, we are really glorifying God and demonstrating our discipleship? "Fruit," "much fruit," "more fruit,"—this is the cumulative command. Are we heeding it? Are we planning for it? Are we giving all our best energies, all our surplus means, and all our best wisdom to the realization of this ideal of discipleship, and to the discharge of our solemn obligations as representatives and stewards?—*Independent.*

TO MY SON IN THE MINISTRY.

G. H. W.

THE MEASURE.

In trouble again? Yes? Well, if you want it, I'll try and help you. Changed your clothes? Well, you do look as though you were a man, and not a hot house plant, all your stiffness of backbone having concentrated in your shirt front. You look as though you could do something. But what seems to be up, now? Preached the gospel, I hope, last Sunday, and left out Declaration of Independence? Yes?

People are cold, don't have much life, piety at low tide—ah, is that it? Well, well, my boy, that is hard. I've been there myself, and I can sympathize with you from my heart. But do you know what I have learned on this line? Perhaps I'm old, my boy, and my words seem like echoes of old-fashioned days, and may not fit in these times; but I learned a thing or two that may just "help a little," and I'll be glad to give it to you, seeing that you have come to me for help.

You remember during the dark days of the war, much depended on the General. If he was full of fire and enthusiasm, it invariably followed that the soldiers were, and where the spirit of ease and comfort characterized the General, the soldiers weren't worth much. The Nineteenth Corps at Winchester came off victorious, because of the spirit of enthusiasm kindled by Sheridan's appearance, when all seemed lost. And do you know that I think the measure of the preacher will be the measure of the church? If he is full of enthusiasm for the work, it naturally follows that they will be. If he is dull and prosy, they will be ditto. Hold on now; don't be too quick! It is true; think it out as you will, you'll come to the conclusion that if you measure the preacher you've got the measure of his people. Many men complain of their fields, and it is largely their own fault. The field will be just what you make it. It narrows itself down to two facts: If the preacher be an earnest, enthusiastic, determined worker, he will either kill or cure a paralyzed field. He will do something, or fold his tent and go where he can work.

The preacher's life, my boy, as you are learning, isn't an easy one, altogether, but a dreadfully earnest one; and the sooner you face the thing squarely, and meet it with unglad hands, the better for you. The fact is, the people will be what you make out of them; they must catch inspiration and enthusiasm from you, very largely. They watch you closely; if there is a grave-yard look on your face, they too will be thinking of tombstones and other cheerful things! But if you are bright and hopeful and happy and cheerful and sunny, the rays from your face will fall on them, and they, also, will be happy.

Can't look what you don't feel? Then feel right. You haven't any business to feel otherwise. Judson had a little harder time than you, and when asked how bright the prospects were for the heathen in Burmah, said, joyfully, "As bright as the promises of God." I can see the old man's eyes flash fire as he says it with a ring. Get to feel that way, get down before God, and have a long talk with him; stay with him until you can come out like Moses, with a shining face—and your people will see it, feel it and be ready to go forward with you. This may not be according to strict orthodoxy; but then that word was never in the Old Book, which gives us to understand that both priests and people were pretty much alike.

Let me write out a perscription for you, which you can take regularly, and you need never fear from an overdose:

Josh. i. 5, 8, 9; Isa. xlv. 2; xlii. 10; Psalm xxxii. 8; xxxvii. 4, 5; Matt. vii. 7; John xv. 7; 2 Cor. ix. 8; Phil. iv. 10; with an unstinted measure of the power mentioned in Acts i. 8. Withal, a double portion of James i. 5. Dose: Mix with clear grit (be sure and get the right stuff), the oftener taken the better.

This remedy is a sure cure for the worst cases of spiritual chills and fever, which invariably culminates in the deadly disease called inertia, indisposition or the "malaria of indifference."—*National Baptist.*

UNCONSCIOUS SHINING.

At once we turn to Moses. "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with them." This is a grand feature of the grand occasion. The greatest man of his times returning to mingle with his fellows; the leader returning to his post, clad with the great honor of bearing to man the wondrous laws of God, and yet not knowing that his face is all aglow! "His face as it has been the face of an angel"—transfigured, may we say, yet obvious of it! Well may we study such a picture. Poor humanity is so prone to parade its honors, and even its goodness. All the more may we linger here—this is the truest, highest type of piety. Besides, what worthy ambition is weakened when such a picture is studied. "Let me be righteous, but not self-righteous; let me be greatly good, yet not glory in my goodness; let me shine, and, withal, be unconscious of the brightness."

Mingling with shining faces may bestir desire for such a face, but it is not obtained thus. "Go ye, rather, and buy for yourselves," Moses' bright face came to him in the mount "with the Lord." God's moral radiance is projected on the soul when He is communed with,

as the light of a lamp is upon the reflector; shining is the result. The vase becomes fragrant by contact with flowers in themselves fragrant.

There is a demand for unconscious shining; appreciation of it. One of the finest things said of Christ is, "That He could not be hid." His radiant spirit made Him a light unto the world. Phariseism disgusts. "Excuse us," people say, when one cries out, "Come see my zeal for the Lord." Nothing is more attractive than when one is morally great and doesn't know it: and esteem of the great one is all the more won because the winner had no talk of bringing it about.

An instance: Near the close of a summer a new comer found the entire company of a hotel preparing to give a *fete* in honor of a young lady who was about to leave them. Each had some farewell gifts ready for "Miss Betty." The stranger was curious: "This Miss Betty is very beautiful, no doubt," he asked his friend. "No, I think not; it never occurred to me, but I believe she is homely." "A great heiress, then?" "On the contrary, a poor artist." "Brilliant? Witty? Intellectual?" "No, indeed; she never said a fine thing. Neither is she learned, or clever or fascinating; but really she is the most lovable girl in the world. Not patrician, but Cæsar himself." "What is the charm?" Betty's friend looked perplexed. "I don't know," he hesitated, "unless it is that she never thinks of herself."

LIFE EVERLASTING.

A dear mother lay dying. For years past that hoary head had been the crowning glory home. In all the affairs of life her advice had been deemed precious, for had she not sought the wisdom that cometh down from above, and the confidence reposed in her judgment was but the evidence of the guiding hand. Though the trying period of young maternity, as through the ripper years of motherhood, and when at length others now matured had assumed the burdens it had been hers to carry, and age had silvered the locks and diminished the physical vitality, her trust in the dear Redeemer had deepened and strengthened until with the apostle, in cheerful assurance, she could say, "I know whom I have believed." Never had she appeared more beautiful than while waiting the summons to come up higher. Her children to the fourth generation had gathered around the bedside. The tenderness and love shown there were but the ripened fruit of her own planting in the years gone by. Grandmother was loved because mother had first been the all and all. As the last words were spoken to each in turn, in the realization that the parting would be for a little while only, one surprised at such calmness in the very face of the King of Terrors, exclaimed: "Why, this is not like death!" "Death!" said the departing saint, as a new light appeared to gleam in the dying eyes and a momentary strength was imparted, "death! why, this is life everlasting!" In a few moments the spirit had returned to God who gave it—the reality of the Christian hope, the comfort of a childlike trust in him who has promised us all things, both for this life and that come!

"Jesus thou Prince of Life,
Thy chosen can not die;
Like thee they conquer in the strife,
To reign with thee on high!"—*Irene.*

WORKING CHRISTIANS.

Learn to be working Christians. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." It is very striking to see the usefulness of many Christians. Are there some of you who know what it is to be selfish in your Christianity? You have seen a selfish child go into a secret place to enjoy some delicious morsel undisturbed by his companions. So it is with some Christians. They feed upon Christ and forgiveness; but it is alone, and all for themselves. Are there not some of you who can enjoy being a Christian, while your dearest friend is not, and yet you will not speak to him? See here, you have got work to do. When Christ found you he said, "Go to work in my vineyard." What were you hired for, if it was not to spread salvation?

What blessed for! O my Christian friends! how little you live as though you were the servants of Christ! How much idle time and idle talk you have! This is not like a good servant. How many things you have to do for yourself! How few for Christ and his people! This is not like a servant.—*McCheyne.*

There is no thorough and prosperous church-religion without family-religion; and there is no thorough and prosperous family-religion without personal-religion. Persons are the units both of the family, and of the church; and Christ saves and sanctifies us person by person.

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