

"FOLLOW THOU ME."

BY WILLIAM WHITE.

Most cheerfully I'll follow Thee,
Where'er Thy voice doth lead,
Contented, Lord, with Thee to be,
My help in time of need.

In all the changing paths of life,
Thy presence gives me aid;
In hours of darkness and of strife,
In brightness, and in shade.

I'll follow Thee when friends forsake,
When no sun shines above;
Only, dear Lord, let me partake
Of Thine unchanging love.

If, Lord, the way I may not see,
And fears should intervene,
Or doubt sometimes my portion be,
Speak, Lord, my Guide unseen.

I'll follow Thee from youth to age,
Through paths that bring delight;
Though all the powers of hell engage,
Thy word will chase the night.

Death's silent valley will I tread,
Until the voices sound;
From out the heavens overhead,
"Fear not," O love profound!

The way must surely lead to heaven,
For there my Lord has gone;
And by the tokens to be given,
I'll hail the eternal dawn.

—Ch. Advocate.

PURE RELIGION.

BY REV. C. H. ZIMMERMAN.

It is worthy of note that the only formal definition of religion given in the Scriptures makes personal contact and association with the needy indispensable. Modern custom places stress upon doctrinal soundness, zeal for the church, faithful attendance upon its ordinances. It does, indeed, give large sums for charity and for home and foreign evangelization, but it too commonly overlooks the fact that fellowship with the wretched and sinful for the purpose of relieving their wants and saving their souls, is essential to pure religion. It is not pleasant to cleanly, thrifty, cultured people to come in contact with rags and filth and ignorance, and we are apt to adapt our religion to our tastes, to associate exclusively with our own class, and give the sinner a wide berth. In direct opposition to this tendency to selfishness and clanishness which early appeared in the church, and is not yet wholly extinct, St. James declared: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the widows and the fatherless in their affliction and to keep himself unpolluted from the world."

According to this definition, the two elements of pure religion are practical philanthropy and holiness. The two are inseparable. They spring from the same source, the Spirit of God in the heart, and are the necessary expression of love for God and man, which is essential to the Christian character. No man can have that love for his kind which leads him to "visit," to associate and sympathize with the afflicted—"weep with them that weep"—and supply their spiritual and physical wants, without also having that love for God which purifies the heart. All genuine philanthropy is, therefore, Christian. There have been many who have sought popularity by identifying themselves with philanthropic schemes and giving largely to public charities; but no man has ever lived with and for the poor and made their cause his own as Christ did, without possessing his spirit.

On the other hand, no man attains personal holiness who has not a warm and active sympathy for the afflicted and wretched. The trouble with many is that they try to be holy without being philanthropic, to love God without loving man, to "keep themselves unspotted from the world" by refusing to mingle with the world. Holiness is not attained by self-seclusion, by shutting ourselves up to devotional books and exercises, and living in ignorance of the woe and want around us. Men do not acquire the mind that is in Christ by watching their own spiritual states and feelings, but by going out of themselves to think and work for others. "Pure religion is this, to visit," to go among the poor and suffering, and seek to lessen their griefs by personal sympathy.

The mistake of many who do not wholly ignore the needs of the poor is that they do not "visit." They give liberally for the relief of suffering, but are never the almoners of their own charity, and, what is more important, never feel that profound sympathy which comes from personal contact and acquaintance with grief. They know nothing of the most vicious and destitute by observation and visitation to their homes. To the worthy poor they give alms and such sympathy as is possible without much fellowship. The vicious may have alms, but no sympathy. Christ associated with both classes, and did not refuse to recognize the penitent Madalen who forced herself into the respectable company at Simon's feast. The standing reproach of the Pharisees was: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The disparity between his philanthropy and that which works only by proxy, which sends relief to a starving family, but refuses to go near them,

and shrinks with loathing from contact with their squalor and wretchedness, shows how far the latter comes short of pure religion.

The solution of the problem of city evangelization is to be found in this one word—visit. To the standing question of debates in synods, assemblies, conferences and evangelical alliances: "How shall we reach the masses?" the answer is, visit them. The question generally means, How shall we get the masses to go to church? The real problem is, how to induce the church to go to the masses. If you are an able-bodied Christian, you are as much bound to visit as is your pastor or city missionary. Do not attempt to quiet your troubled soul with the flattering unctious that it is enough for you to pay the pastor and missionary to visit. They cannot do your work; and you cannot discharge your obligation to the vicious and destitute by leaving them to do work which you ought to do, but will not do, because it is distasteful. On your plan the world would never have had a Saviour, for Christ would have delegated his work to some one else and sought to redeem a polluted world by proxy. And then the plan of redemption would have been about as effective as your methods of city evangelization. But he came himself; saved the world by contact with it; was made flesh and dwelt among us; took upon himself the form of a servant, and in his own divine person bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. So there must be contact, acquaintance, fellowship, sympathy of Christians with the people in the slums, in order to rescue and save them.

We need a revival of that religion which "visits," which brings the rich and poor together; which goes among the vicious as well as the virtuous poor, not always to give alms and advice, but to sympathize. "There are times," says Frederick W. Robertson, "when relief is an impertinence and advice an insult; times when the pressure of the hand and a glistening of the eye are more eloquent than gold. Visit, as a friend. What is wanted is sympathy."

The religion which visits is blessed in its influence, on visitor as well as the visited. Like mercy, which is a part of it, "it is twice blessed; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes." Joseph Cook says that personal intercourse with the wretched is "a two-edged method of action. Its chief merit is its reflex action upon a luxurious, soft, hammock-swinging, lavender Christianity." It is an excellent corrective of the evils of easy circumstances. It seems to counteract the false glow and glitter of life, and to prevent that selfish hardness which the heart gets from not being personally exposed to want. It gives an acquaintance with real sorrows which makes us ashamed of imaginary ones; forces us out of ourselves and leads to a genuine sympathy with the suffering which can be got in no other way. It is indispensable to true religion.—Interior.

CONTINUOUS SERVICE.

It would probably be impossible to find any Christian who has never spoken a single word or done at least a single deed for Christ. Were there such a man, we might reasonably question his relation to the kingdom of God. The first impulse of the young convert is to imitate John and Andrew, and bring others to the Master. Even in the case of the woman at the well, of those who simply hear, the disposition is to tell others about the Saviour. But the practical problem ever before the church, is how to systematize and make this service continuous. It is not uncommon for a whole church to be greatly aroused; to very generally engage in usefulness; some being awakened as a corps by the application of the galvanic battery; but the difficulty is, this ardor cools off, and there are long periods of inactivity. We frequently meet individuals willing for an active service for a brief season, who would, and do, hesitate to deliberately enroll themselves for continuous service through life. Again, many are inclined to build upon a brief record, sometimes a single act of service, and "rest upon their oars." In conversation, recently, with a very intelligent Christian gentleman, in expressing his purpose he said: "I was a member of a very large and active church in the city from which I came. I taught a Bible-class, was at the head of various kinds of special work, always attended the prayer-meeting and took an active part in everything that came along. But I have made up my mind to take a rest, and I do not intend to take a class in the Sabbath-school." This is not an uncommon illustration of a somewhat general disposition. The Scriptures, however, gave us no countenance for any such idea. The call of the Master is a call to life-service.

As the work is before us every day, there is a providential call to daily service.

We do not understand it to be required of us that we should so overwork as to endanger life or health—but there is little danger of that in the vast majority of instances. We are, however, reasonably expected to constantly work for our Lord up to the measure of our strength and opportunity. Without any limit as to time; the fact in the case suggesting continuity; the resolutions of Christians is to be, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men." The inspired word of God never uses an unnecessary word, and when "always" occurs, it is full of meaning. So the apostle gives us the countersign of the service when he says: "My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Enduring in Christian activity, faithful unto death, are prescribed conditions of wearing the crown of eternal life.

Sometimes there comes a special call to great activity; the claims of the service are so urgent that, although not weary in the work, we may become weary in the work. At such a time we have the example of our Saviour and his disciples, to whom the Master said, when "there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat, 'Come ye yourselves apart into the desert place and rest awhile.'" The closing word of this passage sets the limit, but continuous inactivity is incongruous with the idea of the Christian life.—Herald and Presbyterian.

CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

Mr. Spurgeon preached a singularly powerful sermon on Sunday morning, Oct. 17, so that it became literally true that out of his weakness appeared strength—for he was leaning on a staff, and was evidently very ill the whole time. It was Sunday-school day, and Mr. Spurgeon preached from Mark x. 13-16. The general subject dealt upon was that of the great sin of hindering the young from coming to Christ, and the discourse was divided thus: First, to describe it; secondly, to watch its actions; thirdly, to see how Jesus Christ condemns it; fourthly, to take a hint from that which Jesus says, in that he gives a word to all who come to him in such a way. Mr. Spurgeon, in dealing with the subject of the reality of a child's conversion, mentioned incidentally that if he were to deal with facts, and not with mere opinion, he could stand the whole morning in giving details of young children he had converted with during the present year—some very young. I have, he said, more confidence in the conversion and grace of children that I have received into the church this year, than I have in the conversion of the adults. I will go further than that. I have seen a deeper knowledge, and I have heard a clearer statement of the things of Christ from these dear children than from the elder folk. And, what may astonish you most of all, I have met with deeper spiritual experience in children of ten or twelve than I have in some men and women of fifty and sixty. "He is only a child who should be seen and not heard. He is always getting in the way." Some of you talk like that. God forgive you! When the grace of God comes into a boy he is more worth saving than some of you. It is infinite mercy on God's part to save some of you. Of what good can you be at seventy years of age, after you have done all you could for the devil? But as to these dear boys and girls, there is something to be made out of them. Mr. Spurgeon went on to urge that there should be more expectancy on the part of ministers and churches in respect to the conversion of children, and urged particularly the power and tenderness of Jesus Christ's love towards the young. We must all receive Jesus as a little child, or we shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. The child has no preconceived theories, no knowledge which it cannot give up; but it comes to Christ just as it is. I know, dear friends, you know a great deal. Throw it out of the window. You have made up your minds about a great many things. Unmake them. You are very sure about some things. Now just come with nothing at all, if you can. It is a very little thing to do. Come and say, "Lord, I am a know-nothing. I come to be taught." I abandon all my fancied knowing, to learn everything of thee." In closing, Mr. Spurgeon pathetically added, "I don't think there is a particle of flesh and bone in me but what is praying this morning. I long, pine, and cry to God that he may bless this brief word of mine to your conversion—you who have never looked to God and lived. Do as the children did when they came at his call and were folded in his arms. He will press you to his bosom in all the greatness of his love.—London Baptist.

LOST IN SIGHT OF HOME.

A few months ago, during one of the severe storms that visited Colorado, a young man perished in sight of home. In his bewilderment he passed and repassed his own cottage, to lie down and die almost in range with the "light in the window" which his young wife had placed there to guide him home. All alone she watched the long night through, listening in vain for the footsteps that would come no more; for, long before the morning dawned, the icy touch of Death had forever stilled that warm, loving heart. The sad death was made still sadder by the fact that he was lost in sight of home. How many wanderers from the Father's house are lost in sight of home, in the full glare of the Gospel light! They have the open Bible, overflowing with its calls and promises, the faithful warnings from the sacred desk, the manifestations of God's providence, all tending to direct their steps heavenward, and yet from all these they turn away, waiting for the more convenient season, and are lost at last in sight of the many mansions.—Forward.

"PRAY UNCEASINGLY."

"I was lately in company of one of our older ministers," said a young minister the other day, "one who has labored long and with much success in some of the most difficult fields of the Church. The object of my interview was to learn from him the secret of success with which it had pleased God to crown his ministry in positions and places where others had failed. Instead, however, of directly giving me the information I desired, he told me with great sorrow the reason why he had accomplished so little, and said with unaffected sadness, 'My young friend, the mistake of my life has been that I have not prayed more. I fell into the error of most ministers. I studied and preached. I worked and worried too much, and I prayed too little! Could I live my life over again, I would be more with God and less with men. I see it all now—what wasted years of unrest I have passed, how much of my life was my own doing and how little of God has been in my active ministry! I can now in the evening of my days only ask God to forgive my shortcomings, and to aid me in spending my few remaining years differently from the imperfect way in which I have served my Master.'"

ONLY TWO WORDS.

"Oh! if I were lucky enough to call this estate mine, I should be a happy fellow," said a young man. "And then?" said a friend. "Why, then I'd pull down the old house, and build a palace, have lots of prime fellows around me, keep the best wines and finest horses and dogs in the country." "And then?" "Then I'd hunt, and ride, and smoke, and drink, and dance, and keep open house, and enjoy life gloriously." "And then?" "Why, then, I suppose, like other people, I should grow old, and not care so much for these things." "And then?" "Why, then, I suppose, in the course of nature I should leave all these pleasant things—and, well, yes—die." "And then?" "Oh, bother your 'thens!' I must be off." Many years after, the friend was accosted with, "God bless you! I owe my happiness to you!" "How?" "By two words spoken in season long ago—'And then?'—The Quiver.

WHAT A HOUSE SHOULD BE.

A house, truly viewed, is but a setting, a background, and is not to be pushed to the front and made much of for its own sake. It is for shelter, for comfort, for health, and hospitality, to eat in and sleep in, to be born in and to die in, and it is to accord in appearance with homely, every-day usages, and with natural, universal objects and scenes....We can miss almost anything else from a building rather than a look of repose....What is a man's house but his nest, and why should it not be nest-like, both outside and in?....The domestic spirit is quiet, informal, unceremonious, loves ease, privacy, low tones, loves the chimney-corner, the old arm-chair, the undress garb, homely cares, and simple pleasures.—John Burroughs.

RANDOM READINGS.

Religion is more the property of the heart than of the head.
He is a fool that thinks not that another thinks.—George Herbert.
God never promised to save by miracles those who would not save themselves by means.
I would rather have what my Maker knows I need than what I think I want.—Dr. Wm. Ormiston.
Mourning after an absent God is an evidence of love as strong as is rejoicing in a present one.—F. W. Robertson.

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