

The way, The Truth, and The Life.

(JOHN xiv, 6.)
In kindest tones of love
I heard the Saviour say
"Come unto Me, and live—
I am the living Way."

"I am the Truth," said He;
In words of sweetest grace;
"The Truth shall make you free—
Keep you in perfect peace."

"Also the Life I am—
Eternal life I give.
Come, every sinful man,
Come unto Me and live."

"There is no other way;
No other truth is known;
I hear the Master say:
"No life but in the Son."

Ch. Advocate.

First Sermons.

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

"Mrs. Maisey, how be you feelin'?" I got nothing; I'm very hungry." Such was the remark of one old woman to another on their way home from hearing young Arthur Penryhn Stanley's first sermon in the parish church at Bergapton. His bodily presence was weak, and his delivery shocking; and the humble saints found the spiritual nourishment very meagre. Stanley preached beautiful moral essays; but those of us who have heard the lovable Dean address his great crowds in Westminster Abbey have sympathized with the pious rustics who heard his maiden effort and confessed to a certain unsatisfied hunger of the heart.

The perfect antipodes of Dean Stanley, both in doctrine and delivery, was Charles H. Spurgeon. He was the son and the grandson of Congregational ministers, and his first appearance at preaching was made when he was only sixteen. He was asked by a friend to walk four miles to a cottage service in the little village of Taversham, near Cambridge. "I hope God will bless you in your preaching to-night," said his companion. "Nay," said young Spurgeon, "I never have preached and I don't know that I could do it." The cottage was filled; and as no minister appeared, the youth was pressed into service, despite the protests of some old ladies against listening to "that boy." He wore a round jacket and turned down shirt collar, and taking for his text, "Unto you, therefore which believe, He is precious," he expounded it with a fervor and unction which astonished his auditors. Spurgeon was a marvel of ministerial precocity; he never saw the inside of a theological seminary, and was only nineteen when he was invited to go up to London to preach in the old "P R street Chapel." Its congregation had dwindled to a handful, and by diligent "drumming" about two hundred people were got together on a wintry day. Among these who were drummed in to help fill an empty house was a Miss Susannah Thompson, who three years afterwards became the wife of the "wonderful boy," already become the most popular preacher in London! Her twin sons are both ministers of the gospel, thus perpetuating a true "Apostolic succession" through four generations.

If Stanley's and Spurgeon's beginnings were rather unique, that of the celebrated Dr. Thomas Guthrie was far more so. He was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Brechin in 1825. His first sermon was committed to memory and delivered in the parish Church of Dun; but on his way to take the place he said to himself, "I have mistaken my profession; I shall never succeed as a preacher." But he got through the ordeal without balk or blunder, and rode home perfectly happy. One would suppose that pulpits would easily be found for such a promising beginner; but in that Erastian days the Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland were made by "patrons" who had the control of them. Young Guthrie, finding no opening for his gifts, went off to Paris and attended a course of lectures on Natural Philosophy and Anatomy. On his return he secured a position in a bank, where he spent nearly four years in posting accounts! Occasionally he would go out and preach in some vacant pulpit; but as he afterwards said, "I waited by the pool for five long, weary years before I received a present on to the parish of Arblot." This seems to be a most astounding commencement of the career of that magnificent pulpit orator whom the London Times afterwards styled "the most eloquent man in Europe!" The only way to account for it is that the young Guthrie had never yet discovered the secret of his own power, and had not learned how to use the gift that was in him.

The famous and heaven-blessed Dr. Payson of Portland made also a very unpromising debut in his ministry. The account of his first attempt at

preaching is thus given in his diary: "I endeavored to cast myself wholly on the Lord for support. I felt thankful it was rainy; there were very few people at meeting, and I just got through without stopping. Spoke too fast and too low. Was a good deal depressed after meeting. In the afternoon did a little better, but still bad enough. Was very much fatigued, and almost in a fever; but enjoyed some comfort after meeting." If any one could have told that despondent young licentiate that his Portland pulpit would yet blaze out as an Eddystone over all New England and would teach the great secret of soul winning, he might have lain his head upon his pillow, happy as an archangel.

During my student days Edward N. Kirk was unsurpassed in graceful and persuasive pulpit eloquence; Dr. James W. Alexander told me that he regarded him as fully equal to Summerfield. Kirk, while still a theological student at Princeton, delivered his first sermon to a little company of negroes in the outskirts of the village. He made careful preparation, and a few poor, weary-looking colored women dropped in one by one. Satan, he says, whispered in his ear, "This is beautiful, isn't it? A college graduate, a student in theology, carefully preparing an address to such an audience." For a moment my heart yielded, and then the better spirit came and said to me, "Who are you but a sinner saved by grace? What if God has sent you here to-night to lead one of these souls to the Lamb of God, and at length to shine among the stars in the firmament of heaven? Are you worthy of that honor?" He asked God to forgive him, and he said that evening he never felt either troubled or elated by the number of persons in his audience.

We might narrate many other cases of the experimental efforts of men who became masters in Israel. Dr. Chalmers was licensed to preach at the age of nineteen because he was regarded as "a lad o' pregnant parts." Of his first sermon we know nothing; but his earliest ministry at Kilmany was a spiritual failure; he only aimed to reform men by the cold precepts of morality. He declared that he never reformed any one by that style of preaching, and it was not until the free offer of forgiveness through the atoning blood of Christ was urged upon men that I ever heard of any reformations.

Chalmers, like John Wesley, found his power at the foot of the cross. Charles G. Finney, the king of modern evangelists, studied theology, not in a seminary, but with the Rev. Mr. Gale, an "Old School" pastor in Central New York. Young Finney was working out a "New School" system of doctrine for himself, and after he delivered his first sermon Mr. Gale said to him, "I shall be very much ashamed to have it known, wherever you go, that you studied theology with me." The teacher—who was rather a "Hard Shell" came over afterward to the views of his powerful pupil, and confessed that if Mr. Finney had been moulded by him he would have been ruined as a minister.

It would be exceedingly profitable for young men to study what may be called the genesis of the most successful ministers. They will find that many of them began "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." Seldom has any lofty career of usefulness begun in self-conceit; those who have climbed the highest have started from the lowliest point. And if any have ever over-estimated themselves through inexperience, God has been pretty sure to bring them down. The first step to Christ-exaltation is self-abasement.

Four Misunderstood Precepts

BY REV. J. NEWTON BROWN.

The precepts referred to are the following: "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also. Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again." (Luke 6:29-30). The literal meaning of this language is clear. The smiting mentioned in the first precept is not merely an insult, but an act of violence; for the word used means to strike or beat, as with the fist or with a staff or whip. The third precept means to give something more than good advice. Matthew's version is: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." People do not often come to one to borrow good advice. This precept, like the one before it and the one after it, refers to property. And it does not require a prophet to see that one who gives to everyone that asks may not have much left for his family or for himself. In uttering this precept along with three others which tell what one should do in very trying situations, Christ indicated that he was not un-

mindful of the annoyance which one who should never refuse to give or lend might suffer from askers and borrowers. The literal meaning of these four precepts, taken together, is that one shall not maintain or even claim his personal rights, but that he shall submit to injury and injustice without complaint.

But it is proper to inquire whether Christ intended these precepts to be understood literally as rules of conduct, or whether he uttered them for some other purpose. He did not always intend that his utterance should be understood and applied literally. He certainly did not mean to teach men to hate others and to hate their own lives, when he said: "If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." What he meant was that no one could be his disciple who did not love him far more than any other friend or even life itself.

If Christ gave these precepts as literal rules of conduct, then Paul disobeyed them when he appealed to Caesar and every time he claimed his rights as a Roman citizen. Moreover Christ said to his disciples: "Neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you." Would he teach that those who ought not to let the swine trample upon their "pearls," ought always to let the swine trample upon their persons? Furthermore he taught that one should do good to all; but can one always do good to the wicked by allowing them to trample upon his rights and by uttering no word of protest or complaint? Would not such a course embolden some in their insolence and crime?

Most of those who accept what has been said thus far, have no clear idea of what Christ did intend to teach. Some find in these precepts nothing more than an emphatic statement of the familiar duties of meekness, kindness and forbearance. They occur in that part of the Sermon on the Mount in which Christ unfolded the nature and scope of the law of love. How could he do this for those who were accustomed to think of law not as a principle of spiritual life, but as a mere collection of rules for the details of conduct? Evidently the best way in which he could do this would be by putting his definitions of love into removed all limitations in regard to the persons to the familiar form of precepts.

This method of Christ's teaching was illustrated in his reply to Peter's question how often he should forgive his brother. If Peter had understood the law of forgiveness, he never would have asked whether he ought to forgive seven times; but not understanding this, he wanted a definite rule. So Christ told him to forgive four hundred and ninety times. Instead of explaining the law of forgiveness and telling Peter that one who had a forgiving spirit would be ready to forgive always, Christ gave him a rule which would enable him to discover the law of forgiveness for himself.

Now the other disciples were as ignorant in regard to the law of love as Peter was in regard to the law of forgiveness. Their former teachers had perverted the command to love their neighbor, so as to make it read: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." So they were accustomed to think of the law of love as having limitations which would really destroy the nature of love, as though the law meant that they should love only those who loved them, or those from whom they might hope to receive something in return for their love. Christ sought to remove all limitations from this law by uttering eight precepts, of which those under consideration are the second four. In the first four of these precepts Christ is loved.

But another question in regard to the possible limitations of this law needed an answer. Should love control one in all of his relations to others in all of his acts, and under all provocations and injuries? In case of a conflict between the requirements of love and a regard for one's dearest rights, which principle should prevail? This is the question which is answered in the four misunderstood precepts of Christ. They furnish no answer to the question whether it is wise for one who is smitten on one cheek always to offer the other cheek; or whether it is wise for one always to let a wicked man take his coat off from his back, or whether it is wise always to give away whatever any one may please to ask for; or whether it is wise never to ask a thief to return the goods he has stolen. Such questions are answered sufficiently in that saying of Christ which was uttered immediately afterwards, and which is known as the Golden Rule. But what these precepts teach is, that, in the most trying and painful situations, one must make any

further sacrifice which love may demand. They teach that there is a higher law for every man's life than a regard for his own rights; that one must be ready always to surrender his rights for love's sake. In other words, the sway of the love-principle over one's life must not be limited.

If Christ had uttered these precepts as literal rules for conduct, he would have given rules to others which he did not always live up to; for he once said to an officer who struck him: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" It was wiser for Christ at that time to administer the rebuke he had than it would have been for him, having been smitten on the one cheek, to offer also the other. But whenever he could do more good to his enemies by enduring their insults and their blows in silence, he did so. He was always ready to sacrifice his rights, for he knew no law but love.—Free Baptist.

Some Thoughts On Revivals.

Throughout the Church the cry seems to be, Give us a revival; let us have a revival; oh, for a good revival!

But as to what constitutes a good revival, erroneous notions are often entertained by some. We have known those who thought if the people could only get together in their places of worship, get up an excitement, sing, shout, and get persons to come forward and, after passing through a series of stormy meetings, profess conversion and join the Church, then they had had a good revival.

But, unfortunately, soon after the revival was over the prayer meeting was neglected, the new converts backslided, and when the next revival year came around the same work had to be done over again.

Now, we believe in stirring meetings, in old-fashioned conversions at the altar, and in shouting, too, when it is genuine. But we do not believe in a spurious, noisy revival, the work of which has to be done over every year. Such are of no advantage to the backslidden or backsliding converts, nor to the Church either. What is needed is a revival that ultimates in solid, substantial, permanent work.

Nor are we to understand that there can be no good revival unless non-professors of religion are reached, converted, and brought into the fold of Christ. There may be revivals of great value to the Church in other directions, although the constant aim of both pastor and people should be to secure the salvation of the unconverted.

First. There can be and there ought to be a revival in the careful study of the Bible. Too many members of the Church seldom read the Bible at all, while the great majority who do read it do not study it carefully. There should be a great revival in reading and studying the inspired Word for the express purpose of finding out, "What does God say to me?" The Bible is his word, and if we would know what he says to us we must study it carefully and prayerfully.

Professor Henry Drummond, the renowned author of the wonderful book entitled, "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," says that Mr. D. L. Moody, when making his first evangelistic tour in Europe, one evening while addressing a great meeting in Edinburgh, startled him by declaring that if people would pray less and study their Bibles more they would be better Christians. He went home revolving the thought in his mind, betook himself to the careful study of the Bible as never before, and soon experienced a wonderful growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. We hope the pastors and people throughout the Church will strive and pray for a special revival in the systematic, daily, prayerful study of God's Word. It is needed, and needed badly.

Second. There is need of a revival in attending regularly the weekly evening prayer meeting. One of the most discouraging things that the live pastor has to confront is the fact that in so many of our societies not one member in five is a regular attendant at these meetings. How can the Church grow in spiritual power under such circumstances? It is impossible. The general prayer meeting is the Church thermometer. The attendance there is a correct indicator of the spiritual condition of the society. If we would have spiritual power and be successful in winning souls to Christ, we must have a great revival in the regular attendance at the prayer meetings. This is needed far more than a noisy, shouting revival, the effects of which soon disappear.

Third. There is need of a revival in the observance of family worship. How many professed Christian homes there are in which the family altar has never been erected, or if erected has long since been broken down. All the heads of such homes must have leanness in their souls, and their children are by them deprived of a great

and much-needed educator in the ways of righteousness, Godly living. Let us have a revival right here.

Fourth. Let there be a revival of holy living. The lives of Christ's followers should shine like cities set on hills. Their light should clearly show forth in them the image of the world's Redeemer. There should be more of Christ in the words spoken, in the deeds done, in the business performed and in the life lived. His professed followers should be revived in a realization of the fact that the eyes of God and the eyes of men are upon them. The former is keeping watch over them as a Father and a Judge, and the latter are watching to see whether or not their life harmonizes with their profession.

There are other respects in regard to which a revival is greatly needed; but enough has been said. Let us have a revival, thorough, deep, sweeping in all these respects. It is greatly needed by the world, the church, and by each individual.—Rel. Telescope.

Slumbering Christians.

When is the Christian most liable to sleep? Is it not when his temporal circumstances are prosperous? Have you not found it so? When you had daily troubles to take to the throne of grace, were you not more wakeful than you are now? Another dangerous time is when all goes pleasantly in spiritual matters. There is no temptation half so dangerous as not being tempted. The distressed soul does not sleep; it is after we enter into peaceful confidence and full assurance that we are in danger of slumbering. The disciples fell asleep after they had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountain top. Take heed, joyous Christian; be as happy as you will, only be watchful.—Spurgeon.

Adorn the Gospel.

Adorn the gospel by your unselfishness. If you are always looking to your own interests; if you have no thought but for your own personal comfort; if your religion can live and die within your own hearts, you have not any that is worth having. If you would adorn the gospel, you must love others, love them intensely, and make it one object of your life to make other people happy, for so you will then be acting according to the spirit and genius of the gospel, and you will be adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.—Selected.

Christian union is well, but no courtesies between two regiments ever yet defeated the other army.

We should choose to bear the hatred of evil men, rather than deserve their just accusation after serving their base ends.

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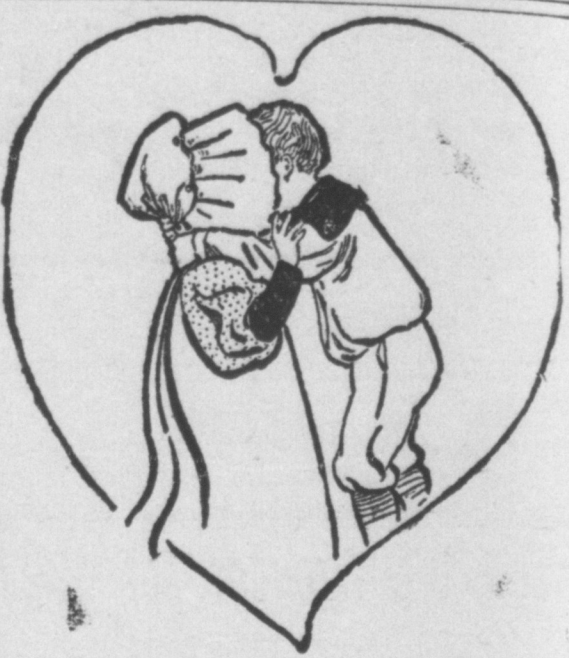
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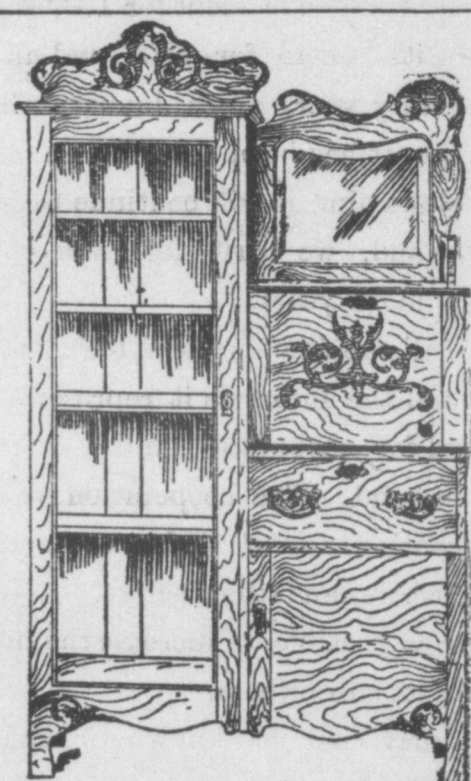
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