

# Christian

# Visitor.

A Family Newspaper—Devoted to

Religious and General Intelligence.



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"BY PURENESS, BY KNOWLEDGE—BY LOVE UNFEIGNED."—ST. PAUL.

{ Rev. E. D. VERY, Editor.

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NO. 1.

## POETRY.

### "NOT LOST, BUT GONE BEFORE."

Say, why should friendship grieve for those,  
Who safe arrive on Canaan's shore!  
Released from all their hurtful foes,  
They are not lost, but gone before.

How many painful days on earth  
Their fainting spirits numbered o'er!  
Now they enjoy a heavenly birth;  
They are not lost, but gone before.

Dear is the spot where Christians sleep,  
And sweet the strain which angels pour;  
Oh! why should we in anguish weep?  
They are not lost, but gone before.

Secure from every mortal care,  
By sin and sorrow vexed no more,  
Eternal happiness they share,  
Who are not lost, but gone before.

To Zion's peaceful courts above,  
In faith triumphant may we soar,  
Embracing in the arms of love,  
The friends not lost, but gone before.

On Jordan's bank when'er we come,  
And hear the swelling waters roar,  
Father convey us safely home,  
To friends not lost, but gone before.

### "BETTER RUB THAN RUST."

Filler! why lie down to die?  
Better rub than rust.  
Hark! the lark sings in the sky,  
"Die when die you must;  
Day is waking, leaves are shaking,  
Better rub than rust."

In the grave there's sleep enough—  
Better rub than rust;  
Death perhaps is hunger proof,  
"Die when die thou must;  
Men are mowing, breezes blowing,  
Better rub than rust."

He who will not work shall want,  
Nought for nought is just;  
Won't do, must do, when he can't—  
"Better rub than rust;  
Bees are flying, sloth is dying,  
Better rub than rust."

## ORIGINAL ESSAYS.

For the Christian Visitor.

### RELIGIOUS JOY.

Must not the feeble, or rather, the uncertain and fluctuating character of the religious joy which marks the present condition of Christian communities, when compared with the abiding confidence and joy unspeakable and full of glory that was daily experienced by the primitive disciples of Christ, be traceable to some defect in our faith, or to omission in some important part of Christian duty; or does the difference arise from the peculiar advantages which the latter enjoyed over the former? I grant that there are, even in this day of general darkness, some happy exceptions who are walking in the truth, and have their spirits arrayed with the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost. The early Churches were undoubtedly blessed with frequent visits from the Apostles, by whom they were confirmed in the faith of the Gospel. This was highly necessary, and even indispensable, at this stage of their history, as they had just emerged from the ignorance of heathenism, and their future usefulness and peace depended on the direction now given to their views of faith and practice. When difficulties of a trying nature occurred in

any of the congregations, as in the case of the Church at Antioch, recourse must be had immediately to the Apostles, as they stood to the primitive Church as the New Testament does to us. They had, in addition in this, one great and important privilege, which their peculiar circumstances called into existence. That of extraordinary gifts, which were given to certain individuals for the perfecting of the saints, till the Churches should all come in the unity of the faith; when prophecies and the gift of tongues were to cease. But have we not recourse to these inspired men? Yes, surely, and though dead, are nevertheless disclosing to us the good way of the Lord. We have Moses and the Prophets, together with the Apostles and Evangelists, who, as often as we hear or read the Scriptures, reveal to us all that is necessary in faith and in practice; sufficient "to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Our facilities for searching the Scriptures are far in advance of the early Churches, as the art of Printing was not then invented; and therefore but few of them could at all obtain copies of the Book. But how different our circumstances; every man, woman, and child can possess a copy of the Holy Scriptures, and read, in their own language, the wonderful works of God.

The Holy Comforter, which commenced His Divine agency after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, continues to give power to the truth in the conversion, sealing, and sanctifying of the Church, "until the redemption of the purchased possession." The most successful way, probably, of ascertaining the real causes of our declension in spiritual joy is to enquire into that which constituted the ground of the consolation of the first Christians. In doing this, we must direct the attention of the reader to the history of this people; and should we succeed in arriving at the true ground of the undying joy of the ancient disciples, we will, at the same time, find it the surest method of ascertaining the real character of our own consolation, as well as the causes of our declension.

Much depended, under God, on faith as an instrument to convey spiritual joy to the minds of the ancient followers of Christ. It was impossible for them to be disciples without it. They placed the greatest confidence in his words, while they left all and followed him. After Christ's resurrection, their remaining doubts and misapprehensions were most effectually removed by his presenting additional testimony from the ancient Scriptures respecting the nature and object of his mission to this world; which they no sooner believed than their hearts warmed with joy. On the day of Pentecost those who gladly received (or believed) the word, having been baptised, "eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people." The inhabitants of Samaria, the Eunuch, and the Jailor at Philippi, as well as many others, who were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost, might be adduced as evidences of the power of faith in the sacrificial atonement of Christ in producing religious joy. But faith works by love; hence Peter says, "whom having not seen, we love, and though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The Master most emphatically informed the disciples that unless their love to him produced obedience, they could not be regarded as belonging to him; "he that has my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," &c. As faith works by love, so love influences the mind to observe all things

that Christ commanded. Also the circumstances in which the ancient Christians were placed in relation to this world, were overruled by God for the increase of their joy. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Peter and John rejoiced that they were thought worthy to suffer for His sake. Those that were born after the flesh, persecuted those that were born after the spirit; but as their sufferings abounded for Christ, so did their consolation abound by Christ, that their tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, &c. Thus we see that their faith, their love, their obedience, and their self-denial united to enhance their joy in the Gospel; whilst they ever regarded the death of Christ as the procuring cause of all their consolation here, and their future hopes of a portion among those that are sanctified hereafter. Hence the promptitude of their obedience, the steadfastness of their faith, the constancy of their joy, and their unwearied zeal in propagating the word of the Lord. The Divine record, and not their own feelings, which are ever varying, was the chart by which they directed their course during their sojourn here.

After the Apostles and other distinguished individuals, who, with parental solicitude, watched over the interests of the Churches, had been taken to their reward, the Christian congregations, in the course of time, became corrupted. The circumstances which had hitherto opposed the full development of "the mystery of iniquity," which commenced its workings in the days of Paul, were now "taken out of the way." The Church and the world became united—men's persons were held in admiration—the word and ordinance of the Gospel were converted into worldly gain, and the few who were contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, and for the ordinances as Christ delivered them, were compelled to retire from public view, to mountains, dens, and caves of the earth, for several centuries.

Now, though the Reformation has taken place, and much good accomplished in the re-establishment of truth, yet the joy and holy confidence peculiar to the ancient people, are comparatively unknown in the present day. The commands and ordinances which Christ instituted to distinguish his kingdom from worldly schemes, having been corrupted during the times of which we have spoken, carnal men found their way into the Churches, which were only intended by the head of the Church to be made up of renewed persons, as such only could appreciate the true value of spiritual things. The consequence is, that worldly conformity, in all its ramifications and paralyzing influences, has taken the place of the humility, self-denial, and crucifixion to the world, which characterized the early Christians. The discipline of the Lord's house is almost unknown in many communities in this day of general dearth; while the primitive Churches were continually reminded, to "withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly." "Mark such and have no fellowship with them," said an inspired teacher. And should not we regard these injunctions of the Holy Spirit equally as imperative on us, as on those to whom they were originally addressed? Nor can we disobey them without being guilty of rejecting the counsels of God, and "becoming partakers of other men's sins." Bearing with those that are evil must always incur the displeasure of God. In a word we are becoming satisfied with a name to live, while our spirits are void of the life of faith and joy of the Spirit.

If these things are true, and I am disposed to believe that no careful observer of the times will be inclined to deny it, why then should we wonder at the sickliness of our religious consolation.

Having therefore ascertained that the first Christians only enjoyed the full assurance of hope while they continued in the faith, and practice of the Gospel as enjoined by Christ, and that the cause of our poverty in spiritual joy is on account of our disobedience; we therefore can only expect to share in their consolation in proportion as we are followers of God as dear children, and imitators of those who through faith and patience inherited the promises.

Now, are we viewing the divine pattern as a thing only to be admired for its simplicity and antiquity, rather than regarding it as the mould of sound doctrines, into which we have been cast, and in which God has before ordained that we should walk? How are we to be delivered from so great a spiritual death? "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord."—Lam. iii 40. "Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent and do thy first work."—Rev. ii 5. We very frequently hear Churches and individuals lamenting their stupidity and darkness, who, when urged to obey the truth, reply "O! these things are not essential to my salvation: I want to feel more of the Spirit's influence, more love and peace." But let such know assuredly, that "the willing and the obedient shall eat the good of the land," and that to obey is better than sacrifice.

Let those who profess to be the children of the light, consider their relations and responsibilities to God, to the Church, and to the world. Let the humility, self-denial, and unrelenting zeal, which marked the ancient disciples in promoting the kingdom of Christ, be imitated by us, and our peace will flow as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea.

A. McD.

### MY SOUL CRIES AGAINST ME.

In the wakeful hours of night it cries, How can you be easy in the present low state of religion? So little thought, so little prayer, and that so formal—do you not offend God? Yet time flies, and on its wings bears you and all to eternity. So will your day end. How can you see these brethren so low, so much taken up with the burdens and cares of life, doing little or nothing as Christians, and yet let them alone? My soul cries to me about sinners, impatient, careless, stupid, prayerless, pursuing eagerly the riches, honors, and pleasures of this life, on the precipice overhanging the bottomless pit, while they live without God in the world—my soul cries to me, How can you see them thus, and give them no warning? Why not go to one immediately, and tell him what you fear about him? Will he not hear you? Perhaps he is even now wishing some one would speak to him. His eye may be on you. He hears you pray. He wonders you do not open your lips to him. The same spirit which moves you to speak, is moving him to hear. He may not own it at once, but he will own it hereafter.—"Run, speak to that young man." Why not go to him and confess your fault to begin with, as a pastor did some years ago? "Mr. ———," said he, with subdued feelings, "I have neglected my duty to you, I hope you will forgive me." This touched his heart, and God blessed it to his conversion. "Go thou and do likewise."

R. A.