

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

MR. EDITOR,—Would you or some of your Correspondents inform one who is anxious to understand things which respect the peace and order of God's house; what authority from Scripture has a Church to introduce any man into the Ministry by Ordination, without a call from any particular Church to preside over them as Pastor? And by whose authority do Ministers lay their hands on an individual under such circumstance? A scriptural answer will confer a favour on

TRUS,
Of Crete.

Brother CASEWELL, with whom many of our readers have formed intimate acquaintance while labouring as Pastor in this City some thirteen years since, has kindly furnished us the following article, which will be continued in subsequent numbers of the Visitor.

"IT IS JUST LIKE HIM."

OR,

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

The thoughts upon Christ and his mediatorial work which are embodied in the following pages, have been useful and refreshing to the writer and some of his most valued friends.—In the hope that they may be the means of impressing others with the dignity of the Saviour and leading them to an experience of his preciousness as the spring of holiness and of justifying merit, they receive publicity. May the blessing of Heaven accompany the feeblest effort to do good!

J. D. CASEWELL.

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

A poor negress at one of our missionary stations, after being instructed in the truths of Christianity was asked, "Are you not astonished that God should so love our world as to give his only begotten Son to die for it?"—She replied, "No, it is just like him." This enlightened heathen had a more correct and noble conception of God than was ever formed of him by philosophers in the absence of divine revelation;—"It is just like him." We admire the sentiment, not only because it contains an important truth, which, mingling with the first elements of thought would spread light and beauty through the mind, but because it makes a direct appeal to the heart, finds its way to the inmost soul, touches the springs of holy sensibility, and quickens our admiration and our love of God. The utterance of this sentiment in words so apposite and so simple, reminds us not so much of his greatness as of his goodness, not so much of the elevation of his throne, as of the depths of his condescension; not so much of his awful glories as of the tenderness of his compassion, and the sweetness of his love. It brings before us the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and in truth. We might take with us this sentiment through the universe, and into whatever region we entered, from the everlasting stars to our own distant dwelling-place; whether our attention was fixed by the arrangements of wisdom, or the productions of power—by the splendours of the firmament of day, or the milder glories of the midnight sky—by the beauties of the green earth, or the skill which makes every dew-drop an abyss of wonders—in every department of creation we should meet with that which is characteristic of God, and we should say, "It is just like him." His perfections impress every thing he does with a distinctive character,—they are pencilled on every unfolding flower and expanding leaf—are displayed in the glittering orbs of heaven, and sung in the harmony of the spheres. But to see Jehovah arrayed with still brighter and more amiable glories—the glories of his mercy and love, the calm eye of pious contemplation must fix on Christ and Calvary. There are seen the meltings of divine compassion, the triumphs of heavenly benevolence, the miracles of benignity, and the wonders of grace. Looking upon the accomplishment of purposes which had existed in the abysses of the infinite mind from everlasting—purposes radiant with mercy—the soul becomes conscious of the sweet and expanding influence of gratitude, and says, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." In the person and work of Christ we have the brightest illustration of the love of God.

That this gift is unspeakable will appear, if we consider that *Jesus Christ was the object of the eternal and intense love of his divine Father.*

We know that the nature of God would prompt him to love with ineffable, ardent affection one who was distinguished by moral goodness. This was the grand distinction of Christ from everlasting. All his purposes, volitions, and affections were pervaded with the beauties of holiness. How intense and deep then was the love of God to his divine Son! The feelings of the eternal mind in relation to Jesus Christ are faintly shadowed forth by the intensity of parental affection. What would be the emotions of a right-minded father in giving up an only son who had always been faithful, obedient, and submissive; in whose character were the most glowing combinations of beauty, and the bright, fresh beamings of benevolence?—to give him up to poverty, reproach, sufferings the most complicated and bitter, and to a death the most painful, lingering, and disgraceful? Would not the mind in looking forward to such an event linger about the features of loveliness distinguishing its object? Would it not, with peculiar vividness, recall the by-gone seasons of endearment? Would it not think how, to one nurtured with so much tenderness and love, the cruelties of wicked, undiscerning men must be most bitter? The mind would feel that in giving up so beloved an object, it was parting with its richest treasure—a treasure of more value than the stars of heaven and the gems of earth; the heart would bleed with agony. If such would be the feelings of man, what were those of God towards his only-begotten Son, whose features were of more ethereal loveliness than those of any other being? He was of higher worth and glory than all the elder spirits of eternity collectively regarded; he was of divine and sinless nature—peerless in exaltation, yet he is consigned to boundless sufferings and an accursed death. We are confounded—lost in amazement. We see mercy and compassion to the fallen and the guilty—to creatures estranged from all that was holy—triumph over the strong love of God to his equal and his only Son. Well may it be said, "God so loved the world," (there is an infinitude of meaning in the particle *so*), "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Here the apostle takes no note of the ineffable contrivances, the benevolent arrangements, which minister to hearing, touch, and sight, make every sense an inlet to pleasure, and give residence and action to the intellect of man; "of the heavens which canopy man with grandeur, cheer his steps with successive light, and mark his festivals by their chronology; of the atmosphere which invigorates his spirits, and is to him the breath of life; of the smiling fields, decked with verdure for his eye, and covered with fruits for his sustenance; of every scene which spreads beauty before his gaze, which is made harmoniously vocal to his ear, which fills and delights the imagination by its glow or by its greatness." He passes over these, and conducts us "into the strange, the mournful, the joyful scenes of Calvary, and amidst the throng of invisible and astonished angels, weeping disciples, and the mocking multitude; under the arch of the darkened heaven, and with earth trembling beneath our feet, we gaze upon the meek, resigned, but fainting sufferer, and exclaim, 'Herein is love.'" Here is the complete demonstration that "God is love."

The death of Christ, then, is not the *cause* but the *effect* of the love of God. This exhibits the great doctrine of the atonement in its true light, and harmonizes the whole system of redemption with the benevolence of God. It originated in love, and is the brightest illustration of that amiable perfection. It is designed to be the medium of conveying to a guilty world every spiritual and eternal blessing, and without enfeebling God's law or obscuring his justice, to be the means to every believer of rescue from everlasting death, the darkness and misery of hell, and an investiture in endless life, with all the beauty and beatitude of heaven. In this view, is not the gift of God unspeakable?

The bleeding cross has sworn eternal grace. Who gave his life, what grace shall he deny?" "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

The ineffable character of this gift will further appear, if we reflect, that the wondrous nature of Jesus, the mysterious constitution of

his person, combining the most opposite properties, and the perfect holiness of his character, invest him with an original greatness, place him at an infinite distance from all other beings, and cause him to stand forth in solitary grandeur, the wonder of the creation of God. Our Lord speaks of his own existence as identified with the glories of a past eternity.—"The glory which I had with the Father before the world was." "When the Son of Man shall ascend up where he was before." These passages, with many others of similar import, show that before a solitary star shot its light across the firmament, or angel voices broke the silence which reigned around the throne of God, Jesus Christ existed in a fellowship of glory with his divine Father.—Eternity was his dwelling-place. Hence he said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am." While listening to a being who makes such affirmations concerning himself we feel that we are receiving the utterances of one who had enwrapped himself in awful and profound mysteriousness; to whom all space is a point, and all time but a moment; and who could rightfully claim an equality with God. We behold him exercising the prerogatives of Deity in the forgiveness of sin and the reception of adoration; wielding an imperial dominion over every element, over life and death, the unseen world, the agency of spirits, and the destinies of men. Who but he that was one with the Father in essence, authority, power, and every other God-like perfection, could say, "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." (John v. 21—23.)—Here he identifies his sovereign and uncircumscribed energy with that of the Father's, and asserts his power of acting according to the dictates of his will. We ask, what man can do this? what angel can do it? It is the exclusive right and power of Jehovah, who doeth according to his will among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. These statements throw around the Redeemer the awful glories of eternal independent existence. But we also see in him an exquisite discovery of all the milder graces and benign sympathies of unstained humanity; the meekness of wisdom, the tenderness of pity, instinctive mildness, and the play of every sweet affection.—We have illustrations of these in his condescending regards to little children who hung upon his vesture, in the tears which he shed at the grave of Lazarus, in the exertion of his power to restore from the dead the only son of the weeping widow of Nain, in his generous sensibility to the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, in the forgetfulness of his own approaching sufferings and death, and his deep solicitude to comfort and sustain his sorrowing disciples whose feet he had condescended to wash. Thus properties which the most broadly contrast with each other, meet in him;—the eternity and energy of God, with the limitation and frailty of man. How ineffable the mystery! how amazing the economy in which the Creator becomes a creature;—the Father of eternity submits to the revolutions of time, in which infinite majesty is associated with outward meanness, and the riches of Deity with the poverty of man. Well might an inspired apostle say, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." (1 Tim. iii. 16.) We feel that these profound mysteries of the Redeemer's person give to Christianity an infinitude of grandeur, a depth of mercy, and a measure of moral beauty and attractiveness which prove it to have descended from the Father of lights, the bright, imperishable embodiment of his own grace, the masterpiece of his wisdom, and the glory of his power and his love. "To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

"God in the person of his Son Hath all his mightiest works out-done."

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.

There is scarcely any thing more needed among the churches, at the present time and at all times, than faithful, free-hearted, affectionate conversation upon the themes of religion; the conversation of those who truly love Christ with one another, and the interchange

among them, in familiar words, of their personal views; their respectful and affectionate conversation, too, whenever it is consented to, with those who confess no allegiance to the Saviour. Conversation 'falsely so called,' formal harangues on the relations of doctrine, what like seem self-laudatory descriptions of the supposed personal experience of God's grace—than these, almost nothing certainly can be more useless or offensive. And that these are sometimes indulged in, under the flattering and self-deceptive title "religious conversation," the intelligent observer of movements around him will scarcely doubt. But the possible abuse of a good thing is surely no argument for its neglect. It is an argument, rather, for the more diligent use of it in the proper way. That a power is likely to be occasionally perverted, which may be made to inure to the great advantage of souls and of Christ's kingdom, is only a reason why Christians should employ it more carefully and more zealously.

And there is no power which they can employ, either more properly or more effectively, than that which they will find in religious conversation, so it be truly what it should be. It should be intelligent, of course, not rambling or meaningless. It should be definite in its aim, not discursive or without purpose. It should be kindly and calm; neither severe in tone or violent in manner; but genial, earnest and sympathetic. Above all it should be strictly, thoroughly, immutably honest; dealing in no exaggerations, speaking no more or other than the truth, and representing faithfully the state of the feelings. And it should be conducted, as far as possible, among those who are accustomed to converse on other subjects than religious, who are familiar with one another's purposes, views, and general mental and social state,—who are upon terms of equality and of general friendship; and even among such, it should be not formally introduced so much as naturally suggested, allowed to come up spontaneously, as excited by an incident or by some other subject: by an item of news, or a recollection of the Past.

Such conversation, so introduced and conducted, cannot fail to be useful. It will be found surprisingly efficacious, in quickening the feelings of Christians, suggesting to them new purposes and thoughts, enlarging and clarifying their views, and uniting them to one another. It will often touch fountains of feelings in the heart of the unrenewed man, which the more formal and elaborate sermon has failed to reach. It will be able to follow that heart through its turnings and windings as it struggles from the truth, as the preacher cannot follow it. It will apply the truth to it, more closely and searchingly, and at the same time more sweetly and movingly, with a more pliant and winning power. It will be itself an EVIDENCE of the reality of Christian principle and Christian feeling, in those who introduce it; and will testify to those who join in it, as almost nothing else can do, the distinctness with which the enlightened mind perceives the truth, and the quickness and depth with which it feels it.

Oh, that we had such conversation in all our churches; giving wings to the truths proclaimed on the Sabbath; witnessing to their reality; making permanent their impression. The Spirit of God would then be with our churches again, as in that early day when the disciples who met each other were wont to say in greeting—"The Lord is risen!" or as at that earlier day when "they who feared the Lord spake often one to another!"—N. V. Independent.

[From The Independent.]

From Prof. Tholuck's "Hours in Devotion."

ENDEAVORS AT TRUTH.

I too must be "well pleased" with Christ, as the heavenly Father avouched himself to be, from the opened heavens. To think that you have already attained the full truth as it is in Jesus, is to condemn yourself to an everlasting stand still, if not to a fatal retrogradation in spiritual knowledge.

The possessed of evil spirits seemed to know Christ sooner than others not so far gone in mad disease. Why? Perhaps because being so intensely evil, they were more sensitive to the presence of the supremely good.

The person and character of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Gospel history, is our only resource.

I have come to the conclusion that he who does not love the Gospel, hates it intensely.—For nothing can be so hateful to a man as

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