

A LAMP IN A DARK PLACE.

BY REV. JOHN TODD, D. D.

Our readers well know with how much interest we are all now looking out upon the world. After more than a quarter of a century of profound peace—during which time the human mind, instead of being given up to devise engines of death, has advanced the world more than two or ten centuries of war could have done—the world is again shaken. There must have been a long preparation, else the random shot of a single gun, and the cry from an unknown voice, "It's too late!" could not have convulsed all Europe. The loins of kings have been loosed, and the wise have been taken in their own craftiness. What shall be the end of these things? When we see changes, we are apt—nay, we are determined to prophesy. If the Pope shows tokens of being a man of the age, we toast him and make speeches, and feel that he is about to annihilate his throne by the rays of light which he lets in upon it. If he is frightened at the spirit which he has evoked, and runs away we make mouths at him, and predict that he will never come back again to befool the human mind. When we see the legions of Russia thundering at the gates of Constantinople, and her fleets riding at anchor in the Golden Horn, or when we see the arts and improvements of the West creeping into the great gate (Sublime Porte) of that city, we feel that the False Prophet as well as the Beast hath its days numbered. (So he hath. So have both of them. But more than once has the Pope hurried from his throne amid the derision of the world, and yet he still lives, and calls upon the whole of Pöpedom to discuss the important question—Was the Virgin Mary born without sin? Infallibility does not reside in the Pope himself, nor in his Cardinals alone, nor in any synod or body alone—nor in all the faithful alone; but take all these cyphers and multiply them together, and they will have an infallible answer to a question which infallibility has not been able to decide for more than eighteen hundred years!—The Pope still lives, and will probably be reinstated on his throne of darkness by bayonets and blood.—Protestant nations will look on quietly. The Mohammedan power still lives, though more than once armies have mysteriously withdrawn from the gates of Constantinople, which seemed destined to destroy it forever.

The fact is, we may try to predict and to manage the world, but we very soon find we are wearying ourselves—like the sage whom Rasselas found in Egypt, who for years had been wearying himself out in ruling the planets and the clouds, and distributing light and heat and rain to the various countries of each with impartiality. The sun and moon obeyed him very well, but the winds and the storms were sadly refractory, and seemed never to be obedient to his voice. God ruleth! let us rejoice. The overturnings—the times and the seasons are his. In his plans, as revealed in his promises, he is one day to make kings and queens sit at his feet; and is to slay the False Prophet and the Beast "full of lying wonders" with the sword of his mouth—i. e. by his word. But when it will be—how many agencies are first to be put in operation—how many railroads are to be laid through the dark regions of the earth—how many electrical wires are to be stretched through these countries—how much the communities are to be agitated and shaken by political questions—how much blood is to flow, or how many upheavings there are to be before light shall encircle the earth, we do not know. But we look out upon the world calmly and untroubled, if we make the word of God "the lamp to our feet." The moment we close that word, we feel like the sage before alluded to, when out of the society of his friends, "I am like a man," says he, "habitually afraid of spectres, who is not set at ease by a lamp, and wonders at the dread which harrassed him in the dark; yet, if his lamp be extinguished, feels again the terrors which he knows that when it is light he shall feel no more." How many of these spectres dance around us, the moment we extinguish or set aside the lamp of divine truth! How are we troubled, and listen to the first tidings which come to us across the waters! How we are elated or depressed, as every new change seems to us to be for the advancing or the retarding of the chariot of the Prince of Peace. Peace! be still! He walketh upon the troubled waters—and watcheth the insect that creepeth upon the rose-leaf, as well as the flight of the archangel. He hath not put his plans in the hands of Popes or armies, councils or nations, so that he cannot at any moment

make them move like the verriest puppets strung on wires.

[From the New York Evangelist.]

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

DOES IT ENCOURAGE INDIFFERENCE TO RELIGION.

"If this doctrine be true," says the objector "then I am elected or not elected, and shall be saved, do what I please, however bad; if not elected, I shall not be saved, do all I can, however good. Every believer in the doctrine must consider himself as belonging to the one class or the other, and in either case it will tend to make him indifferent to his conduct, irreligious and immoral."

If the doctrine have such a tendency upon any man, it must be upon a believer or a non-believer in the doctrine.

Upon the non-believer the doctrine most certainly can exert no such influence. No one will be absurd enough to maintain that the doctrine of election, or any other doctrine, can have a bad practical influence upon him who does not believe it, but rejects it.

Does the doctrine in question, then, have a bad practical influence upon him who actually believes it? Look at facts. Are the persons who believe this doctrine generally more negligent about their salvation than others? Are not those who most sincerely believe this doctrine watchful, prayerful, punctual and conscientious in using all the means of salvation? And who make greater efforts and greater sacrifices to secure the salvation of others? Are they not often charged by the world with being too strict—with being superstitious, and righteous overmuch, as afraid of innocent amusements, and afraid of encountering the flames of future torment? How, then, is the tendency of this doctrine so immoral and so fatal to religion?

But the objector may say, The doctrine does not produce a bad influence upon truly pious persons, but it does produce it when believed by a person of depraved and unregenerate heart.

Suppose we admit it has this tendency in such a case. Does it follow that this is the proper tendency of this doctrine? In other words, is this the effect that the doctrine ought to produce? If it produce a bad influence, is that owing to the falsehood of the doctrine, or to the depravity of the heart? What truth may not a wicked heart abuse or pervert?

Here, then, we come to the whole force of the grand objection which has been urged, over and over again in a thousand forms of reproach against the doctrine of election—a wicked heart may, and probably will, abuse it, which is no evidence at all against the doctrine, because a wicked heart may and does abuse everything.

And it is proper to add, none but a wicked heart can abuse it, for the doctrine of election does not present the slightest shadow of hope that any soul will be saved without holiness.—"Because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." God has expressly asserted that "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Now, what but a wicked heart can reply, "God has determined to save some of my race—has determined that some shall be holy and be saved, therefore it makes no difference whether I am holy or not! Because he has determined that some shall certainly repent, therefore I will not repent!"

What but a wicked heart can reason thus! and who, but an infatuated sinner, whom the god of this world has blinded, can find, in such an argument, an opiate for his conscience to quiet him in a career of guilt and folly.

Let an admonition reach the ears of all who believe this doctrine. If, on the ground of God's eternal and electing decrees, you feel the slightest security in sin, or the slightest encouragement to neglect duty, it is a fearful token that your heart is not right with him.—You hold the truth in unrighteousness, which thereby becomes to you a savor of death, and you are hastening to bring upon you the deep condemnation of those who change the truth of God into a lie.

Come Over and Help Us.

Such was the cry uttered in the ears of the devoted Apostle to the Gentiles, by the man of Macedonia, who appeared to him in a vision by night. And he was moved by it, to go and make known to them, of Macedonia that Saviour whose love filled his heart. Though this cry be not uttered in our ears by the heathen

themselves, yet does their condition appeal to us in the strongest possible terms; and this appeal is rendered more forcible, and more binding upon us to heed, by the consideration that Providence has opened the door for the entering in of the gospel to so many nations, some of which have for centuries been closed against it.

We cannot escape the responsibility involved in shutting our ears to its sound. We dare not, as pledged followers of him whose kingdom is yet to fill the earth, shrink from, or sluggishly engage in, the great work of furnishing the help demanded. For while God opens the door, he likewise furnishes us with the means to enter in and take possession. He has made it the Christian's privilege to labour as a co-worker with Christ. What a blessed privilege! Would to God we all prized it more highly!

Come over and help us. It is a cry of want—of distress—of supplication. From some heathen and semi-Christian lands the very cry has been sent to us. Our ears may well tingle at the sound, and our hearts be humbled as we remember how little we have done to relieve them. What millions have gone to judgment since we first named the name of Christ!—How many more shall live and die, uncared for, and unprovided with the gospel, by us.

Let no christian flatter himself that he is exempt from this duty. No amount of charity at home, no deed of self-denial, no special exertion in behalf of a few who are near and dear to him, will excuse his neglect of the command of the Saviour: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." If he cannot become a preacher of righteousness, if he cannot contribute alms to aid in carrying on the work of missions, he *can pray*, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." He can remember all classes and conditions of men when he bows before the mercy-seat.

The Scriptures teach that true charity is that which longs for the salvation of *all*; for this is the will of God, "that all should come, to repentance." The Christian who closes his ears to the cry that is coming up, if not from the inhabitants of heathen lands, yet from their benighted lost condition, "*Come over and help us*," is living either in gross ignorance of his duty, or in wilful neglect of it, and needs to fear lest he is but a stumbling-block in the way of salvation.—*Pres. Treasury.*

PROCRASTINATION HARDENS.

In all temporal matters, indecision and putting off actual attention to them, operate to indispose a man to attend to them. After one successful postponement, he is less concerned about them than before; and another simply increases his indifference, and soon he becomes not only habitually negligent, but thoroughly averse to the exertion necessary in the case. But in religion this tendency of nature is helped by depravity, and delay soon produces a heartlessness—an indifference—a repugnance, of which the subject is not conscious in ordinary matters. He seems to rejoice to learn that he has it in his power to put away the matter from his mind; that he *can* resist the reproofs of nature and reason, of providence and grace; that he *can* evade, for the present, the force of truth and the appeals of Christian friends and of Christ's ambassadors; that he *can* resist the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and silence the monitions of his own conscience; and the practical effect of once successfully putting off the all-important—the consciously necessary matter, is a repetition of the effort until he has but to say, without a ruffle of feeling, when he is reproved in any way, Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee. Hundreds and thousands have thus succeeded in making themselves *insensible* to the most pungent truths—to the most alarming warnings, to the most affecting appeals, to the most terrible providences, to the most powerful convictions. It is thus that many, in every Christian congregation, abuse the means of grace, and harden their necks, so that they are unmoved by that which God has appointed for their eternal welfare. They have used no particular and designed effort to resist the means of their religious improvement, but they have just indulged nature in putting off attention to the subject, and by indulgence nature has become strong and they are impregnable in the fortress of indifference.

THE STRAIGHT GATE.—The straight gate of religion is wide enough to admit any sinner, but too narrow for the admission of any sins.—*W. Howell.*

Only One Refuge.

There is only one refuge from the terrors of judgment—Christ, sought as the last resource under the pressure of inward distress, and found and clung to as the only tenable point. In Him, who presents us to the Judge, divested of our sins, we only hear the soft and gentle music of peace. The heavens are azure over us; light and free the air we breathe. The thunders aloft terrify us no longer; nor does the blood cease to flow in our veins, when a passing funeral reminds us of the nearness of our own exit from this world. That which so often lay, like a heavy and oppressive incubus, on our souls, even in our happiest hours, entirely leaves us, for it was nothing else but the spectral consciousness of our misunderstanding with God, and the horrible dangers to which it exposed us.

Whoever, therefore, wishes to save his soul, let him flee to Christ. Our Zoar, our Pella, lies where the cross is exhibited. Embrace the horns of the altar on Calvary, and ye are safe. Around this city of refuge the Divine command, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further," sets bounds to every hostile power. "One thing is needful." Long for, and entreat till you obtain it; and what is that? "He that hath ears, let him hear;" it resounds in the following lines:—

Sprinkle the threshold of my heart,
Thou Prince of Peace, with thy dear blood;
And bid each stain of sin depart,
Washt out by that all-cleansing flood.

Whatever else may dark remain,
Let me thy cross in glory see,
And teach me what those words contain:
'Tis finished, Christ hath died for me!

Then boldly I pursue my way;
My soul the curse no longer needs;
I seek no other guiding ray,
Than that which from thy cross proceeds.

'Tis there that wrath was turned to grace,
There mercy gained the victory;
Redemption for our fallen race
Was purchased on Mount Calvary.

[Krummacher.]

CLOSET QUESTIONS.

What use have I this day made of my talents? of my life and health? my religious opportunities? my influence? my property? What has been my temper? Has it been Christ-like? that is kind, merciful, considerate, cheerful, meek, and affectionate?

How have I spent my time? Have I redeemed it from unnecessary sleep? from useless visits? from indolence and vanity?

How did I spend my time in the closet? in family prayer? in the discharge of my relative duties? in company? at my meals?

Upon what have I chiefly fixed my thoughts? Have I thought upon my peculiar temptations? of the promised grace of God? of the love of Christ? of the example of Christ? of the will of God? of the glory of God? of the purity and joys of heaven?

How have I this day governed my tongue? Have I spoken what was true? what was useful what was kind?

Have I remembered the presence of God? Have I rejoiced in the will of God? Have I directed all to the glory of God?

Aim High.

Look into your Bible, and see how Christians ought to live. See how the Bible says those Christians must live; and then if you find your Christian friends living in a different way, instead of having cause for feeling that you may do so too, you have only cause to fear that they are deceiving themselves with the belief that they are Christians when they are not. Remember that the farther your Christian friends depart from the standard of Christian character laid down in the Bible, the less reason have you to hope that they are Christians. And do not hesitate upon this subject, because you find many professed Christians who are indifferent, or lax in their practice and example. Remember that Christ has said, "Many shall say unto me in that day Lord, Lord;" thus claiming to be his disciples, to whom he will say "I never knew you."—*Dr. Bedell.*

Bible Anecdote.

The following is published in French newspapers: A poor shepherd of the environs of Yvetot, father of a large family, for whose wants he provided with very great difficulty, purchased last summer from a dealer in old clothes, furniture, &c., an old Bible, with a view to occupy his leisure evenings during the present winter. Sunday evening, as he was turning over the leaves, he noticed that several of them were pasted together. He im-