

[From the Primitive Church Magazine]

### Are Sinners to be exhorted to repent, and believe the Gospel.

The religion of Jesus is the religion of sinners. The Bible is a revelation of mercy adapted to man, as he now is, beneath the ruins of the fall, and not as he originally was in his primeval state. It is the most perfect manifestation that God himself could give of his being, nature, and design, to the sons of men. In it he has commended his love towards us in the gift of his Son: Rom. v. 8. He has made his love conspicuous, enhanced, and raised it up on high, above all the displays of the love of man, so as to be exhibited in the most gracious manner. *The gospel is worthy of all acceptation: 1 Tim. i. 15.*

Here are promises for believers, as believers, which are the inheritance of all the sons and daughters of God. Here are doctrines addressed to all men, as men, which are binding on all those who hear them proclaimed. Man is a reasonable creature, and can examine evidence, understand principles, reflect, remember, and, before conversion, exercise the powers of an intellectual mind. Sometimes light enters the mind, the conscience consents, and the understanding yields, as in the case of Felix and Agrippa, even while the heart revolts and continues to rebel. Men may have an orthodox judgement and unsoftened hearts.—Here are invitations proclaimed to sinners, as sinners, whereby they are freely invited to come to Jesus. Those who reject the gospel have just the same warrant to come to Jesus, the same encouragement to believe, and are under the same obligation to repent as those who obey. It is because men are sinners that they are invited to Jesus, and are under an obligation to repent and believe.

1. *Then, is obedience to God's revealed will the sinner's duty?* Surely it is. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul?" Deut. x. 12; Matt. xxii. 37. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Ecc. xii. 13. *The fearing, walking, loving and serving that are here required, is to be "with all the heart,"* so as to be acceptable to God.

2. *Jesus exhorted sinners to repent, and believe the gospel.* He commenced his ministry by saying, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark i. 15. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matt. ix. 13. "Repent," said the Son of God, and, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 3. The object of our Saviour's mission was not merely the salvation of men, but the salvation of sinners; therefore when he calls to repentance it must be the duty of sinners to obey, and he calls for that "repentance to salvation not to be repented of." 2 Cor. vii. 10.

3. *The apostles urged repentance and faith as the sinner's duty.* The twelve "went out and preached that men should repent." Mark vi. 12. Peter said to Simon Magus, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness." Acts viii. 22. Paul not only told the Athenians that God hath "commanded all men everywhere to repent," but showed first unto them of Damascus and Jerusalem, and through all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Acts xvii. 30; xxvi. 20. John says "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John iii. 23. If these passages do not prove that sinners are under an obligation to repent and believe, I confess I do not understand their meaning. If it should be said that this last passage was given to believers only, surely it would be a very peculiar command, if no one were commanded to believe but those who had already done so.

4. *The sinner's duty, in this respect, will appear more clearly if we consider the wickedness of unbelief.* We do not sufficiently comprehend the sinner's guilt in refusing to believe in Christ. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar," why so? "Because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." 1 John v. 10. Why is the sinner condemned? "because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." 1 John iii. 18. Unbelief, then, is the special ground of the sinner's condemnation. Unbelief makes God a liar, contemns the wisdom, tramples upon his mercy, hates Jesus without a cause, and

rejects the gospel as unworthy of his acceptance.

"The question is not what man can do, or what he is inclined to do, but what God requires of him. *Because* men love darkness rather than light, will this justify their rebellion? Does a sinner's hatred of a good law release him from its commands? Some say that it is the sinner's duty to believe with a "human faith," or a "temporary faith," or a "natural faith." The gospel, however, rejects all those scholastic distinctions of learned men, and requires the sinner to "believe to the saving of the soul." Heb. x. 39. God certainly requires something of sinners as a matter of duty, otherwise they are under no obligation to obey, and therefore cannot sin. Where there is no duty there is no law, and where there is no law there is no transgression. If sinners ought not to repent and believe, an aversion to these duties is not sinful, but praise-worthy; for surely persons ought to be commended for being averse to those duties which they are not required to perform.

#### "To be with Christ."

"To be with Christ" is the noblest and best element of the portion of the pious. It was the thought that made Paul willing to leave the objects of his love and care on earth, and specially to desire to depart. To a mind really refined by grace, and alive to its highest capabilities, it is not so much to be free from pains, and sufferings and dangers, that heaven is desiderated; it is as the scene of a new and nobler life, of a life conformed to the beautiful original of purity, order, harmony and glory, in which and for which the soul was created—a life partaking of the Divine nature, that it asserts its greatest power and attraction to the Christian. And this new and noble life is the inspiration and gift of Christ. Christ is its source and sustainer; and proximity to and communion with Christ, is therefore the highest element of heaven's excellence and glory. Heaven would be stripped of its main attractions, and lose its sweetest song, if the Lamb were not the light there.

To be with Christ is not merely to be a spectator of his glory and his grace, but to partake of them. There is something marvellous in the assurance of the Scriptures on this subject. We are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, and suffering together to be glorified together, equally. We are to sustain a relationship to Christ more close and honorable than that of any other of God's creatures. Seraph or archangel can lay claim to no inheritance like that of a joint heirship to all that devolves upon the Son of God. Other orders of being may inherit immeasurable benefits, and be heirs to crowns surpassing all human thought. But to none others of all the myriads of God's creatures will the Son become the elder brother; for "he took not on him the form of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." His adoption with nature has eternally identified him with our race. So long as he remains the God-man, he will bear a likeness of nature and intimacy of his friendship to us that no other order of beings can claim. Partaking of his dignity, we become allied to the royal line; we advance to the first rank of empire, become the peers of the universe, and shall judge angels.

The measure of the Christian's future glory is the measure of Christ's dignity and dominion, for they are to be one. The identity of the Father and Son is not more complete.—If there be any conception of dignity, any aspiration of purity, harmony and love, any ideal excellence, it is all comprehended in the portion—TO BE WITH CHRIST.—N. Y. Evangelist.

#### The Spoiler Spoiled.

Mary, the bloody Queen of England, was a violent persecutor of the Protestants. Having brought to the block and the stake multitudes in England, Scotland, and Wales, she reached forth her hand to vex Ireland. She had signed a commission (1558) authorizing the persecution and annihilation of all Irish heretics, which was committed for execution to Dr. Cole, a zealous son of Rome. The Doctor immediately starts for Ireland to execute the bloody mandate of the Queen. At Chester, where he is to embark, he communicates to the Mayor the nature of his errand to Ireland, at the same time pointing to a box, which, to use his language, contained that "which should lash the heretics of Ireland." The good woman in the house where they were, (Elizabeth Edmonds), a friend of the Protestants, who

had a brother in Dublin, hearing these words, was not a little troubled. Therefore, watching her opportunity, she opens the box, takes out the commission, and places in its stead a sheet of paper, in which she had carefully wrapped a pack of cards with the knave of clubs uppermost. Suspecting nothing, the Doctor, the wind and weather favouring, next day set sail for Dublin. He immediately appears before the Lord Deputy and the Privy Council, makes his speech, declaring the nature of his mission, and presents his box to the Lord Deputy; which on opening nothing appears but a pack of cards, the knave of clubs staring his lordship in the face. The Lord Deputy and Council were amazed, and the Doctor was confounded, yet insisted that he had started with a commission, such as he had declared. The Lord Deputy answered: "Let us have another commission, and we will shuffle the cards in the mean time." The Doctor chagrined, returns to England, appears in court, obtains another commission, but is now detained by unfavourable winds; and while waiting the Queen is called to her dread account, and thus God preserved the Protestants of Ireland. "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."—*Hand of God in History.*

#### The Imperceptible Influence of the Word.

President Edwards says, in his work on Revivals, that much of the good which is done by sermons is wrought during the hearing of them. This may explain how simple and unlearned persons may derive great advantage from those things of which they can give no connected account. While they have the help and guidance of the preacher, they get along well enough; when he ceases, they have little to rehearse: yet it is not a little, if during the time of exercise they have been moved to faith, hope, love or adoration.

A gentleman was once riding in Scotland by a bleaching-ground, where a poor woman was at work watering the webs of linen cloth. He asked her where she went to church, what she had heard on the preceding day, and how much she remembered. She could not even tell the text of the last sermon. "And what good can the preaching do you," said he, "if you forget it all?" "Ah, sir," replied the poor woman, "if you look at this web on the grass, you will see that as fast as ever I put the water on it the sun dries it all up; and yet, sir, I see it gets whiter and whiter."

We should undoubtedly try to bear so as to retain as much as possible in our memory; yet let us not undervalue influences on humbler minds, though they may be so slight as to be scarcely appreciable.—*American Messenger.*

#### Mr. Webster on Religion.

In a recent discourse on the Life and Character of the late Hon. Jeremiah Mason, Mr. Webster gave the following views on the subject of religion:

But, sir, political eminence and professional fame fade away and die with all things earthly. Nothing of character is really permanent, but virtue and personal worth. They remain.—Whatever of excellence is wrought into the soul itself, belongs to both worlds. Real goodness does not attach itself merely to this life; it points to another world. Political or professional fame cannot last forever, but a conscience void of offence before God and man, is an inheritance for eternity. Religion, therefore, is a necessary, an indispensable element in any great human character. There is no living without it. Religion is the tie that connects man with his Creator, and holds him to his throne. If that tie be sundered, all broken, he floats away, a worthless atom in the universe, its proper attractions all gone, its destiny thwarted, and its whole future nothing but darkness, desolation and death. A man with no sense of religious duty, is he whom the Scriptures describe,—in such terse but terrific manner,—as "living without God in the world." Such a man is out of his proper being, out of the circle of all his duties, out of the circle of all his happiness, and away, far, far away from the purposes of his creation.

#### The Inward Witness.

We learn from the Mirror that the author of the following paragraph was a good minister who came over to this country not many years after the pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, having been driven by persecution from not less than seven places in England. He abode a short time at Dorchester, afterward at Weymouth, and finally at Roboboth—perhaps he was the first settler of this last named place, as

the name was given it by him. He was accustomed to record the results of his personal examinations of the state of his heart. One of these entries has been preserved. It is as follows:—

"I find that I love God, and desire to love Him more. I find a desire to requite evil with good. I find that I am looking up to God to see Him and his hand in all things. I find a greater fear of displeasing God than all the world. I find a love to such Christians as I never saw or received good from. I find a grief when I see the commands of God broken. I find a mourning when I do not find an assurance of God's love. I find a willingness to give God the glory of all my abilities to do good. I find a joy in the company and conversation of the godly. I find a grief when I perceive it goes ill with Christians. I find a constant love to secret duties. I find a bewailing of such sins as the world cannot accuse me of. I find I constantly choose suffering to avoid sin."

The man who can truly say this of himself is fitted for earth or heaven. There are test points in this record, very convenient for others to try themselves by.

#### A Striking Anecdote.

A caviller once asked Dr. Nettleton, "How came I by my wicked heart?"

"That," he replied, "is a question which does not concern you so much as another, namely—How you shall get rid of it? You have a wicked heart, which renders you unfit for the kingdom of God; and you must have a new heart or you cannot be saved; and the question which now most deeply concerns you is, How you shall obtain it?"

"But," said the man, "I wish you to tell me how came I by my wicked heart?"

"I shall not," replied Dr. Nettleton, "do that at present; for if I could do it to your entire satisfaction, it would not in the least help you towards obtaining a new heart. The great thing for which I am solicitous is, that you should become a new creature, and be prepared for heaven."

As the man manifested no disposition to hear anything on that subject, but still pressed the question how he came by his wicked heart, Dr. Nettleton told him that his condition was that of a man who is drowning, while his friends are attempting to save his life. As he rises to the surface of the water he exclaims, "How came I here?"

"That question," says one of his friends, does not concern you now. Take hold of this rope."

"But how came I here?" he asks again.

"I shall not stop to answer that question now," replies his friend.

"Then I'll drown," says the infatuated man, and, spurning all proffered aid, sinks to the bottom.—*Dr. Nettleton's Remains.*

#### Bluntness Rebuked.

It is said of Rev. Andrew Fuller, that he could rarely be faithful without being severe, and in giving reproof, he was often betrayed into an intemperate zeal. Being at a meeting of ministers, he undertook to correct an erroneous opinion delivered by a brother, and he laid on his censures so heavily, that Dr. Ryland called out vehemently, "Brother Fuller, brother Fuller, you can never admonish a brother, but you must take up a sledge hammer and knock his brains out."

#### RELIGIOUS PAPERS.

The Boston Watchman says that Rev. Dr. Malcom, in a sermon which he preached on the last Sabbath of 1849, said to his people that, to have their religious denominational paper in every family in the congregation, is a Christian duty. Having dwelt on the influence of such a paper in promoting piety, intelligence and benevolence, he expressed a readiness, if necessary, to become responsible for the money required to place it in every family in his society; an example in one of the most energetic men in the church, who well understands how to benefit the people, that all pastors may imitate.

#### THE BIBLE OF EVERY LAND.

The Bagsters, of London, are bringing out in numbers a book of rare interest and attraction; being specimens of the various languages of the earth into which the Bible has been translated. In addition to this, the work presents a statement of the geographical extent of each language and dialect, together with the elements of the language and a history of its diffusion. We see the work noticed in our foreign papers, but have not heard of its introduction into this country.—*Presbyterian.*