

## "THE TRUE CROSS."

Fifteen hundred years ago the mother of the first christian emperor\* discovered amidst the ruins about Jerusalem, the veritable cross on which Jesus was crucified! She knew it from the other two which were found near it, by its instantly restoring to health an invalid who touched it! She honoured and treasured it carefully, and by the time of the Reformation it is said to have furnished fragments enough of the "true cross" to build, if put together, a man of war! Over such miserable superstition and imposture shall we smile, reader, or grieve? We cannot easily avoid either.

In this present year, one thousand eight hundred and fifty years nearly after "the Crucifixion," we see, "the Cross" exalted on the summit of lofty erections—frequently in stone as if fossilized, frequently gilded, a melancholy imitation always of us of what the Cross has become—"a gilded cross." Yes, the "offence of the Cross" is vanished if it wear a golden aspect, if it proffer gold to its ministers and its worshippers. And of smaller dimensions we see it also worn as an ornament; but it is often made of "gold, silver, or precious stones," the adorning which one "who witnessed the sufferings of Jesus did not think meet ornament for christian women." (1 Pet. iii. 3, 4; v. i. 1; 1 Tim. ii. 2, 10.) Verily, neither gilded nor golden crosses are "the true Cross."

No, "the true Cross," was, indeed, a rough and homely object,—untrimmed wood,—the carpentry of an hour,—fit only for fuel when its work was done, and no doubt used for that or some other humble purpose. So mean was the altar, so utterly unfit to be preserved as a memorial, on which was shed "the precious blood of Christ,"—on which that victim was offered, and that death took place, which never can be forgotten in the history of the world, or throughout eternity itself!

Let us look at the true Cross. All the previous scenes—the scourging, crowning with thorns, the mock trial—are over; and a condemned criminal stands in the hands of four soldiers beside the barbarous engine. Weary, pale with a whole night's maltreatment, yet serene, benevolent in aspect. How different his appearance from that of the two highway-men in the like condemnation! "His countenance more marred than any man's;" yet it was innocence, holiness, and dignity. The robber saw it and bore witness, the centurion saw it and bore witness, "this was surely a righteous man;" yes, he "had done nothing amiss." The sun, the rocks, soon added their testimony, and confirmed this reversal by his executioners and fellow-sufferers, of his unjust judge's verdict; and on the third day, the vanquished tomb—the first time it was ever vanquished—confirmed also the reversal of his unjust judgment.

Still, beside the "true cross," stands the innocent victim. But all is ready. Four soldiers seize each a member, and nail it to the cross as it lies on the ground; in a minute more it is erected, placed in the ground, and made fast in the earth; the malefactors on each side are treated in a like manner; and thus, and in the midst, hangs the holy sufferer on the True Cross.

Thus much was true to even the eyes of the many, but more was surely true. This was not only a righteous man, he was surely a good man too. No one ever denied that he went about doing good. Hundreds of relieved sufferers were witnesses of that. If he sometimes "sent the rich empty away," no one denied "that he had helped the poor." He was no common man. His wisdom, although he had not studied at their schools, continually put the Sadducees and Pharisees (the Sceptics and Puseyites of that day) to silence. And he was undeniably an open worker of innumerable miracles,—innumerable works he did which no other man did. A man he was who never flattered the "common people,"—yet was beloved by them,—a man whose teachings the hierarchy of that day, and of all days, abhorred, yet could never refute,—all this, at least, was plainly true of Him who now hung on the "true Cross." He was not a mere man!

And it was true, also, that he was in his own judgment, and according to his own teaching, the long-promised one, the hope and desire of all nations, the Son of David, and yet mysteriously his Lord, the Son of the Most High. Was he wrong in his judgment? Let his resurrection from the dead reply. (Rom. i. 4.)

\*We regard him only as the first of the numerous imperious and royal personages who have corrupted christianity by State law and for State purposes. His life was like that of nearly all of his class.—*Source citation*

But look once more at the "true Cross." The sufferer is not yet dead; he might live for days in his torture—his fellow-sufferers would have done so; but they were killed prematurely. Hark! a loud and touching call! It says that "his God has forsaken him!" The forsaking of all others he had borne; but his God forsaking him, this has overpowered him. Yes, completely overpowered his humanity; the grief literally burst the muscles of his heart, and he almost immediately expired!—How can we account for all this—such innocence and dignity, such composure, such sudden and fatal sorrow? He himself has told us how; for—

There was yet one thing more on the "true Cross," invisible indeed to the bodily eye, yet visible to the faith of all who believed his own express words. He had said that he had given "his life a ransom for many," that he "laid down his life for his sheep," that "no man took it from him," but that "he laid it down himself;" in a word, that he died to atone for the sins of men. Look, then, at the "true Cross" again,—look at him who hangs thereon,—look at his INTENTION in hanging there. What Pilate intended, what priests intended; that is nothing to us; but what HE intended, that is every thing to us. That it is which really transforms the unsightly tree,—which changes it from the barbarous implement of the barbarous punishment of death, into the magic name which alone can soothe the guilty conscience.

Yes, amidst all his conflicting thoughts and feelings,—amidst pains so distressful, so painful, one steadfast will, one settled purpose abode through all,—the will, the purpose, to endure all agony of body and of mind, that we might be pardoned. He willed to suffer what justice ought to award to the bearer of human guilt. He did suffer it. Justice awarded that he should suffer unconsoled by his Heavenly Father. He suffered that. More he could not suffer. The grief of losing all happy sense of his Father's presence was the fatal suffering. It broke the fountain of life! It burst his heart!

The true Cross! Verily, this world abounds in fictions, and even "the Cross" has been changed into a lie, and perverted to imposture and gain; but there is a "true Cross" after all. The Sufferer on it yet lives to save us by it. The witnesses of his sufferings have left us their testimony on record, and they, too, yet live to sing for ever before him, "Worthy the Lamb that was slain."

Cross of Christ! Thou wilt be my salvation or my ruin, my joy or my terror, throughout eternity. He who died upon thee meant to save me,—meant to bear my sins,—meant to give me pardon and peace through his sorrows, meant me to share the glory he purchased by his sufferings. But he meant me also to love him for all this,—he meant me to obey him in love. His was, indeed, a true Cross. Oh, may I be a true disciple of the Cross.—All in heaven are so, and all must be who yet shall go there!—*The Appeal.*

## Christian Baptism.

"Christian baptism is the appointment of Christ. Here he appears in full-orbed official glory. It is sacred to the memory of his death, burial, and resurrection to endless life, as the Head of his Mystical Body. It embodies the atonement. It exhibits the truth of this glorious event with all its appropriate evidences, as transmitted to us in the testimony of God. This standing memorial of "the holy nation" is also the attendant of the gospel, and should only keep pace with its progress. The observance of this ordinance follows the faith of the truth. The faith of the gospel is professed in baptism. What is believed in the heart becomes visible by this act of obedience.—Compare 1 Cor. xv. 2, with Rom. vi. 3; also Col. ii. 12, and iii. 1; wherein the union of Christ and his people is most significantly set forth. The manifold wisdom of God is manifested by all the monuments that exist in the history of the church. These were ordinarily erected immediately on the occurrence of the events which they were designed to exhibit. This delightful ordinance was set up at the commencement of the Christian era, and is therefore coeval with the events it so aptly commemorates. Christian baptism is replete with the richest spiritual instructions. We behold an altar with this inscription—"To the known God." The name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is legibly enstamped thereon. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto

God, which is your reasonable service."—(Rom. xii. 1.)

"The baptism of the Bible requires all its subjects to imbibe the spirit, imitate the example, and implicitly obey the will of the Lord in all things. It seeks submission of none without repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. It excludes infidelity, formality, idolatry, and rivalry. It shows that those who preach the gospel should baptize the believers thereof. Not every venter of every whimsical view is warranted to baptize. It demands, at least, a predisposition to prefer the views of Christ on every subject upon which he has been pleased to pronounce his judgment. It cuts off all connection with the baptized into the belief of a lie, whose faith is groundless and vain, who are yet in their sins,—with those also who make the observance their saviour, and convert it into an object of idolatrous homage. It censures the conduct of Christian communities who would continue to exclude it. It complains of those who would cause the baptism of believers and the sprinkling of babes into competition and collision. It admits of no such rivalry. It is dishonored by all such caricaturing and confusion. "It is one."—(Eph. iv. 5.) It courts no obsequious deference from the world. The one Lord and one faith, precede the one baptism. Its positive relation to Christ, and particular place in his government, should be carefully considered and guarded by his people. When the King himself delighteth to honor it, why should multitudes of his spiritual subjects despise, deface, and defame it? Baptism comes after the belief of the gospel. The Divine commands to believe in Christ and then to be baptized into Christ, are equally explicit, and absolutely imperative: what God hath joined let no man put asunder. 'For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.'—(Gal. iii. 27.)

[From the Puritan Recorder.]

## UNSTABLE PROFESSORS.

Where is the church that has not to mourn over such members? What minister has not had his heart saddened by their inconsistent walk? At one time they are all zeal, and at another, all indifference. Their seat in the sanctuary is filled or vacant just as the humor takes them. If there is anything new or exciting, they may be found among the foremost; but the regular and ordinary means of grace are neither appreciated nor improved. Belonging to the stony ground class of hearers, and having no depth, they shoot up in apparent luxuriance, but soon die out and never bear any fruit. They have no special regard for their own minister, and are ready to find fault with him on the most trivial occasion. At one time he does too much, and at another too little. They seem to take special pains to wound his feelings by absenting themselves on occasions where he looks for their presence and expects their support. They live on the outskirts of Zion, and never seem to get beyond the Court of the Gentiles. For the sake of avoiding discipline, they may force themselves to be present at the communion; but they enjoy no sacred fellowship with the rest; and it is to be feared have no proper discernment of the true nature of the ordinance. They are extremely sensitive on the ground of personal attention. You must make much of them, nay, even flatter them, or they will be off to some other society where they hope for more of this sort of adulation. They have no true humility. Occasionally they will slyly fall in to some place of preaching where the doctrine is anything but true, and where even the Lord that bought them is denied. How to spend the Sabbath is often a difficult problem with them. The church where they are bound to go, where their names are recorded, to which they have sworn sacred allegiance, is deserted, or but occasionally visited; whilst the query is, where they can be most entertained, or pass the holy time with the least sense of weariness. The preaching they most enjoy is that which least benefits their souls—which amuses rather than humbles them. They rove about in search of this kind of Sabbath-day entertainment. "Unstable as water" should be written opposite the names of all such professors. They are a dreadful incubus to the church of God, a grief to the truly pious, "wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness." It is no want of charity to say that they give no evidence of conversion.

Oh ye unstable professors! What is to become of you in the day when the crowns of glory are distributed? Will the cry, "Lord, Lord," save you then? Will not the course

you are pursuing plant a thorn in your dying pillow? If the character described belongs to the reader, let the warning be taken. Go back to the church where your violated vows are recorded—to the minister whose heart you have saddened—and there begin your repentance. Take your place under the faithful preaching of the Gospel; that which will penetrate rather than please; and you may hope that if there is mercy for your backslidden or unconverted soul, there, if any where, you will be likely to experience it.

[From the Watchman and Reflector.]

## Just what is needed.

In the published accounts of revivals with which many churches are now favored, it is interesting to observe how generally the means employed are represented under two heads.

1. The faithful exhibition on the Sabbath of the humbling doctrines of God's Word.

2. The earnest activity of the members of the church in sustaining prayer meetings, visiting from house to house, distributing tracts, conversing with the impenitent, &c.

It is not difficult to see that these are the legitimate and most promising modes of promoting genuine revivals. The labor is performed by the appropriate persons. The pastor delivers two well prepared discourses on the Sabbath, thus supplying the people with a body of scriptural truth as the material of thought. During the week, the members co-operate with him in personal efforts to awaken the careless, and to conduct the inquiring to the Saviour. In this way, the pastor is encouraged, the spiritual health of his church is promoted, and the world feel the power of such exhibitions of Christian zeal and consistency.

But, O how disheartening to a pastor to labor without the co-operation of the members of his church! He studies severely, and preaches faithfully. But they do not second his efforts. He endeavors to make the most of the Sabbath, for it is almost his only opportunity to do good. They go to their worldly business, and immerse themselves for six days in secular cares, saying nothing and doing nothing for the conversion of sinners. All the impressions which his sermons may have made, are effaced, and the next Sabbath he is compelled to repeat the process upon minds that have been hardening for another week under adverse influences. He feels deeply the perilous condition of the unconverted, and is distressed as he witnesses their entire indifference. But the keenest pangs of his heart are occasioned by the stupidity of his pledged co-workers. They do not sympathize with him. They concur in avowed creed with their minister, but their conduct is a practical Universalism.

A pastor in a country village recently said, "I am about discouraged. Out of more than a hundred members, I have not more than seven upon whom I can rely for any spiritual service. Had I no church here, I think I might be useful. But now these inactive professors stand between me and the world. They are not immoral, but they are utterly useless.—They stand in my way. Dead themselves, they keep all dead around them."

How different this from the statement of another pastor, who is now in the midst of a powerful revival. "Every member of the church," he says, "is awake and active." Churches of Christ, do you co-operate with your pastors in efforts to save souls?

## Faithfulness to Souls always Seasonable.

There is an incident in the life of Chalmers which so impressively illustrates the importance of improving opportunities of usefulness to the souls of the impenitent, that it may well be frequently republished as a remembrance and stimulant to the discharge of Christian duty. We give it here, with a few words of application as found in one of our exchanges.—Dr. Chalmers once spent an evening with a family in Scotland, and the themes of their conversation were of a worldly character.—At the close of the evening a visitor was struck with apoplexy and died very suddenly. The Doctor stood over him the very picture of despair. At last he said: "Had I known that this man would have been called so suddenly from time to eternity, would I not have felt it my duty to have pointed him to the Saviour?" Perhaps it would have been deemed by some out of season; but doubtless it would have been in season in the sight of God.

This case is a word to the conscience of many—is it not, reader, to thine? How many souls have passed from your society and influence, unwarned, to the judgment, whom you would probably have warned if you had known