

THE BELIEVER'S FIRM FAITH IN GOSPEL DOCTRINES.

As for the nature and power of sin—in his own soul's deepest misery he has known what sin is, and his own bitter experience confirms all the Bible statements of its hatefulness.—The reality of deliverance from it, by the power and grace of the Saviour, is also matter of blessed experience. Relief from an agonizing consciousness of guilt, and peace and joy in Christ are as much a delightful reality, as being saved from a burning house, or a sinking wreck. The new taste and relish of his mind for God and holy things are as much a reality as his vision of the natural objects of creation.

In a word, all the great doctrines of the Gospel have penetrated his heart by this power. They are the warp and filling of his own experience. He knows their reality by testimony as convincing as that which teaches him that fire will burn, or food will relieve hunger.

Hence the doctrines of the Gospel are not merely faint and feeble intellectual impressions. They are actually experienced facts. They have gone down, by this practical power, into the deepest sensibilities of the believer's heart. There is therefore no such thing as parting with them. You can no more reason the true believer out of them, than you can reason him out of those palpable impressions which are every hour made upon his senses. Bring the sword, the rack, the faggot. Send Peter to a dungeon and Paul to crucifixion. Will any such agencies destroy their faith? With a tenacity, that nothing can break, does the true believer cling to the great doctrines of the Gospel. They have taken possession of his soul. They are the very life of it.—They shoot their blessed influences throughout every part of his spiritual nature. Whatever there is of beauty or strength in his religious character, is there through the agency of these doctrines. Give them up! He gives up the life-blood of his soul. To give them up it would quench all the lights in his spiritual firmament. All his religious joys and consolations are based on these doctrines. He can never part with them. They guide, comfort, and strengthen him unto death; and their practical power over him, through the grace of God, fits him for a welcome to glory.—*Puritan Recorder.*

A Church of England Minister on Election.

"I remember disputing with the Dissenting Minister (in a friendly way) about the doctrine of Election. I could not receive the doctrine of Election, not being able to separate it from that of reprobation; but I was not violent against it, being convinced as much as I was of my own existence, that whatever others might do, I myself should no more have loved God if he had not first loved me, or turned to God if he had not by his free and sovereign grace turned me, than a cannon-ball would of itself return to the orifice from whence it was shot out. But I soon learned that I must take the Scriptures with the simplicity of a little child, and be content to receive on God's testimony, what he has revealed, whether I can unravel all the difficulties that may attend it or not; and from that day to this I have never had a doubt respecting the truth of that doctrine, nor a wish (as far as I know) to be wise above what is written. I feel that I cannot ever explain how it is that I move my finger, and therefore I am content to be ignorant of innumerable things which exceed, not only my wisdom, but the wisdom of the most learned men in the universe. For this disposition of mind I have unbounded reason to be thankful to God; for I have not only avoided many perplexities by means of it, but actually learned much, which I should otherwise have never learned. I was not then aware that this simple exercise of faith is the only way of attaining divine knowledge; but I now see it is so; and in fact it is the way in which we attain human knowledge also; for the child receives every thing first upon the authority of his teacher, and thus learns the very first rudiments of language: he does not say, How do I know that *a b*, spells *ab*? or, that this is the nominative case, and that is the verb, and that it is the accusative case that is governed by it? No, he calls things as he is taught to call them, and then, in due time, he sees that these things are not the arbitrary dictates of his master, but that they of necessity appertain to language, and exist in the very nature of things; and thus in time he comes to see a beauty and propriety in things which were at first no better to him than senseless jargon. This, I am persuaded, is

the way in which we should receive instruction from God; and if we will do so, I verily believe, that we shall in due time see a beauty and harmony in many things, which the pertinacious advocates of human systems can never understand."—*Rev. Charles Simeon.*

The Religion of the Age.

The age also boasts of its religion as part of its product. With many, religion is mere philosophic speculation upon truth connected with man's soul. With others, it is the seemingly discharge of all relative duties. With others, it consists in admiration for the Bible, as a book of literary excellences. With others, it is the adoption of a creed, or connection with a church. With others, it consists in bustle and outward zeal. In all, it lacks life, that deep, intense glowing life, which so marked it in earlier time. Its root is not in the conscience, but in some outer region of the soul, which does not bring us into close and living contact with Jehovah himself. It is a thing of the imagination, or of the intellect, or even of the affections, but not of the conscience. There can be no religion which has not its seat there. The hindrance to living religion is the want of a "purged conscience;" and till the conscience has been purged from dead works, there can be no real religion, no true service of God. How little is there of conscience in the religion of the day! Hence, that lack of simplicity, of freshness, of serenity, which we should expect. Hence, its hollowness, and noisy shallowness.

The religion of the day is (as we have seen) an *easy-minded* religion, without conflict and wrestling, without self-denial and sacrifice; a religion which knows nothing of the pangs of the new birth as its commencement, and nothing of the desperate struggle with the flesh and with the devil, day by day, making us long for resurrection deliverance, for the binding of the adversary, and for the Lord's arrival. It is a *second-rate* religion; a religion in which there is no largeness, no grandeur, no potency, no noble-mindedness, no elevation, no self-devotedness, no all-constraining love. It is a *hollow* religion, with a fair exterior, but an aching heart, a heart unsatisfied, a soul not at rest, a conscience not at peace with God; a religion, marked, it may be, by activity and excitement, but betraying all the while the consciousness of a wound hidden and unhealed within, and, hence, unable to animate to lofty doing, or supply the strength needed for such doings. It is a *feeble* religion, lacking the sinews and the bones of harder times; very different from the indomitable, much-enduring, storm-braving religion, not merely of apostolic days, but even of the Reformation. It is an *uncertain* religion, that is to say, it is not rooted on certainty; it is not the out-flowing of a soul assured of pardon, and rejoicing in the filial relationship between itself and God. Hence, there is no liberty of service, for the question of personal acceptance is still an unsettled thing; there is a working for pardon, but not from pardon. All is thus bondage, heaviness, irksomeness. There is a speaking for God, but it is with a faltering tongue; there is a laboring for God, but it is with fettered hands; there is a moving in the way of his commandments, but it is with a heavy drag upon our limbs. Hence, the inefficient, uninfluential character of our religion. It does not tell on others, for it has not yet fully told upon ourselves. It falls short of its mark, for the arm that drew the bow is paralyzed.—*Rev. H. Bowman.*

A Portion for All.

If the Christian be a *stranger*, here is his citizenship declared to him. If he be a *pilgrim*, here is his staff provided for him. If he be a *traveller*, here is his guide. If he be a *voyager*, here is his chart. If he be a *soldier*, here is his spiritual armory; the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit; the sandals of peace and the girdle of truth; the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation.

Whatever the Christian be, or in whatever circumstances, he will find in the Word of the living God a most suitable and seasonable portion. It is as food for the hungry, and water for the thirsty; medicine for the sick, and a cordial to the faint. It gives riches to the poor, and a blessing without sorrow to the rich. It gives sight to the blind, strength to the weak, instruction to the living, and consolation to the dying! Safely may we affirm that no believer ever searched the Sacred Scriptures in vain. When darkness surrounds us, here we see a light shining upon

our path. When perplexity unsettles us, we find here a counsellor who directs us with unerring wisdom. When the remembrance of sin sinks us in despondency, the Scriptures assure us that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin. When the believer is bereaved of the pious friends he loved, he is here comforted by the hope that he and they shall again be reunited forever. Thus, whatever be the circumstances of the Christian, the Word of God is as "green pastures" to his soul.—*Stevenson.*

The Power of the Cross.

In the recent reports of the London Missionary Society there occurs an account of the conversion of a Hindoo who visited the city of Cuddapah and there first heard the Gospel. The story develops with great simplicity the power of the cross of Christ, when it bears upon a conscience convicted of sin and enlightened by the Spirit of God.

The narrative states that this Hindoo, "being put under instruction three months, made good progress in knowledge of Christian doctrine, and manifested great abhorrence of his former heathen practices. When the catechist read to him the account of the jailer's conversion, he wept much, and said, 'Oh, sir! I am a great sinner; no one can tell the number of my sins!' On another occasion, when the catechist read to him and explained the Saviour's sufferings and death, he expressed great surprise, and said, 'Oh sir! is all this true? Is it true that Jesus died for all sinners? Is it true he died for me?' The catechist replied, 'It is true.' 'Then,' said he, 'I have great joy in my heart. This is indeed a great salvation!' When I asked him, on the morning of his baptism, what was the principal thing that struck his mind in our religion, after thinking a short time, he replied, 'The chief thing was, that Jesus died and rose again.' I have found by inquiry that he is in the constant habit of private prayer, and especially prays for those who are offended with him on account of his low caste; praying that God would incline their hearts to love him, and that he would prevent any from leaving our Christian society on his account. Truly, these are good signs that the Spirit of God has commenced its blessed work of enlightening and renewing the heart of the young convert."

Verily there is no relief for a guilty, burdened sinner, like that found in the cross of Jesus Christ! Indeed, there can be no other relief,—none that really reaches the seat of his difficulty and pours the peace of joy and salvation through his very soul. When even the most guilty and the most deeply convicted sinners see the love of God, as manifested in a crucified Saviour, they know that such a God can and will forgive. There seems to spring up in the soul unbidden, a precious assurance that this atonement for sin is adequate, and that the vilest may now find pardon and acceptance before God. With this comes "great joy in the heart." With this comes a most intense hatred of sin, and such a turning away from it as never occurs under any other influence. Oh! there is spiritual power in the cross of Christ! It can reach the untaught Hindoo's heart; it can reach the heart of the philosopher. In all hearts alike, it subdues selfishness and sin, brings forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to the praise of infinite grace.—*Oberlin Evangelist.*

The Monk.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

In a certain cloister there once lived a Monk, who at the close of every day, showed signs of great weariness and lassitude. The Abbot once asked him the cause of this.

"Alas!" replied the Monk, "every day I have so much to do that my strength would not suffice thereto if the grace of God did not assist me. I have two falcons to watch, two hares to hold, two sparrow-hawks to train, a dragon to controul, a lion to overcome, and a sick man to tend."

"Tut! tut!" said the Abbot, "your complaints are foolish; so many employments are never given to one man at the same time, and I have never heard that duties like these were imposed upon any brother in this cloister."

"And still, reverend father," replied the Monk, "I have spoken no untruth. The two falcons are my eyes; these I am obliged to watch with the greatest care lest something should delight them which might endanger my salvation. The two hares are my feet; these I am forced continually to restrain, lest they run after wicked pleasures, and stray into the

path of sin. The two sparrow-hawks are my hands; these I must train and urge to labour, that I may feed and refresh myself and my needy brethren. The dragon is my tongue; this I must continually hold in check lest it may utter something unseemly or speak idle words. The lion is my heart; with this I must wage a constant fight, lest vanity and self-love should occupy it, and thereby prevent the spirit of God from dwelling and working therein. The sick man is my own body, which capriciously craves, now this, now that, and inquires not whether that which it desires is good for true health, and for eternal life.—All this wearies me daily."

The Abbot listened in wonder to the Monk's words, and said to him, "My brother, thou dost labor in the wine press of the Lord; he will reward thy toil, and refresh thy weariness with the joys of everlasting life."

Alone, yet not Alone.

How many conflicts and burdens, with all our instinctive yearning for aid, must we encounter alone. The friend who was nearest to you faints, falls, is gone; and you are alone. The partner of your life is torn from your side, and you are alone. The expected support of your age, the pride of your paternal heart leaves you, and you are alone; your day declines, the shadows lengthening and darkening around you, and you are alone. The guide of your youth perhaps, just when you begin to feel how much you need his counsels and his aid, is gone, and you are alone—alone amid the growing fascinations and thickening dangers of life. Oh, to have a better friend, a friend who will never leave you nor forsake you. Oh the comfort of resting on God in bereavement, and conversing with him as Friend and Father—as all in all to you forever. How is the loneliness of bereavement brightened when you can say, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."—*Rev. Dr. Bacon, at the Funeral of Mrs. Thompson.*

Duty and Feeling.

The struggle between duty and feeling, for the moment, is hard, very hard. We can hardly believe it is not for the best to obey our present feelings. We always like to make great allowance for them; to believe they are right, and best to be followed; yes, even when we feel that they are opposed to duty. But how wrong is this! Duty above every thing; above feeling, desire, every thing. And though we may not see how this will accomplish for us a dear object, yet we should remember that there is a God in the world, and that he can bring to pass what is for the best, and in a way not our own. Let every one do his duty, trusting in God, and he can live no higher life; no, not in heaven.

The Sinner's Prayer.

God hath put arguments into sinner's mouths to plead with him for mercy. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Rise, sinner, he calleth thee; go to the Lord; and when thou goest, tell him, Lord, thou hast bid me come, and behold here I am. I come, Lord, at thy word; I come for a little water, I come for thy wine and thy milk. I have brought no price in my hand, but thou hast bid me come without money and without price. Though I have no grace, yet at thy word I come for grace; though I have no Christ, I come for Christ; though I cannot call the Father, yet, being called, I come to thee as fatherless; "With thee the fatherless find mercy." If I am not thy child, may I not be made thy child? Hast thou not a child's blessing left yet to bestow upon me? Thou hast bid me come, come for a blessing; bless me, even me, also, O Lord. Wherefore hast thou sent for me? Shall I be sent away as I came? I came at thy word; do not say, Be gone out of my sight. I cannot go at thy word; I will not go; for whither shall I go from thee? "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Since thou wilt have me speak, Lord answer. Thou I dare not say, Be just to me a saint; yet I do say, I will say, I must say, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."—*Richard Alleine.*

True fortitude is the distinguishing mark of a great mind.

To tyrannize where they can, be no resistance, is the extreme of baseness.

Thefts never enrich; alms never impoverish; prayers hinder no work.