

...and much less change and deny himself on these fundamental doctrines of revelation; that he continued to hold as long as life lasted the doctrines concerning the Son of God and the Holy Spirit he advocated in "Of Reformation in England," "Prelatical Episcopacy," "Animadversions," "Reasons of Church Government," and other works till we come to the close of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, in 1671.

In 1673, the year before his death, he published the treatise "Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration." This, as all acknowledge, is the last work published by John Milton. He wrote it during the last year of his life, for a specific purpose, viz.: to define what is true religion, what is heresy and schism, and who are to be tolerated. Here, then, if anywhere, we expect to find the real opinions of John Milton. Our limits do not allow us to quote from this work, to show how he classes Anabaptists, Arians, Arminians, and Socinians together as errorists, and speaks of the Holy Spirit. We can only say that in his last work John Milton abjures and condemns sects and doctrines that he advocates in Christian Doctrine. He declares of the Trinity, "In Scripture it is a plain doctrine."

His confidence is thus full and positive that he died in what he so often, in his Letters, calls "the ancient," "the orthodox," "the evangelic faith," that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are co-eternal and co-equal, constituting the personal Godhead.

The expression prevails that there is no Arianism in Paradise Lost; but it is only no ground for such a notion. The orthodox ever after he had written the lines of maturity.

Give us our Trespases.

It is told of a certain nobleman in a city of his enemies, amidst of his tale, the bell of prayer, and bishop, and noaped to their faces, the former the Lord's prayer, and the latter the time of story untold, when came to the petition, "Forgive us our trespases," he stopped the other to go on alone, but he attempted to continue, but the sound of his own unaccountable, and recalled by his companion to the significance of the petition, ceased praying, and rose on his knees a hopeless man—until he was found hope in a better disposition towards his neighbor. It is an easy thing to say "Forgive us our trespases" by rote; it is difficult, sometimes, to say it understandingly. If we stop at this petition, when we are repeating the Lord's Prayer, until we have taken in the idea of it, how many of us will go on?

This was a very prominent doctrine with Christ. In the brief Sermon on the Mount he reiterated it six times, devoting to it several verses at a time; and of all the precepts of the prayer he taught us this is the only one that he commented upon—as if it transcended all the others in importance. He gives us, too, various reasons for insisting upon our graciousness towards one another before he will bestow his grace upon us. One of these is the inconsistency of a man condemning his fellow men. We are all sinners. "How wilt thou say to thy brother: Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye." "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest thou doest the same things." The spray of our offence falls in different shapes from the fountain of our hearts, but it is the same.

Another reason our Saviour gives for this commandment for mutual charity is that the only hope for any and all of us is in God's infinite charity for us. The debtor of whom Jesus told, who put his debtor into prison for a hundred pence, though he himself had just been forgiven ten thousand talents, was no meaner than we are if we hope in God's forgiveness with hatred towards others. If we are the saved of God, He bids us be the "followers of God as dear children."

Now we see how God forgives us. He forgives unreservedly. We think we are very gracious if we remit the penalty of a wrong done us, even though we drop the acquaintance and show our scorn. Nothing is more common than to hear men say, "I can forgive, but I cannot forget." What does God say? "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." If God merely remitted the punishment,

and then ignored us, thought no more of us, we should perish as the plant without water and light. It is a great thing for us to resume external relation with those who have injured us. It is natural to make them recognize our magnanimity, to heap coals of fire on their heads by our selfish kindness. But God forgets our offence out-and-out, and never shows by an act that he even imputes our iniquities to us. In estate and in feeling He restores our souls, so that, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note also that God is not only ready to forgive us on the show of repentance, but that He is not disposed to be critical against us. Weaknesses are not sprung as charges. Even sins He allows us to correct by repentance, to rub them out with tears of contrition, so that they will not be counted in adding up the sum of life.

It is related in the Koran that two angels guard every man on the earth, one watching on either side of him, and when at night he sleeps, they fly up to heaven, with a written report of all his words and actions during the day. Every good action is recorded at once, and ten times over, so that no item shall ever be lost from the account. But when they come to a sinful thing, the angel on the right says to his comrade: "Forbear for seven hours to record that; peradventure, as he wakes and thinks in the quiet hours, he may be sorry for it, and pray and obtain forgiveness." They would not have even the blotted record on the Book of Life.

This Mohammedan sentiment is undoubtedly putting into poetical imagery the sentiment recurring frequently in the Old Testament, with which Mohammed, himself a son of "Abraham," was familiar: "Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." It was with the same truth in mind, no doubt, that the apostle said of the charity he expected men to show one towards another: "Charity suffereth long and is kind, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity."

Many beautiful stories of this exercise of mutual forgiveness come down to us from the days of the early church, when Christians seemed to be more impressed with the meaning and power of the Christian duty than later. One of these relates again to the Bishop of Alexandria, who, it is told, had a fierce quarrel with the governor, so that they parted like two pieces of tinder which by their rubbing together had both caught fire; each going home in a flame of hatred. As the shadow of the declining day, however, fell into his room, the bishop grew pensive, and wrote on a slip of paper, "The sun is going down." This he sent to the governor, who, catching the reference to St. Paul's precept, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," hastened to the old bishop, and together, mutually reconciled, they stood in the sunset's benediction.

The sun is going down—the sun of life's day. When the sun goes down in mists and clouds, we say it will storm to-morrow. When it pours its quiet glory over the earth, we say it will be fair to-morrow. If life's sun goes down struggling in vain to disperse these chilling mists of unloveliness, these clouds of enmity which have exhaled from our lives here, it will not rise brightly on the eternal morn.

questions of church government. They were occupied fully with their attacks upon other points, and so a most important part of their work was left undone.

From the earliest organization into local churches, the Baptist insisted that all members of the household of faith formed a brotherhood, and were on equal footing. An independent and democratic form of church government was thus opposed to the aristocratic and monarchic form. But it was compelled to travel a path of great peril. It was sealed by the blood of faithful men. Baptists have ever stood erect in this faith of the separate independence of each church, and the perfect equality of all members. Equality and independence are ideas interwoven into the whole fabric of our churches, the ruling principles of all our institutions. It was the example of a Baptist church, settling all its questions by the vote of a majority, that led Thomas Jefferson to say that he "considered the Baptist church the only true democracy then existing in the world, and had concluded that it would be the best plan for the government of these American colonies."

We claim that our form of church government is not only apostolic, but it is also most in accord with the genius of a republic. "A free Church in a free State," as the late Count Cavour would say, is our rallying cry.

THE BIBLE ONLY.

Again, we stoutly maintain that the Bible is sole authority in matters of religion. Some think more of their former creed than of the Scriptures, from which it is professedly taken. But to a consistent Baptist, the Bible is above creed, confession or ritual. Mere forms of worship it is idle to wrangle about. If my brother can worship God consciously with the aid of a prayer-book, who am I that I should insist upon an extemporaneous form of devotion? I could easily waive all differences of this sort and say, as the young Quaker to Whitfield, "Friend George, I am as thou art. I am for bringing all to the life and power of the ever-living God, and therefore if thou wilt not quarrel with me about my hat, I will not quarrel with thee about thy gown." Matters of mere form are unessential. But truth is essential. The Bible is the truth of God, the only standard of doctrine and duty. We must not take away from this word, nor must we add to it. The invocation of saints and angels; the reverence paid to images, relics and sacred places; the command to the celibacy of the ministry; the monastic orders and life, the confessional and penance and purgatory; the doctrine of official grace derived by episcopal succession from the Apostles; the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; the application of the rite of baptism to infants—all these doctrines and practices have no binding force upon Baptists, because they are not biblical ideas, but the thoughts and inventions of men, who, in these various directions, have tried to complete the standard of Christian duty and belief. Not the bishop, not the Church, not the decisions of councils, not the creed, not the writings of men, however good and gifted—none nor all of these can bind our consciences. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is our final appeal. We can exclaim with one of the Reformers, "I had rather follow the shadow of Christ than the body of all the general councils of doctors since the death of Christ."

When young Eugenio Kincaid, afterward our veteran missionary, went to an old itinerant Baptist preacher to get a book to settle his mind upon the subject of baptism, and the aged man gave him one from his saddle-bags. Eugenio thought he had made a mistake, and ventured to say, "Did you not give me the wrong book, sir? I see this is the New Testament." Stretching himself up at full length, the white-haired patriarch said: "Young man, if you want any better book on baptism than the Bible, don't come to me!" It was a representative act. Our counsel to those asking light in religion is: "Take the New Testament. Study it prayerfully, follow honestly the impressions you thus receive, and enter any church where your conscience may lead you."

Too Much Defense Weakens.

We are told that Admiral Farragut once said: "I would never go into battle in an iron-clad, I could not handle my men, nor inspire them. If a ball strikes a wooden ship, it sends a few splinters around, two or three poor fellows are killed or wounded; but the hole is soon stopped, the deck cleared, and the fight goes on. But in an iron-clad the men feel from the first that they are in their coffin, for they

know that if a hole is knocked in her side she must sink, and it is much harder to get up their spirit for the fight. Give me a good ship of oak and put iron into the men."

Men who are weak in themselves may be so surrounded by defenses that the very safeguards become sources of danger. A minister may get entrenched behind knowledge and theological dogmas until the defenses become so weighty that if you perforate one of his cherished theories with clear-cut fact, or with sharp impinging logic, he is alarmed, and his whole system of belief is in danger of going to the bottom. He is liable to make shipwreck of his faith, because he relies too much on the outward plating of human learning and little on the knowledge of Christ's grace and love in his heart.

Another seeks a protecting panoply of respectability and dignity. He accretes to himself so weighty a character for conservatism and correct carriage, that he may be afraid to act energetically and aggressively on any great question, lest he might lose his "influence," and sink in public esteem, and that is a terrifying and dispiriting contingency. But the man who is willing to be despised and hated of a men for Christ's sake will make a much shaper fight against principalities, powers, and wicked spirits in high places. If a keen shot of contumely pierce his reputation, the hole is soon stopped, "and the fight goes on."

Another may have large money for his defense. He gets a large salary, and therefore feels tolerably secure. He he not behind a "rampart" of "almighty dollars." He supposes that he can labor and fight without fear of coming to want, and with no perplexing anxiety concerning provision for his family's comfort. But with time there may be a lurking fear that the money may decrease and his position be less. The larger the salary the greater the fear of losing it, perhaps. It is not inspiring to him to feel that his living depends on man's caprice, and that a slight turn of affairs may imperil, and cause financial ruin to stare him in the face. The fear of loss makes the man timid, temporizing and unmanly, and he is apt to please men because he thinks men hold the purse-strings. He can not fight the world, the flesh and the devil with the true courage that comes of assured faith, because he has only a wavering confidence in his moneyed defenses.

Iron is good if properly distributed. Knowledge is good if a man use it wisely. Money is good if it be rightly subordinated and unflinchingly kept in its place as servant and not master. But the best results, so far, on this planet, have not come from iron plated ships, science-plated galleys, or gold-plated men. The successful naval commander was certainly right in morals, if not in naval affairs, when he said: "Give me a good ship of oak and put iron into the men."

This is the true principle. What the good "ship of Zion" needs is not a heavy outside plating of theological evidences, scientific demonstrations, but the unquerable aggressive energy that comes from the indwelling power and love of Christ in each heart. We need the iron in the men.—West. Chr. Adv.

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