

Sin in the Church.

BY REV. I. B. COLWELL.

Sin is the curse of this world. Sin is the great barrier to the onward movement and progress of the Christian church, and we fear that one of the most deplorable features of the church today is, the light and thoughtless manner in which sin is regarded by the large percentage of professed Christians. We do not seem to have the fear and bitter abhorrence of it that our covenant relationship to Christ our Redeemer demands. Many of God's children seem to be inert to the sad and fearful consequences of sin both in the world and more especially in the church of Christ. How sacred are our covenant relations, both with Christ the great head of the church and to each other, and yet in many cases how grossly is that relationship violated and thought little or nothing of on the part of the violator and many others. Sin in any of its aspects deliberately indulged in and not repented of with feelings of deep regret, and with a sincere desire and determination to forsake it, must deaden the conscience and destroy the sense of fellowship with God. Indeed it is quite impossible for us to understand how one can be a child of God and go deliberately and sin having no compunction of conscience over it. Sin is the one thing that God hates. Sin is the one thing that made it imperative for the Son of God to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. Sin is the one tyrant that slew our Lord. And sin is the one tyrant that our Lord died to slay. He came and suffered and died that he might destroy the works of the devil. This he did in a general sense when he died and rose. His blow at Satan's kingdom was an effectual and decisive one. But it was effectual only because by the atonement he made the redemption of the individual life certain. And the redemption of the individual life inevitably involves the presence and permanent indwelling of Christ in the soul. "Know ye not that Christ is in you except ye be reprobate." Now if Christ in a living, vital sense is, by his spiritual presence indwelling in the soul, he is there for the high and holy purpose of destroying the works of the devil in that individual life. How can that soul sin then without having a deep sense of it. There must certainly be a repentant spirit and sorrow for sin as long as there are any imperfections about the life, and imperfections will no doubt lurk about us so long as we are in the flesh. But surely for church members to go on deliberately in sin, with no soul sorrow, no confession and no disposition to turn from it and forsake it, is a deplorable state of heart. We fear that there are many in our churches who do not regard sin as an enemy, who fail to look upon sin as the great destroyer of man's life and peace. But they say we must have enjoyment and our enjoyment must be in common with the world.

Great God, shall professed followers of Christ seek their enjoyment with the enemy of Christ. "Know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God." Shall Christians revel in the company of their Master's enemy? Shall they kiss the sword that smote their Redeemer's breast? God forbid! If we cannot find our highest enjoyment in the company and companionship of Christ and his saints, we fear there is something radically wrong. Brethren why is it that there are so many in our churches who seem to have little or no disposition to depart from sin? Is it not largely because there is not the deep-seated, genuine, whole-hearted repentance that God requires on the part of the individual before they are baptized and admitted into the church, and is not this largely due to the fact that there is so little said today in the pulpit upon the subject of repentance, the exceeding sinfulness of sin and its awful consequences?

John's first demand of the people was to repent. Christ says to all sinners, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Peter said on the day of Pentecost to the multitude of inquirers, repent. With a genuine repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ there will be a true conversion, and we believe there will be created in the heart such an abhorrence for sin as will never be obliterated to the end of life. Such an one will have a continual sorrow for sin. It may grow dim and faint by times but it will be there and will burn continuously upon the altar of the soul. Each individual when regenerated is to know himself as a new creature. He is in a new element of existence, and in a new sphere for action. Formerly he was in a worldly, sinful atmosphere. His entire being was reckoned on the side of evil; but now he, having risen with Christ, is to dwell in a holy, heavenly atmosphere, put off his evil propensities, and put on the new man, "who is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," and thus become an imitator of Christ as a faithful child of God. Divine authority demands of all Christians that they reckon themselves as being dead unto sin but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. Such a demand requires decision, decision of mind and heart. I am alive unto God now, I am dead and my life is hid with Christ in God, and how shall I live any longer in deliberate sin, I am God's child destined to become in character like God's son, of whose life and righteousness I have already been made partaker. Unto this great and glorious end every child of God, if true, must exercise himself continuously.

When temptations assail and sin invites we must practically say—I am not your servant to obey your voice now, but am dead to sin, because alive unto Jesus Christ. Thus shall the Christian put off day by day the old man and be transformed into the image of Christ from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But what of all this? What of all Christ's divine injunctions and exhortations and precepts if they are not recognized, applied, and obeyed by each individual to their soul's present welfare. "Sanctify them by thy truth, prayed Christ, thy word is truth." But when his children are so careless and indifferent that they will not read and search God's Word, how is the work of sanctification to progress in their lives? The Word of God, the bare, clean word of God alone, not man's expositions of it: not man's dissertations upon it, or anything that can be produced by man can become a substitute, or excuse God's children from studying that Word. If God's children would grow in grace, if they would put off the old man and have a growing aversion to sin in all its forms, they must study God's Word and know for themselves what their Father in heaven requires of them and what he is willing to do for them in that relation. If Christ's followers could be induced to search the Scriptures faithfully, for the purpose of spiritual growth, there would come a holy, divine impetus to all Christian churches. We are led to believe that there never was a day among Christians when God's word was more neglected than at present, largely due to worldliness in the church and also largely due to the fact of so many books, many of them excellent in themselves, but read much to the expense rather than to the profit of God's Holy Word. His Word cannot be neglected with impunity for anything that ever was or ever can be written. It will admit of no substitute; when it is slighted for other matter God's name and cause are dishonored, his displeasure incurred, and the result is sure to be barrenness of soul. Let the Book of all books, which always imparts fresh and vital food for the soul, have the precedence and preeminence, and let all other works come in subordinately and the result invariably will be good. We must go direct to God's Word to know his will concerning our individual lives, and if we know that and are daily impressed with it, and if the life of Christ be in us, the inevitable result will be hatred of sin, a coming in of the new man, of the Christ-life, a putting off of the old man and a fruitful, vigorous spiritual growth.

Is these things are not apparent to the individual, if he has no sorrow of soul for sin, if no longing of heart for the righteousness of Christ, what grounds has he for regarding himself a redeemed child of God. The church member that can freely engage in the vain frivolities of earth, he who can do mean and contemptible acts with his fellowmen and continue in them with little or no compunction of conscience, how dwelleth the Christ life in such persons. John the beloved disciple says, "And hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his Word in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him. He that sayeth he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked." He that is a follower of Christ ought also to walk just as near in the footsteps of Jesus as he possibly can. And we know that Jesus resisted unto blood striving against sin. He had his natural appetites and passions, to strive against in common with all other human beings; but those natural propensities of his human nature were all made to bend to an inexorably holy life and spotless character. "He was tried in all points like as we, yet without sin." And how that same Christ can dwell in the soul of a human being, and that person revel in sin and feel comfortable, and continue in it is something that is inexplicable to our mind. We would strongly urge all such to carefully and honestly examine themselves by God's Word, to find out their true condition before God, to know whether they be in the faith or not.

We are not unmindful of the fact that God's children (within themselves) are exceeding weak, and often by trusting to themselves they fall and sin grievously against their Lord. But if they do we are certain they will come to their Lord again with broken and contrite spirits. They will plead for forgiveness and will not feel restless and comfortable until they receive the assurance in their hearts that God has forgiven them. What about all the Bible characters, those who were God's redeemed? When they committed grievous sin it brought overwhelming grief to their hearts, and they openly manifested their deep repentance and repentance by sitting in sackcloth and ashes and many of them crying bitterly unto the Lord until he turned to them again in loving tender mercy. The best of God's children may stumble and fall in an unguarded moment, but we do not believe they will premeditate and execute that that will bring dishonor to God's holy cause. God has many faithful, loyal, devout children in his churches to-day, who are doing faithful work for him and who are daily exercising themselves to have a conscience void of offence. But we fear such is not the case with all, even of those who are among the truly redeemed of God. There are those

whose conversion we have no absolute reason to doubt but yet who live in a careless indifferent manner toward the cause of Christ and indulge in much that is dishonoring to that cause. They do not seem to consider their obligations to their God, the welfare of the church, nor the salvation of lost men. The Christian who is interested in the redemption of his fellowmen will be careful in his conversation before the world; he will suppress any spirit of unjust and selfish rivalry; he will deal with the utmost equity with his neighbors in all business affairs, and thus be careful to bring no reproach which the world may use as an argument against the church of Christ. The man who refuses to carry his religion into his business and every-day acts and be governed by it, cannot be a light in the world, and disregards the voice of his Master who demands of him that he do to others as he would others should do to him. That man will retard the progress of the church and will drive sinners toward skepticism rather than toward Christ. Many evils exist in the church of Christ to-day having the tendency to kill the spirituality and vital life of the church and make the preaching of the word largely ineffectual.

Brethren, what shall we do? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? Shall we allow these various evils which are threatening the very life of our churches to continue unmolested; or shall we endeavor to use the hand of discipline in a kind and judicious yet in a frank and effective manner?

Many to-day are crying out against church discipline, even the working part of the church. Why is this? Is it because discipline is not taught in the Scriptures? Surely not, for anyone who reads that Word must acknowledge that God has made it imperative as one of the conditions of prosperity in the church that sin shall be put away from among his people. There would be little or no trouble in the use of discipline in the church if there was united concerted action with the working part of each church. But one of the great difficulties is that the offender himself or his great grandfather gives a few dollars into the treasury of the church and if you lay hands on him in any way you will lose their money, or you are going to offend some one else. And so sin is harbored in the church, believing it is better to tolerate sin and hold the money and friendship of the offender rather than the approval of God and the obedience of his Word.

There certainly are difficulties and hard work connected with the work of keeping the church pure; but if we are not willing to do some hard work for the Lord and his cause we are not worthy of him. One thing I believe is a necessity in the church to-day and would probably be somewhat disciplinary in itself, that is a church covenant with such restrictions as would make discipline more practicable and decisive.

May God hasten the day when there will be more staunch backbone and purer material in the church; when men will more fully anticipate and realize the blessed force of the purging beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Letter From India.

A few weeks since I wrote briefly of the state of things on our mission field as regards famine, crops, and the outlook for the future. The prospect at that time was dark, and not until a few days past has there been any decided change for the better. There were light showers, it is true, that kept the growing crops on the dry lands alive but not until last week were there any heavy showers, at least in the Bobbili field, to enable the people to begin transplanting the rice seedlings. All about here the cultivators were almost in despair. The plants where they had not dried up were getting too old to transplant with any hope of a fair crop. But about ten days ago a very welcome change took place and good showers began to fall in some places. At first they were very local and unevenly distributed. To give an example. I started a week ago last night for a short trip to Rajam.

The next evening while only a few miles from Bobbili we had a very heavy rain while at Bobbili there was none. Fifteen miles from Bobbili there had been several heavy rains and the tanks were full and the rice plants had been largely transplanted. A few miles the other side very little rain had fallen and the rice plants had been much injured. During last week heavy showers fell in many places while others were not touched. At one village where some of our native Christians live and are trying to support themselves by cultivating there has been no rain and the rice plants have not been transplanted at all. Still on the whole the situation has changed a good deal for the better and prices are falling slightly. Ten days ago the cultivators would hardly sell grain at all and there was rumor that they were going to sell no more unless rain came. Now that rain has come and there is a possibility of a rice crop they are selling more freely and the fear of immediate famine has passed. Until a few days since the situation was a very serious one and we hesitated in expending all the money sent to us for famine relief, fearing that in a short time famine

might break out and continue to se famine districts. The situation is going months and months. Already a good mission has been sent and the perishing. are in need of of the way in been economic. We have not f Christians beyo my own field of more. Some of and are still ha

Three weeks forty-seven mile community. U they had very very much and high and there While I was th matters very mu their chief crops This is a very se they laggedly dep and shall have t I baptized three ward but were a tians seem to be

A request was have not seen th principal men of rather hold it un service they ren tians the greater raise money for feasts and liquor. sons have all bee able to redeem t from it. They l dollars to redeem the land and the repaid. Could th could pay it and the Christian com mission money fo own at present t all the same they will be greatly di my late visit to believing our tea help them to get mean it. There is a true believer an tism as soon as h seems much inter slowly the truth i of waiting for bri down in our time. time and way. Bobbili, Aug. 31

"A Glimpse at"

Bimlipatam th been so troubleso conference of the to Vizagapatam to her since we met pleasure in store.

I hope your me zeal! Bimil is at those who live the from Vizianagram is no "lively stable one fine evening m and we all proceed No lady of legend o as do wayfarers in baskets, fans, umb Lastly I followed th the friends and star I had no care, and doors I sat looking through the town a we were fairly starte After about an hour ed guard on the pol kept hurrying on farther and farther dreamland. But al the oxen without th was still. "The bo which I could succ understand, was "to to arouse myself driver," to goad th