

The Berean.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—Acts xvii. 11.

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THE SETTING SUN.

A FATHER'S ANSWER TO HIS CHILD.

"Why does the sun go down?"
Thy infant lips exclaim,
As thou gazest on the departing orb,
While heaven seems wrapt in flame.
It goes to cheer another sphere,
Make other hills look bright,
And chase away from distant realms,
The hovering shades of night.

"Why does the sun go down?"
Perchance thou soon mayst say,
As the fond bright dreams of childhood's years
Are vanishing away.
Those fairy dreams desert thee now,
And their magic charms are riven,
To show the earth is at best but dark,
And light proceeds from heaven.

"Why does the sun go down?"
Perhaps thou mayst whisper too,
As the warmer beams of youthful love
Are fitting fast from view,
To bid thee fix thy heart on things
Beyond the gulf of time,
And never expect enduring bliss
In the earth's ungenial clime.

"Why does the sun go down?"
Thou mayst ask in deeper gloom,
When the hand that writes these verses now,
Is laid in the silent tomb;
And O may heaven this sacred truth
Stamp deep on thy bosom then—
It does but quit the scene awhile,
In glory to rise again!
Church of Engl. Magazine.

THE WORD OF GOD

NOT DEPENDENT FOR AUTHORITY UPON TRADITION.

To the question, How shall we undoubtedly know the Scriptures to be the Word of God? "I answer," says Dr. Chalmers, "that we may know them to be so, partly by the light of the Word, that is, the divine notes and characters therein imprinted, and partly by the enlightening and persuading grace of God's Spirit, enabling us to see, and moving us to believe what we see." And he remarks,—"The former, (which is, the word itself, and the notes thereof) cannot be denied by an ingenious Papist, to be there found; for howsoever some of them, by a just judgment of God, for being injurious to the Scriptures, in branding them with obscurity, imperfections, &c., have been so blinded by the Prince of Darkness, that (setting aside the judgment of the Church) no reason to them hath appeared wherefore A'sop's Fables should not, as well as the Scriptures themselves be thought canonical, yet others, as Bellarmine, Greg. de Valentin, Gretser, &c., do acknowledge these distinguishing notes to be in their kind argumentative, and to shine in them, as the excellency of the doctrine, concord, efficacy and the like, whereby may be verified of the whole books of God, what the officers sent by the Pharisees and Priests saw of our Saviour, John vii: *Never man spake like this man.* Nor is the latter (which is the inward testimony of the Spirit) denied, by the learned sort of Papists, to possess another chief place in the discovery of the Scriptures. For although in popular air they seem to vent the contrary, yet when they are called to give a more sober account in writing, they utter the same in effect which we do." Be the case, then, as it may in this respect, with that which patristical tradition delivers to us, Scripture at least has a testimony to the fact of its being a revelation from God, far higher and more influential than any human witness.

Hence the conclusion of the Tractators, that because there is (as they suppose) as good testimony in the Fathers for the apostolicity of certain doctrines and rites, as for the apostolic origin of the Scriptures; therefore if we believe the latter, we must also believe the former, is altogether groundless and unwarrantable. For even supposing that the patristical testimony for the two should be equally strong (which we altogether deny) this is but one, and the least persuasive portion of the evidence for the divine origin of Scripture. The Fathers may bear equally strong testimony to two things, one of which is true, and the other false, and of which, therefore, the former only has the witness of the Spirit in its favour.

And that more influential witness of the Spirit is, we may hope, enjoyed by every humble-minded inquirer after truth; for if they who are evil, as our blessed Lord reminds us, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Nor will it be any cause for scepticism to a mind thus taught, if it should even happen that the external evidence for the divine origin of that Word which he venerates as the Word of God, is less strong than it might be.

How, indeed, is a conviction of the divine origin of Scripture to be produced otherwise in thousands who are unable to investigate the external evidence? To those who know not what that evidence is, or are unable to appreciate it, it cannot be a sufficient foundation for faith.

And shall we deprive Christianity of its glory, as being the Dispensation of the Spirit, and leave the poor and illiterate either to grope their way among the records of antiquity to find a foundation for their faith, or to pin their faith upon the affirmation of a few individuals, when the Scripture offers such gracious promises of assistance to the sincere inquirer after truth?

To make historical testimony the only ground for belief in this truth, is equivalent to admitting that nine tenths of mankind have no sure foundation for their belief in it, for how- ever valid that testimony may be, (they neither

know what it is nor are able to appreciate its value.

Thus much, then, we have felt it necessary to premise on a point, which, alas! the Tractators seem altogether to have overlooked.

Further, to make the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture rest upon the bare affirmation of the Fathers, (as our opponents do,) is equivalent to saying that our belief in the divine origin of Scripture is founded on no better evidence than the belief of Mohammedans in the divine origin of the Koran. For the chief and vital point in this doctrine is the divine origin of the revelation contained in Scripture, for which the belief of any number of individuals is no sufficient foundation for faith.

Let us observe that it is not a mere matter of fact which is here involved, nor what could ever be the object of knowledge to any individual, but a doctrine which, in all cases, could only be an object of faith. Moreover, it is a doctrine standing upon a foundation peculiar to itself. For even granting that patristical tradition might be a safe medium for the conveyance of the oral teaching of the Apostles, the concession proves nothing for the validity of such tradition, as a proof of the inspiration of the Apostles; for it is not the assertion of any number of individuals, or of the Apostles themselves, that can be any sufficient proof to us of their inspiration.

Nor does it help us to take such tradition as indicating that strict catholic consent which we may suppose from the promise of Christ to ensure freedom from error; for supposing that we had such catholic consent, it would prove nothing in the point about which we are inquiring, because its supposed authority rests upon the very truth in question. Catholic consent, to one who is yet unconvinced of this truth, is but the consent of a certain number of individuals, and he who says that he believes the divine mission of our Lord and his Apostles on such a ground, does in effect say that he believes the Christian religion because a certain number of persons believed it eighteen centuries ago, which would be as good a reason for believing any form of Paganism or Mohammedism.

This, therefore, is a truth, the proof of which extends over a much wider field than patristical tradition, and requires a much broader foundation than such tradition can supply it with.

We may, indeed, be indebted to the patristical tradition as one and a necessary witness of the facts upon which the external evidence for Scripture being the Word of God is founded, but no assertions of Christian writers that the New Testament is a divine revelation can be of themselves any more a sufficient proof than so it is, than the assertions of Mohammedan writers that the Koran came from God.—*Goode's Divine Rule of Faith and Practice.*

A MARTYR'S LETTER TO HIS WIFE.

[The following interesting relic from the days of martyrdom, is found in the original French, in a small volume, printed in the year 1568. It appears that Guy de Bres, the writer of the subjoined letter, was a minister of the Reformed Church of Valenciennes, who was imprisoned on the 15th of April, 1567, and put to death on the last Saturday in May of the same year. The volume above alluded to, as containing his history, letters, &c., happening to come into the possession of a lady (now deceased), who was well versed in the French language, she committed to writing the following translation.]—*New York Christian Intelligencer.*

The grace and mercy of our good God and Heavenly Father, and the love of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, be with your spirit.

Your anguish and grief somewhat disturbing my joy, and the gladness of my heart, I write to you now, as much for your consolation as for mine, inasmuch as you have always loved me with a very ardent affection; and now it pleases the Lord to separate us, for which separation I feel your affection more than mine, and pray that you may not trouble yourself beyond measure, fearing to offend God. You know that when you espoused me, you took a mortal husband, who was not sure of living one minute; and yet it hath pleased our good God to permit us to live together for the space of seven years, and to give us five children. If the Lord had determined that we should live a longer time together, he could easily have caused it so to be; but it pleased him not—therefore, his good pleasure be done.

On the other hand, consider that I have not fallen into the hands of my adversaries by chance, but by the providence of my God, who conducts and governs all things, small as well as great, as is evident by what Christ said, "Fear not, your hairs are all numbered. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall upon the earth without the will of your Father. Fear not, then, ye are of more value than many sparrows." What is of less worth in our estimation than a hair? Nevertheless it is the mouth of divine wisdom which says, that God has registered the number of my hairs. How, then, can evil and adversity befall me without the order and providence of God? That can in no wise be, unless we say that God is no longer God.

Joseph being sold by his brethren, to be led into Egypt, said, You have done an evil deed, but God has converted it to your good. God has sent me before you into Egypt for your profit. Other instances might be mentioned, as of David when cursed by Shimei; of Job, &c.; and this is the reason why the Evangelists treat so particularly of the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, adding, and this was done in order that what was written of Him might be accomplished. It is very true, that human reason contends against this

doctrine, and resists it as long as she can, and I myself have very fully experienced it. When I was apprehended, I said in myself, we have ill done to walk so great a company together; we have been discovered by such an one, and such an one; we should stop no where. Under such reflections I remained quite overwhelmed in my thoughts, until I raised my mind higher in the meditation of the providence of God; then my heart began to feel a wonderful repose. I began to say, my God! thou didst bring me into the world, in the day and hour that thou hadst appointed, and during all my life thou hadst kept and preserved me from extreme dangers, and delivered me from them all; if now mine hour is come that I must pass from this life to thee, thy good will be done; I cannot escape from thy hands; and if I might, I would not, inasmuch as it is all my felicity to conform myself to thy will.

All these considerations have rendered, and do still render my heart very cheerful and active. I pray you, my dear and faithful companion, to rejoice with me, and to thank this good God for what he has done, for he does nothing that is not just and equitable. Above all, you ought to rejoice inasmuch as it is for my good, and my repose. You have been fully sensible of my labours, crosses, persecutions, and afflictions which I have endured, and have even participated in them, when you accompanied me in my travels during the time of my exile. And now my God is willing to extend his hand to receive me into his blessed kingdom. I go before you, but the separation may not be long, and when it shall please the Lord that you shall follow me, he will receive you also, and unite us together to our Head, Jesus Christ. This is not the place of our habitation, that is in heaven; this is the place of our pilgrimage; therefore let us aspire after our true country, which is in heaven, and desire especially to be received into the house of our Heavenly Father, to see our Brother, Head, and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the very noble company of Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, and many thousands of Martyrs, into which company I hope to be admitted, when I shall have finished the course of the ministry which I have received of my Lord Jesus. I pray you, then, my dear beloved, that you will console yourself in the meditation of these things; consider seriously the honour that God does you in giving you a husband who is not only a minister of the Son of God, but also so much esteemed and valued of God that he designs to make him partaker of the Crown of Martyrs. Such an honour has not been done even to angels: My heart is joyful, I want nothing. I am filled with the abundance of the riches of my God. I pray him to continue toward me, his prisoner, his goodness and benignity, which I hope he will do, for I know, by experience, that he will never forsake those who hope in him. I had never thought that God had been so gracious towards so poor a creature as I am. I feel now the faithfulness of my Lord Jesus Christ. I practise now, what I have so long preached to others, and, indeed, I must confess that when I did preach to others, I spake as a blind man of colours, in comparison to what I now feel in practising. I have learned and profited more since I have been a prisoner, than all my life before. I am in a very good school. The Holy Spirit inspires me continually, and teaches me to handle the weapons in this combat. On the other side, Satan, the adversary of all the children of God, who is like a roaring lion, encompasses me on every side to wound me, but he who has said, "Fear not, I have overcome the world," makes me victorious.

Already I see the Lord brise Satan under my feet, and feel the power of God perfected in my infirmity. Our Lord makes me feel on one side my infirmity and my littleness, that I am but a poor earthen vessel, fragile in power, in order that I might humble myself, and that all the glory of the victory may be given to Him. On the other side, He fortifies and consoles me in an incredible manner. I am even more at my ease than the enemies of the Gospel. I eat, drink, and repose, better than they. I am lodged in the strongest prison, and the most wretched there is; gloomy and dark; for its obscurity is called *Drunain*; no air is admitted but through a small impure passage. I have chains on the feet and hands large and heavy—which serve me for a continual torment, making a cavity even in my poor bones. After the Provost Marshal came to visit my chains two or three times a day, fearing that I might escape, they placed a guard of 30 men before the door of my prison. I have also the visitation of M. de Lamouide, who comes to see me, to comfort and exhort me to penitence. He says he comes willingly after dinner, when he has wine in his head, and has filled himself with meats—you can imagine what those consolations are which he brings. He threatens me violently, and says that if I make the least sign of wishing to escape, he will order me to be chained by the neck, the body, and the legs, so that I cannot move a finger,—and other similar resolutions; yet notwithstanding all that, my God does not permit him to keep his promise, but consoles my heart, in giving me very great contentment.

Seeing these things are so, my good sister and faithful wife, I pray you to comfort yourself in the Lord, in your afflictions, and surrender to him both yourself and your affairs. He is the Husband of faithful widows, and the Father of poor orphans. He will never leave you; of that I can assure you. Conduct yourself always like a Christian woman, and faithful in the fear of God, as you always have done, and honour as much as lies in your power, by your good life and conversation, the doctrine of the Son of God, which your husband has preached; and as you have loved me very affectionately, I entreat you to

continue it towards our little children; instruct them in the knowledge of the true God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. Be their father and mother; see that they be treated honestly respecting the little that God has given you.

If God grant you the favour of living after my decease in widowhood with your children, you will do very well. When the means fail, and you are not able, see that you go to some worthy faithful man, fearing God, of whom there is good evidence. When I have the means, I will write to our friends that they may have care of you, as I think they will be wanting to you. You can return to your first manner of living, after the Lord shall have removed me. Our daughter Sarah will ere long be old enough to be instructed; she can keep you company, and assist you in your affliction, and console you in your distress. The Lord will be always with you. Salute all our good friends in my name; may they entreat God for me, that he will give me strength, a mouth and wisdom to maintain the truth of the Son of God, even to the end, and unto the last sign of life.

Adieu, Catharine, my best friend; I pray my God to watch over, console you, and in his mercy give you comfort. I hope that God will grant me the favour to write more to you if it please him, so comfort you as long as I shall be in this poor world. Keep my letter for a remembrance of me; it is badly written, but as I can, not as I wish. I pray you to commend me to my mother; I hope to write her some consolation, if it please God. Salute also my good sister; may she betake herself to God in affliction. Alay you be blessed. Your faithful husband,
GUY DE BRES,

Minister of the word of God at Valenciennes, and now prisoner of the Son of God in the said place.

From the Prison, April 10, 1567.

CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD.

"And Ananias," says the historian, "went his way, and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, said, 'Brother Saul.' What a salutation was this from one of the meek and lowly followers of our Lord to the persecutor and blasphemer!" "Brother Saul!" without reluctance and without delay, he acknowledges that man as a brother, whom God had so astonishingly acknowledged as a son. He requires no further introduction, no further testimony, but gives at once the right hand of fellowship, and with it gives his affections and his heart.

How does such an example, my brethren, put to shame the cold, unkindly feelings of the Christians of the present day. It is not enough for them to know that a man is a Christian, to induce them to acknowledge him as a brother; they must know every clause in his creed, every feature of his religious character; they must hear him pronounce, with the most unquestionable distinctness, the Shibboleth of their own party: he must believe, not simply all that he can discern in the word of God, but all that they can discern there, even to their latest discovery, to the revelation of yesterday, or he is no brother of theirs. Verily the bonds of discipleship are drawn so closely together in these our days, that a modern Ananias, instead of going his way, and bailing this poor convert as a disciple indeed, because the Lord had said, "He is a chosen vessel unto me," would have replied, "Nay, but O Lord, does he believe all that I believe? has he seen the great things that I have seen out of thy word? for if not, I cannot give him the right hand of fellowship; I cannot call him brother."

My brethren, beware of all such contracted views of Christian fellowship, which are daily dividing the seamless garment of our Lord into the vilest shreds and tatters; learn to make no distinction, except that which the converted Paul himself made in after days, when he said, "Grace be with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Let this be the broad platform of your Christian fellowship; let every minor point, whether of doctrine or of discipline, be merged in this—in every lover of your Redeemer, recognise a friend; to the feeblest lamb of His fold stretch out a helping hand; to the weakest of His true and sincere followers, offer a sympathizing heart. Among the members of our Lord's blessed family, among the sheep of His "little flock" there should be no divisions, no distinctions: our language to all, however they may differ from us in the non-essentials of our holy religion, should be, if a chosen vessel, if a child of God, then a fellow heir of the same grace, an expectant of the same glory; a brother here, a more than brother throughout eternity.—*Lectures on the History of St. Paul, by the Rev. H. J. Hunt, A. M., formerly of Chelsea, last of Strathearn.*

THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.

Among those periodicals of the Church of England, which happily still maintain the principles of the Reformation, The Christian Observer holds a place of great respectability. It commenced its career, in the year 1802; at once an indication and a fruit of a blessed revival of our apostolical Church, from that state of lamentable torpor and decay, into which it had sunk, during the preceding century.

The late Rev. John Yenn, Rector of Clapham, if not the first Editor, was very early associated with the conductors of the work; and, for a considerable period, held an influential place among them. His great ability and fervent piety, probably, contributed much to give it favour, and to promote its usefulness, among the more serious part of the community. No doubt is entertained (though it cannot be absolutely asserted, as a fact) by the writer of this sketch, that the highly-honoured names of Wilberforce and Thornton

(to the latter of whom so powerful a testimony is inserted, in the Berean of the 3d July) were found among its earliest and most frequent contributors.

After some years, another name, not to be mentioned without veneration, that of the late Zachary Macaulay, was added to the list of its conductors. His regular quota to the work, furnished for many years (besides occasional papers) was a brief, but lucid, and very able "View of Public Affairs;" in which the most interesting events of the preceding month were adverted to, in a truly Christian spirit.

The present Editor, (who, though extensively known as such, must be nameless here, in compliance with his understood feelings,) has held that responsible post, it is believed, almost thirty years. It must be acknowledged, that the elaborate style, frequently to be found in the earlier volumes, has but rarely appeared of late; but this change, in a work commenced so long ago, can scarcely be perceptible to the present generation of readers; especially as a new series was begun in the year 1838; within the bounds of which, probably, the great majority will confine their knowledge of the work. It is highly gratifying to add, that there is no falling off, in higher matters; in a healthy tone of piety; in zeal for the honour of our Blessed Redeemer, and lively interest in the establishment of His Kingdom, in the world; especially, as connected with the operation of Societies for the diffusion of the Scriptures, and for the evangelization of Jews and Heathens.

A large portion of the work is devoted to the "Review of New Publications;" in which, not unfrequently, great ability has been displayed. More recently, the Editor, by giving copious extracts from the work noticed, seems often to have wished rather to leave to the reader the task of deciding on its merits, than to pronounce any very direct opinion of his own.

To the lovers of Sacred Poetry, a rich treat has sometimes been afforded, by original contributions of this kind; but, for some months, there has been a lack of that attractive article.

It is a remarkable, and somewhat peculiar recommendation of the work, that, for a number of years, it has been regularly reprinted in the United States of America; (circulating chiefly, of course, among the friends of our Episcopal communion) and that the plan has, it is understood, met with considerable encouragement.

In these sifting times, (when temptations to unfaithfulness abound; when principle is too often balanced against expediency; when some are blinded by authority, and others led astray by self-will; so that defections from the faith once delivered to the saints, are, alas! not uncommon,) it deserves honourable mention, that the Christian Observer still "contends earnestly" for the precious truth, which breathes throughout the Liturgy, and is so plainly set forth in the Articles and Homilies of our Scriptural Church. In this view, the present conductors may well claim the gratitude of all those (through Divine goodness, not few in number) who yet glory in the name of PROTESTANT.

J. R. S. L.

23d Sept. 1845.

THE NESTORIANS.

Favourable prospect of their security, given in a letter to the New York Observer.

Onoontant, (Persia), June 23d, 1845.

Among the many events indicative of the waning tendency of Mohammedan power and bigotry in the East, which mark the present period, one has recently occurred which is particularly interesting to us, as affecting the condition and prospects of the Nestorians of this country. These nominal Christians have at last realized the object of a long cherished desire, in securing from the Persian government the appointment of a Christian governor, to shield them from the grinding oppression which they have experienced so many ages from their unfeeling Mohammedan masters. David Khan, a Georgian by birth, but for many years a Persian subject, and holding the rank of a brigadier general in the Shah's army, is the individual appointed to the government of the Nestorians.

Ten years ago a measure of this kind would have been deemed little less difficult than a change in the dynasty of the Empire. As it is now understood that this Christian governor of the Nestorians will be sustained by the European embassies, as well as by the authority of the King, it seems hardly probable that there will be any violent attempt to thwart this provision of the Persian government to protect its Nestorian subjects,—especially as the Afshans have lately learned to apprehend, that such an attempt would be likely to recoil severely upon its authors.

This change in the circumstances of the Nestorians, if the experiment prove successful, (which, from the nature of the case, is more or less problematical,) cannot fail essentially to meliorate their temporal condition and prospects. It removes a mountain pressure that has hitherto crushed their spirits, and their energies, and raises them up in some measure to the dignity of man. It drives trembling and want from their humble dwellings, and throws around them quiet and comfort. It will also, as we trust, contribute much to facilitate the progress of the Gospel among these fallen Christians.

As ever yours,
J. PERKINS.

A CHANGE INDEED.

You know I have been always a practical man—but I look my own views—made for myself a kind of religion, which I thought to be Christianity, but which I freely confess was not the Christianity of the Word of God. For instance, I studiously separated the ways