

The Christian.

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THE CHRISTIAN has just closed its first year, and with this issue commences its second volume. Let our readers remember that if they wish to have the paper continued they should at once renew their subscription. Subscribers need not wait for an agent. Let each be his own agent, and coupled with his or her name send at least one other accompanied with the money, and the circulation of our paper will be greatly increased.

EDITORIAL.

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION A MEANS OF GRACE.

The saved in Christ like himself feel for the salvation of others. Whatever may be our profession or position if we have no such desires we have not the Spirit of Christ and are none of his. True Christians often ask themselves how can we succeed in leading dear friends to the Saviour that they may share with us his pardoning love, and no joy is greater than the assurance that God makes them instrumental in the salvation of others. Let all such remember that God has appointed religious conversation to be a means of grace.

The Psalmist calls his tongue his glory and resolves with all his heart to consecrate it to the service of God. The tongue is the noblest of our members and the helm of our character. The man who governs his own spirit stands foremost in the rank of conquering heroes, and he who can effectually bridle his own tongue finds that government comparatively easy. The tongue is a fire, and can set on fire the course of nature, but if it be itself fired with the love of God it will kindle and spread a fire that will enlighten and purify those who come within its influence. Hence the Apostle exhorts the Galatians: "Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt that ye may know how you ought to answer every man," (4-6); and the Ephesians: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (iv 29).

Here it is plainly implied that corrupt communication is apt to come even from Christians for they are commanded to anticipate them before they proceed out of their mouth, and to keep their speech always with grace seasoned with salt.

We are sometimes shocked with the speech of those excited by passion or crazed with liquor. But the venom with which they use the awful names of God and Jesus Christ rather disgusts and warns the hearers than corrupts them, and it is not to such the Apostle alludes but to such conversation as Christians inadvertently fall into, and may appear harmless though of a most corrupting tendency. Of these we will consider, 1st, speaking evil of

others in their absence. When we compare our own hearts and lives with God's word how many and conspicuous our faults will appear even to ourselves. But how much more so will they appear to others. If others exaggerate these faults and make them a subject of conversation, how unkind to us and corrupting to all concerned. If we do so to others it will have the same effect. "To dwell on the virtues of others is kind to them and happyfying to ourselves and the hearers while the opposite is to speak evil of the law and to judge the law." James iv.-11.

The use of unguarded opinions is corrupting. We shrink from the man who takes the awful name of God in vain whether in anger or in jest, but such expressions as "By George," "By Golly," "By Jove," etc., may not at all alarm us. But if we call the former swearing what can we call the latter but *swearing in milder form*. It can have no other meaning, and that it has a meaning is evident or it would not be used. Christians are apt to use such expressions in careless imitation of others, not remembering their corrupting tendency. Why is medicine that is nauseous and forbidding diluted or given in milder form? To induce others to take it, so that they may receive all of its power *deprived of its loathsomeness*. And perhaps there is no sin that Satan does not dilute that its power may be received by men to corrupt them. Jesus has positively forbidden all such communications. "Swear not at all, neither by Jerusalem, by heaven, or earth or by any other oath, but let your communication be yea or nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matt. v. 34-37).

3. Worldly conversation on the Lord's day is corrupting. Men whose hearts and treasures are in the world are expected to talk of the world. It is only the law of the land that prevents them doing business on the Lord's day, but that law does not interfere with their conversation, and their speech is the same on that day as on others. But true Christians regard this as the Lord's own day and to be kept from secular employment in commemoration of his glorious resurrection. They are glad that the law of the land guards this day and permits them to worship and serve their risen Lord and to proclaim to all men that he is the Son of the living God and the Saviour of men. They have opportunity to edify each other on this day as well as to influence those that are without if their speech is always with grace seasoned with salt, but if these opportunities be lost the loss of souls may follow. If young Christians hear their elder brethren engage harshly in worldly conversation on the Lord's day they will regard the practice as innocent and will of course enjoy it. This will lead their young minds to relish such things, and after a while the Lord's house will be given up to enjoy pleasant company and conversation. Had they from the first regarded it as an evil and a dangerous snare they might have been saved. Such vain and worldly conversation will encourage the unconverted to pursue their course. They think that professors have no more interest in that day and in heavenly things than they have themselves for they cannot see how much better it is to have the heart and conversation wholly on the world than to have the hands engaged in it.

It injures the Christian himself. God has given him six days for secular purposes, but has reserved one to commune with his people, and to be deprived of such sweet communion is an immense loss to himself as well as an injustice to his God; hence the necessity of religious conversation on the Lord's day.

The Apostle shows that the proper conversation of Christians is good and that its use is to edify and minister grace to the hearer.

God himself makes conversation a means of grace between him and the world. He does not govern the minds of men by physical force, nor instinct, but by words spoken to their understanding and affections. He sent his Son to dwell with us as "The Word" to speak his mind and tell his will concerning our salvation. The Holy Spirit - as Christ's advocate spoke to the apostles and led them

into all truth so that they might tell that truth to others for their salvation.

Man has two gifts that distinguish him from the brute. The first is reason, the second is speech. The highest use of his reason is to know God, and the noblest use of his speech is to make God known. It is by conversation a man affects and influences others. This is true whether the conversation is of politics, temperance or religion. To speak of wealth inspires the love of money; a conversation about impurity will pollute the mind, and to speak of God and Christ and heaven will purify men and draw them to the Saviour. As soon as the Holy Spirit through the apostles told the people that the Son of man was lifted up on the cross they were drawn to him.

Religious conversation is good to minister grace to men awakened to see their lost state who are struggling and halting between life and death. How often has an anxious soul put himself in the way of Christians, hoping to hear them speak of Jesus and his love, and how sad his disappointment at their silence on these themes. But how pure his joy when a pious Christian *did* converse with him, found out his trouble and told him how Jesus would deliver him from all his guilty fears. He spoke to him of the wondrous love of Christ and how ready he was to save him on terms so plain and easy that he could understand and accept. How precious to his heart was that conversation. The spot on which it took place he could always remember as the gate of heaven and even the form of his friend would ever be before him as an angel of mercy.

Christians although they may not know it are surrounded by many who are anxious and wavering and ready to perish and to whom a few words fitly spoken might prove "words of eternal life," which shows the necessity of having the speech always with grace seasoned with salt that they might know how to answer every man. Different men need different answers and different treatment. All need the Truth, but certain parts of the Truth are adapted to different circumstances and cases, and he who rightly uses the Truth so as to save souls is wise. "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God." Let him speak the truth *in love*. A conversation largely mingled with humility, anxiety, pity and love is useful to minister grace to the hearers.

Religious conversation is good for the use of edifying even in times of religious declension. In the days of Malachi when "they that feared the Lord" could not gain the attention of those outside their own circle they sought out each other for religious fellowship and "spake often one to another and the Lord hearkened and heard it." Although their conversation was heard and unheeded by others it stirred up their own minds to holy activity and it entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth and was favorably noted in his book of remembrance. Who could despair of religious revival following associations like these!

True Christians are in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and they are engaged in the same work. The work of the Holy Spirit on earth was to influence and save men by speaking to them the words of Christ; the great work of Christians is the same and it is only by their union with the Holy Spirit and dependence on him they can be successful. What can be grander than the words uttered by the Son of God in his parting speech announcing the union and the work of his Spirit and his bride as if he said "I am now about to speak to men for the last time until I call the living and the dead to Judgment. But just before I place a guard around "this Book" and direct my amanuensis to pronounce the benediction and close the Book I would declare my love to sinners and my intense anxiety to save them." And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.' Rev. xxii. 17.

D. C.

BRO. FORD'S article will, no doubt, appear in our next issue.