

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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MEDITATION FOR LENT.

Continued.

The yoke of Christ is our cross which we have to bear, and thus it becometh us to die unto the world. A man may shut himself up in cloisters, he may bind himself by vows and rules; and he may remain utterly in the world all the while, full of spiritual pride, pharisaical contempt of others, secret hatred and envy. But by constant, hidden, penitential sorrow, the inward man turns from Satan to God, dies to the world and lives to Christ by faith, by real humility and meekness, depending upon the grace of God through Christ.

It is He hath called us to this inward sorrow for sin and turning of the heart from the world to God: and thereupon he has promised forgiveness of sin, and the imputation of his righteousness and perfect obedience by virtue of faith. For without such inward penitence, Christ cannot benefit man: man has no part in his grace and in the fruit of his merits, which must be apprehended by a heart grieving over sin, contrite, humble, and believing. Such is the fruit in us of Christ's death, that through penitence we die unto sin; such is the fruit of Christ's resurrection that Christ lives in us and we in him.

This, then, is the new creature in Christ which alone availeth. Be careful to understand this matter aright. Numbers err by imagining that they truly repent because they abstain from the outward sins of idolatry, blasphemy, murder, theft, and adultery; and true enough it is that they ought to abstain, as the prophet Isaiah saith (i.v. 7) "Let the wicked forsake his way." (See also Ezek. xviii. 27, and xxxiii. 14.) But prophets and apostles have looked much deeper than this—even into the heart of man—and have taught us of an inward repentance which makes man die unto pride, covetousness, and sensuality; deny and abhor self, renounce the world and every thing that he calls his own—surrender himself to God, crucify the flesh, daily present to God the acceptable offering of a heart broken, contrite, and anxious, the soul weeping within him—such as is described in the penitential Psalm. Upon such repentance there followeth amendment of the external life.

If, then, a man amend his life because he fears punishment, yet undergo no change in his heart, and experience not the beginning of a new inward life in Christ, he is yet in danger of condemnation, and his crying "Lord, Lord" will not profit him; he will hear an answer: "I know thee not." It is not those who say "Lord, Lord" that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of their Father who is in heaven. (Matth. vii. 21.) This applies to persons of quality even as to those of low degree; to the learned even as to those of mean attainments. None of those who do not truly repent in their hearts and become new creatures in Christ, will be recognised by the Lord as his own and peculiar people.

Unto thee, then, O God and Father, who triest the hearts and reins, do I confess my fall and corruption. They are known to thee better than to myself; but thou, from whom nothing is hid, knowest also that it is a grief to me to bear this body of sin, and to feel in me the poison of the serpent. Thou, righteous God, mightest justly reject from thy presence and from every hope of mercy the soul which forsook thee first:—but thy gracious word reveals thee as a Father, and I come to thee, beseeching thee through thy Son Jesus, let my soul be precious in thy sight. Give me grace that I may be turned wholly—suffer me not to deceive my own soul by a feigned repentance, but do thou convert me, that I may be converted truly. Help thou me, and I shall be helped. Make my righteousness to exceed that of the scribes and pharisees. Let not my lips only and my outward members surrender themselves to thy service, but renew thou even the depths of my heart, so that, dying unto sin, I may live to thee alone in Christ. His yoke I would cheerfully take upon me, in his footsteps I would walk, turning neither to the right nor to the left. Thou, O my God, must work this in me, and when thou guidest, I shall run. Ah, guide me, hasten me on, my God, and leave me not, till from the guilt and love of sin thou hast wholly turned me to thyself, purified me by the blood of Jesus, and for ever united me to thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.—From TRUE CHRISTIANITY by Johann Arnd, General Superintendent of the Clergy of Zelle, died 1621.

HE BARE THE SIN OF MANY. IS. LIII. 12.

The imputation of sin to Christ is no idle tale. It is no fond, unwarranted idea, in the believer's mind:—a mere nominal transference, effected by the insertion of a few figures on the debit and credit side of the eternal reckoning. It was a real transaction between the Father and the Son. It was a business of life and death in which our Surety was engaged. Our case is certainly not an ideal one. Every day gives us fresh proofs by pain, sorrow, sickness, and death, that sin is something more than a mere word. We feel that we are bound under its curse. And when Christ undertook to deliver us, he was fully aware of this. He knew what he had undertaken; therefore he placed himself under the law, and under the curse of the law. He took up the burden of sin, yet he loathed it in his heart. He felt its odious weight upon his spirit; but, having taken it, it was reckoned his. And the Father treated him accordingly. The Lord bruised him; God turned away from him; God refused for a time to speak with him. And Christ must have felt somewhat as we do, when a fellow creature lays a crime to our charge, and turns from us when we address him. In our case, the corruption of nature, turns to our relief.

The workings of pride and anger form a reasonable, though sinful, counteraction to our mortified feelings. But it could not be so with Christ. He tasted the unmitigated bitterness of the curse. His were unmitigated feelings of sorrow. Sin itself grieved him. He mourned that God should have been so dishonoured. He hated it not merely in its consequences, but its essence. He knew that the great Judge, before whom he stood, did not abhor him, but the burden which he bore. His own soul detested it in an equal degree, yet he girt it so to him that no separation could be effected. He made himself so one with our case and cause, that all that we deserved lighted upon him. Let us keep this distinction clearly before our minds. Christ's person was still as holy and acceptable to the Father as before. The Divine wrath could not, and did not, burn against him; but it waxed hot against the sins of man. And since Christ took these sins upon his own head, he must be content to suffer all the consequences which they entailed. And he was content to suffer all, and with a ready hand he took the cup and drank it to the dregs. But when he had drunk that cup, and when he had wrung out its bitter ingredients, he was not content—no, he speak it deliberately, and with reverence—he was not content, neither was his Father, that it should be held to his lips for ever. He was now "tasting" a kind of spiritual "death," (Heb. ii. 9.) As corporal death is the separation of the body from the soul, so spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. Here is the mystery of Christ's crucifixion and loud cry; that his human soul was separated from his Father's presence; that he was made to experience exclusion and banishment from God's face. But herein lies the mystery of our redemption by that crucifixion, that Christ was not willing to remain for ever separated from God; and that by the energy of his own holiness he did wrestle, with an agonizing earnestness, and importunity of entreaty, till he was restored again to the enjoyment of that presence. He willingly endured that curse for us, and as willingly pressed back again into that presence from which he had suffered it for a time to exclude him. Let a mere man be forsaken by his Creator, he never can recover himself. This is the grand prerogative of the God-man, that though submerged in the lowest depths, he can rise again by inherent power. "He has life in himself." Therefore, though the concentrated wrath of God were let loose against the sins of men; and though that wrath was not in the slightest degree diminished, because these sins were taken up by One with whom the Father was well pleased; yet could it not cast the sinner who committed them into instant and eternal ruin, because One interposed himself who could indeed sustain, and bear away, the double load of sin, and of desertion, but his heart was broken under it. Say not, that, being God, he could not feel; for remember that he exclaimed when the sins of the world were laid upon his head, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Christ on the Cross, by the Rev. John Stevenson.

AURICULAR CONFESSION.

[Extract from 32nd Homily, adverting to the text: "Acknowledge your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be saved." James v. 16.]

Whereas the adversaries go about to wrest this place, for to maintain their auricular confession, they are greatly deceived themselves, and do shamefully deceive others; for if this text ought to be understood of auricular confession, then the Priests are as much bound to confess themselves unto the lay-people, as the lay-people are bound to confess themselves to them. And if to pray is to absolve, then the laity by this place hath as great authority to absolve the Priests, as the Priests have to absolve the laity. This did Johannes Scotus, otherwise called Duns, well perceive, who upon this place writeth on this manner: Neither doth it seem unto me that James did give this commandment, or that he did set it forth as being received of Christ. For, first and foremost, whence had he authority to bind the whole church, sith that he was only Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem? Except thou wilt say, that the same church was at the beginning the head church, and consequently that he was the head Bishop, which thing the see of Rome will never grant. The understanding of it then is as these words: Confess your sins one to another; a persuasion to humility, whereby he willeth us to confess ourselves generally unto our neighbours, that we are sinners, according to this saying: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

And, where that they do allege this saying of our Saviour Jesus Christ unto the leper, to prove auricular confession to stand on God's word, Go thy way, and show thyself unto the Priest; do they not see that the leper was cleansed from his leprosy, before he was by Christ sent unto the Priest for to shew himself unto him? By the same reason we must be cleansed from our spiritual leprosy; I mean our sins must be forgiven us, before that we come to confession. What need we then tell forth our sins into the ear of the Priest, sith that they be already taken away? Therefore holy Ambrose, in his second sermon upon the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, doth say full well: Go shew thyself unto the Priest: Who is the true Priest, but he which is the Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek? Whereby this holy Father doth understand that, both the priesthood and the law being changed, we ought to acknowledge none other Priest for deliverance from our sins, but our Saviour Jesus Christ, who, being Sovereign Bishop, doth with the sacrifice of his body and blood, offered once for ever upon

the altar of the cross, most effectually cleanse the spiritual leprosy, and wash away the sins of all those that with true confession of the same do flee unto him.

It is most evident and plain, that this auricular confession hath not his warrant of God's word; else it had not been lawful for Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, upon a just occasion to have put it down. For, when any thing ordained of God is by the lewdness of men abused, the abuse ought to be taken away, and the thing itself suffered to remain. Moreover, these are St. Augustine's words: What have I to do with men, that they should hear my confession, as though they were able to heal my diseases? A curious sort of men to know another man's life, and slothful to correct and amend their own. Why do they seek to hear of me what I am, which will not hear of thee what they are? And how can they tell, when they hear by me of myself, whether I tell the truth or not; sith that no mortal man knoweth what is in man, but the spirit of man which is in him? Augustine would not have written thus, if auricular confession had been used in his time.

Being therefore not led with the conscience thereof, let us with fear and trembling, and with a true contrite heart, use that kind of confession that God doth command in his word; and then doubtless, as he is faithful and righteous, he will forgive us our sins and make us clean from all wickedness. I do not say, but that, if any do find themselves troubled in conscience, they may repair to their learned Curate or Pastor, or to some other godly learned man, and shew the trouble and doubt of their conscience to them, that they may receive at their hand the comfortable salve of God's word: but it is against the true Christian liberty, that any man should be bound to the numbering of his sins, as it hath been used heretofore in the time of blindness and ignorance.

ONE OF THE MARKS OF THE TRUE CHURCH.

"Twice in Daniel, then; twice by our Lord's own words; twice by St. Paul; and four times in the Revelation given to the beloved disciple, are we distinctly warned, that in 'the times of the Gentiles,' the times, times, and a half; 'the latter times,'—the state of the visible Church—of 'whole Christendom,' as the Homily styles it, would be that of apostasy,—of falling away,—of departing from the faith;—while the state of the true or spiritual Church would be that of persecution, 'tribulation,' being 'worn out,' falling by the sword, by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days."

Yet, says the writer of the 53d Tract for the Times, the Church has been defended from persecution for fifteen hundred years. 'The Church!—what Church? Certainly not the Church described by Daniel, or our Lord, or St. Paul, or St. John. That Church, consisting of 'the saints,' was seen by Daniel to be 'given into the hand' of the little horn, which 'prevailed against them.' That Church was described by its Divine Master and Head, as 'hated of all nations for His name's sake.' That Church was foretold by St. Paul as excluded from the visible temple, wherein sat the usurping Man of Sin, the son of perdition. That Church was beheld, again and again, by St. John, under various figures, but ever those of depression and persecution,—the woman fleeing into the wilderness,—the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth. Hence, if any man advances now the claims of a visible Church which has been preserved from persecution for fifteen hundred years, we say to him at once, This must be a counterfeit,—a false Church, for the Church of Christ was not to be so exempted. 'If ye were of the world,' said our Lord, 'the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' A Church, then, which boasts of its amity with the world for fifteen hundred years, must be a different Church from that which Christ founded. Rather does such a community agree with the apostle's description of her who boasted, 'I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.' (Rev. xviii. 7.)—From 'The Church in the Middle Ages,' by the author of the 'Essays on the Church.'

RESULT OF TRACTARIANISM.

The following painful narrative appears in a weekly journal. Mr. William Pitts is a pianoforte-tuner:—

"About two years ago my eldest boy William, aged seventeen years, was engaged by the Rev. F. W. Faber, of Elton, to play the organ in the parish church; his younger brother James, aged sixteen years, was also engaged to go with him on Sundays to sing and lead the choir. They used to leave home on Saturday evenings and remain at Elton until Monday morning. William, the elder, used to go often to Elton twice in the week, (as Mr. Faber used to have service on Wednesdays and Fridays) and often stopped at the rectory all night. Mr. Faber was very kind to the boys, and made them his equals in every respect; which oftentimes made me wonder why it should be so. Some time back Mr. Faber offered to teach the elder one Latin. I pressed upon the boy to pay attention to it, as Mr. Faber was kind enough to do so, telling him that it might prove useful to him in his musical profession; but little did I think then what he was going to teach him Latin for. The boys continued to go on as usual up to the Sunday that Mr. Faber preached his farewell sermon, the 16th of November, 1845. On that day my third son went over to Elton, and came home with the news that Mr. Faber had preached his last sermon in Elton Church, which very much surprised us. For I do declare that I was totally ignorant of the step he was about to

take. The boys did not come home on Monday as usual, but I did not take any particular notice of it. On Tuesday morning the Rev. J. Oliver came into my house, and inquired after the boys, and said, he had no doubt but that before that time they had entered into the Church of Rome. I did not think so for the moment, but towards night began to feel rather uncomfortable, and said to my wife that I must go to Elton for the boys. I went over and met one of my boys in the street, who said nothing about the step he had taken. I then went on for my other son, and on my way I was told by one of Mr. Faber's servants that my sons had joined the Church of Rome with them and Mr. Faber on the 17th Nov. 1845. My feelings were such as I cannot describe; they were known only to God and myself. I then brought my sons home with me; but my heart was too full to enter fully into the matter with them."

About this time Mr. Pitts received the following letter from Mr. Faber:—

"Saunderton Rectory, near Tring, Nov. 21, 1845.

"Sir,—As by this time you are acquainted with the step which W. and James have taken, in pursuance to the dictates of their own conscience and the motions of God's Holy Spirit, it is my duty now to write you a few lines, which I did not think it well to do, until you had learned from them that it was a step taken by them with their own good-will. Of course, as a conscientious Protestant, you are bound in the sight of God and man, to leave liberty of conscience to every one; to force persons in the matter of religion is acting upon the very principle of the Roman Church which you so much abhor. However, if you can reconcile persecution and a denial of permission to your sons, to worship God as their consciences lead them, you will do as you please, and answer for it to him. My duty is merely this: there is of course no manner of doubt, but that the instructions they derived from me have led them, as well as myself, to the happy step which we have taken: and as Wm. particularly, is precluded almost from getting his livelihood as an organist in Protestant churches, and James might be an object of fear to you because of your younger children, it seems incumbent upon me, to do what I can for them in any way, which you might assent to, as at present and for the next four years with William, and five years with James, their lawful guardian. I leave England in no very long time; and if you should, on considering the matter, deem it advisable, I have the means of providing for both the boys, in a manner, highly advantageous to their advancement in life.

"My address at present is, at Henry Faber's, Esq., Stockton-on-Tees. You must not suppose from what I have said in this letter, that I do not quite enter into your feelings of sorrow and dismay about this matter as well as no little conscientious indignation against myself, as their false teacher, and misleader. Whatever you may think it well to say of severity towards myself, will not affect, I can assure you, my kindly feelings towards yourself, or my readiness to benefit William and James.

"I feel that I have been the means, and as in God's sight, I cannot repent of it, of introducing division into your family; and I am therefore bound to do what I can, to repair any grievous consequences to you, which may come out of that solemn and religious act.

"Yours truly,

"FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER.

"P. S. The sooner you write to me, the better able shall I be to make arrangements, if you should wish it, before I leave England. Wm. did not get me your bill, which however my servant Anne will pay you."

To this letter Mr. Pitts returned the following answer:—

"Rev. Sir,—You must have a very bad opinion of me, if you think that, for the sake of any temporal advantage, I can be brought to sacrifice my sons. Although I neither wish, nor intend, to say anything which may be offensive, yet I must assure you I consider you have acted most cruelly towards me, and in a most un-Christianlike manner. Under pretence of doing me a kindness, you have been secretly working a division in my family, and destroying that peace and happiness which has always subsisted amongst us.

"Under the feeling that you were a good and conscientious minister of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to do his will, you were intrusted with the care and instruction of my children. You have wickedly abused that trust; and, by working in the most subtle manner on their minds, you have led them to do that which you now say they have done of their own free will. I have no doubt but that my sons have been led to the unhappy step they have taken by the instruction they have derived from you. But the question is, whether such would have been the case if you had shown yourself in your proper character; if, instead of carrying on your plans under pretence of being a faithful and zealous minister of the Protestant Church, you had honestly owned yourself to be (what in reality you were) a Roman Catholic in disguise. It is unfair, Sir, to talk about my children worshipping God as their consciences lead them, when you have, in the most artful manner, so trained them as to make it almost impossible they should go otherwise than in your footsteps. You have taught them to set at naught God's holy commandments, and to dishonour their father and mother. You have taught them to make a mock of religion, and that in the house of God, and in face of all his people assembled there. You have, in short, taught them to do as you yourself have done—that is, to act a double and a wicked part, both towards God and man. Sir, my God knows, and you yourself know too, that I have been no party in the matter; I have been in utter ignorance of

your proceedings. I will not, however, act towards you as you have done towards me; I will not at once declare to you my intention: which is this—That, so far from assenting to the proposals made in your letter, I will do everything in my power to keep my children from you, and from all connected with you; and I will endeavour (by the grace of God) to undo all that you have done in point of doctrine. I would rather see my children, as unfortunate, but humble and sincere Protestants, in rags and begging their bread from door to door, than I would see them as Roman Catholics, clothed in fine linen, well fed, and occupied in deluding their fellow-creatures.

"Sir, my humble and earnest prayer to Almighty God is, that he will be graciously pleased to forgive you all you have done amiss; that he will lead you to see the error of your way; and that he will have mercy on your soul for Jesus Christ's sake.

"I am, Reverend Sir,

your deeply injured,

Yet humble servant,

WILLIAM PITTS.

"Wormington, Nov. 26, 1845."

Mr. Pitts then proceeds with his narrative: "Sunday came on: they refused to go to church, but I thought it my duty to command my children to go to the house of God with me; they reluctantly obeyed my command. Another Sunday came on, when they went with me again; and, if ever I prayed in earnest, it was while in church with them, that God would have mercy upon them, and save them from the errors of the Church of Rome. The following Tuesday (December 9) I went from home. My poor wife sent one of my little boys to say that William and James had both gone away, and had been gone about two hours before they were missed. I came home (and parents only can judge what were our feelings), and told my wife that I would go off to Birmingham immediately, knowing that Mr. Faber was there. I arrived there about eleven o'clock the next day, when I saw Mr. Faber at the Bishop's palace. I asked him if my sons were there; he said, 'No.' I asked him if he knew where they were; he said, 'No.' I then entreated him with tears that, if they should come there, he would let me know; to which he answered, he could not. I then said I thought they had no money with them, not even to buy a little bread with, or to pay for a bed to lie down upon. Mr. Faber soon put me to rest on this matter, by saying that he had given one 12s., and the other 8s. And what did he give them the money for? I scruple not to say, to enable them to make their escape. Mr. Faber then said that he felt himself perfectly justified in every step he had taken as it regarded my sons. I then said, I hoped that God would not lay it to his charge, and that, if we never met any more on earth, I hoped we should meet in heaven. I then left him and returned home with a heavy heart.

"When I got home, I found an almost broken-hearted wife, not having heard anything of our poor boys. The next morning we heard that they were seen on the road for Thrapstone the day that they left home. I then set off again for Birmingham the next night after my return, and arrived there about two o'clock in the morning. I went down to St. Chad's directly, and found that the palace was lighted up at that early hour. I walked to and fro till about four o'clock, hoping that I might see my poor boys at some of the windows; but I could not see any one. I then went to an inn, where I found the people up, and remained there until nine o'clock in the morning; I then went down again to the palace, and inquired of one of the servants if two boys had been there. He told me they had, and that Mr. Faber had taken them away along with him; but he knew not where either of them was gone to. I then asked if I could see the Bishop, or any of the priests. I was shown up into a room, where one of the priests came to me. I asked him the same questions as I did the servant, and he answered me in the same way, saying he knew not where they were. He then began to enter into a controversy on religious matters. I told him that was not my business; my business was to find my children, and I was determined to find them, if possible. I told him that, if Mr. Faber could make void the law of God, I should see if he could make void the laws of his country also. I then left the palace, and went to the late Mayor of Birmingham, Mr. Phillips, stated my case to him, and was satisfied with his answer.

"It was rumoured about the neighbourhood of St. Chad's, that the palace was going to be searched. Mr. Faber got to hear that I was going to try what the law would do for me, as he stated in a letter which I saw myself at Elton. These were his words: 'He expected he should go to prison; so much the better!' He also said, 'He would not be the means of concealing my sons; but, at the same time, he had taken them away somewhere down in the North of England; I do not even now know where. I waited till Sunday evening, when Mr. Faber sent for me, and said that he had written for my sons, pointing to the letter then lying on the table, and assured me that they should be at home by the next Thursday or Friday without fail. He said also that he would give William a letter for me, stating therein that they should not teach their doctrine to their younger brother and sisters; and that I should keep that letter as a witness against them and him; but alas! he has not as yet fulfilled his promise respecting the letter.

"I went to Birmingham the third time, on the Saturday following, as the poor boys did not come home according to the above promise, and brought them home with me on Monday. Thank God, they are now at home; but we are divided: they will not