

"The Pearl of Greatest Price."

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.—Matt. xiii. 45, 46

The general exposition of this Scripture from the preacher and poet is, that Christ is the pearl of great price, for which the sinner leaves all to possess. While this may be well set forth, there is another side to the text which, in my opinion, is a better interpretation and more in harmony with the tenor of the Scriptures and man's relation to God.

True it is that the apostles saw everything in Jesus that they could entertain in their mind as the ideal treasure for the human heart. We hear them say, "We have left all and followed Thee."—Luke xviii. 29, 30. Again they express their entire satisfaction concerning the Son, by the saying: "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us."—John xiv. 8. Peter said: "I will lay down my life for Thy sake."—John xiii. 27. How like Paul: "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy."—Acts xx. 24. Hear him again: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Gal. vi. 14; and again: "The unsearchable riches of Christ."—Eph. iii. 8.

It seems to you, brother, does it not, that Christ is indeed that pearl? Those best of men embraced Him as the priceless treasure; neither would I have any think less of Him because to "You who believe, He is precious." Yet, while all the above is so true, it may not be the rendering of the text: 1. Because the sinner does not seek the Lord. 2. He does not leave pearls. 3. He cannot buy the Lord; (a) The Lord does the seeking; "He came to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke xix. 10. He left His glory with the Father to seek us (Phil. ii. 5-8); man is content to sit in darkness until the light shines unto him (Matt. iv. 16; Mark xvi. 16, 17, 11. Cor. iv. 3, 4). (b) The Lord Jesus left heaven to take out of this world a kingdom for Himself; to sanctify and cleanse a people unto Himself (Eph. v. 25-27); to bring many sons and daughters into glory (Heb. ii. 10). The Church is the pearl which the merchant man sought and bought; "He purchased it with His own blood."—Act xx. 28; "For ye are bought with a price."—I. Cor. vi. 20; vii. 22, 23.

Some may refuse my statement that "The sinner does not seek the Lord"; but not until our hearts are turned Godward, or until we are begotten, do we seek Him. Jesus said to His disciples: "Seek and ye shall find"; "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Paul said: "I press toward the mark." And he taught others, his brethren, to "set their affections on things above." A pearl sparkles, shines; and on whatever part you look it gleams with beauty. We may not see much in a poor sinner to admire as a pearl, much less in the evil course he follows, but Jesus saw in us something worth redeeming. Behold Him in Simon's house; He sees in the one at His feet what no one else saw; they saw nothing but "a sinful woman." He saw a loving and grateful heart; it only needed redeeming love to bring out its beauty, to manifest its pearl-like glory, tempting to an able purchaser. Look again at Peter, at his old trade, "a sinful man." But when he learns to "cast all his care on Him," he yields up a life service. Jesus knows where the pearl is, and He has undertaken to seek it, and pay the buying price.

His desire is that His purchase should reflect His praise. "That He

might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

God is glorified when His children "Bring forth much fruit", when He sees them "Zealous of good works." He is pleased for, for this purpose, are we begotten in Christ Jesus (Eph. ii. 10; Titus ii. 14).

Jesus will continue His work until He restores the broken order of the world; until His purchase justifies the price (Matt. xi. 10, Acts ii. 31, 35; iii. 21; Heb. x. 12, 13).

It is rejoicing to see the Lord's people so earnest in their love for Him, so willing to spend and be spent for the extension of His glorious name. Press on brethren! Carry out nobly your undertakings! You are precious in His sight! You are working according to His purpose and confirmed promise to you, from the beginning and unto the fathers.

"Look up and lift up." "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." We can do great things if we will.

J. B. LISTER.

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Selections.

Content.

Content to climb, I journey on, Nor backward gaze at glories gone, Tho' far the summit fair appears, And seen full oft thro' blinding tears. Tho' I do sometimes weary grow, I cling to faith, and since I know The goal I'll gain with larger time, I journey on, content to climb!

Content to work, I toil away, Nor pause to dream of yesterday, Tho' sometimes labor seems in vain, And tired grow hands and heart and brain; Tho' in the distance guardians dwell, I murmur not, and, knowing well The fates can not forever foil, I work away content to toil!

—Sue M. Best.

The Spirit of Communion.

The word "communion," like the word "holiness," has a peculiar sanctity attached to it. It is rarely employed in the language of every-day life, except in its application to the more profoundly personal relations of spirit with spirit. We speak of a quiet communion with our own hearts, of the communion of saints with one another, of the communion of our spirits with God; and we designate the holy Christian sacrament of our Lord's Supper as the Communion. We speak, indeed, of the duty of being always in the spirit of Christian communion; yet it can hardly be said that we have a clearly defined idea of the nature of communion, or of the meaning and force of the term as a term.

"Communion" and "common" are words having the same root, although the word "communion" has been kept on a far higher plane than the word "common," in practical use. While it is an open question whether these two have their origin in the Latin *munire* ("to wall about") and the prefix *com* ("together with"), or in the Latin *munus* ("service," "duty," "obligation") and the same prefix, in either case the root idea is that of being "bound"; of being circled by that which shuts one in to a specific sphere of duty and privilege; of being obligated by the very limitations of one's sphere. And so it is true that the root meaning of "communion" is the being ready for service in that sphere wherein one is encircled. Communion is not so much a matter of intercourse as a matter of attitude. The spirit of communion is not a longing for a response to one's outreachings of love, but is an unselfish readiness to serve the one loved. Unselfishness is, indeed,

an indispensable prerequisite to the spirit of communion. Only as one forgets himself, in loving and loyal devotion to another, is it possible for him to be in a spirit of communion with his fellow or with his God.

True friendship is a state of constant communion on the part of him who is a friend; for a true friend is always in the attitude of readiness for unselfish service toward him to whom he is a friend. Where a friendship is mutual, this spirit of communion prevails also in both loving hearts; but in every friendship a true friend is a true friend apart from any question of the return or the recognition of his friendship; hence a true friend is in the spirit of communion with his friend by being in the attitude of readiness for loving service, whether that friend bears him lovingly in mind, or has no thought of him or of his friendship. He, therefore, who longs for unselfish communion with the friend of his heart's affection, may know that that communion is open to him, if only he will unselfishly open his heart in an unselfish readiness to be of loving service to that friend.

An unselfishly loving mother is in constant communion with her absent son, away at school or college, or in the activities of business, or in the temptations of undesirable companionship. Her boy may forget his loving mother, or may give little thought to her love or to her wishes; but she can never forget him, even while she seems to others to be absorbed in the duties of her daily home life away from him. She thinks of him; she prays for him; she lives in an attitude of readiness to serve him—by her love, by her faith, by her labors, or by her very life itself, if that could help him. A loving mother's communion with her loved boy is often all on her side; but it is none the less, rather all the more, real and holy and precious for that.

He who loves Christ unselfishly is ever in the spirit of communion with Christ, and with all who are dear to Christ. Because he loves Christ, he is ready to serve Christ, and is ready to serve those whom Christ makes His own representatives. No matter what he is doing, whether he is at work or at worship or at recreation, he is in the attitude of readiness for service at the call of Him whom he loves. His communion with his Lord—in this sense of readiness for service—is no more real in one place—or in one occupation, than in another, even though he recognizes his duty and his privilege to be in one place or in one occupation for the time being, as alone consistent for that time with the service he owes to his Master. Bound to his Lord more closely than a loving mother is bound to her child, or than a loving friend is bound to his friend, the disciple of the Lord Jesus is by this binding love in constant and unselfish communion with Him in whom he lives and moves and has his being. And here, as in no other sphere of being, he who enjoys this spirit of communion may be sure that it is recognized, welcomed and reciprocated by Him toward whom it is lovingly exercised. This communion is ever intercommunion.

How different from this is the ordinary conception of the spirit of communion! It is supposed to be a spirit of passive inertness, whereas it is a spirit of alertness for action. It is looked upon as calling for one's separation from the cares and trials of every-day duties, whereas it is consistent with an absorbed interest in whatever one has to do in the sphere within which God has enclosed him. Communion is the life of true living; its spirit is the spirit of unselfish de-

votes to the highest object of being. The exercise of this spirit is the exercise of love to God and love to one's fellows. In the quaint phrasing of Wycliff's Bible, the apostolic command of Hebrews xiii. 1 is: "And nylo forghete wel doings and comynynge; for bi suche sacrifices God is deserued." And Calvin emphasizes this thought in the declaration: "For we are not taught of God only for ourselves, but that every man after the measure of his faith should be brotherly, communicate with his neighbors, and distribute unto them that thing he hath learned and known in God's school." He who is in the spirit of communion is doing all the good he can in this world, and is always ready to do more as the opportunity offers.—*Sunday School Times.*

Unitarian Confessions.

The Apostle of Agnosticism, in his lecture "How Must I be Saved," holds that the Bible doctrine of salvation by faith is of immoral tendency and an encouragement to an evil life. No one of the mistakes of this great errorist demonstrates his title to the name of Agnostic better than this. It requires no argument in this age of the world to show that faith makes the man; that a man's beliefs are the very root from which his character grows up; and that the Bible in suspending salvation upon right belief has suspended upon the very hinge upon which the man's character turns. Mormon, Mohammedan, Pagan, Atheist and Christian all differ in character development, in spirit of life and deeds, because they have different beliefs. It takes a firm and unflinching trust in the crucified and risen Lord to produce the pure, lowly, loving and spiritual development which fits a man for the heavenly society.

Not only are these things true, but it is also true that among professing Christians the grade of Christian character depends, to a great extent, on the shade of belief. There is a Calvinistic type of character, and on the other hand, there is an Arminian type; there is a Catholic and there is a Protestant type; there is a Trinitarian, and there is a Unitarian type. Different bodies differ much in devotion, in earnestness, in active efforts to save mankind, in purity of life, and a relation will always be found to exist between the shade of belief and the type of character. There are bodies whose theology seems to be barren of inspiration and life-giving power.

This is especially true of those sects which rob Christ of His divine character. In view of certain events and tendencies among our own people, it is well for us to study closely the effect of Unitarian belief. In a recent article the well-known essayist, William Matthews, LL.D., cites the testimony of leading Unitarian authorities upon this point. No one can charge upon these confessions of their recognized leaders that they do an injustice to the effects of Unitarian belief. It is well known that Unitarian churches have only prospered, here and there, where a pulpit was filled by some man of remarkable force. Monsieur D. Conway, himself a Unitarian, says that his denomination is dying in London. New York, seventy years ago, had two Unitarian churches, and has only two to-day. In New England, the headquarters of this belief, the *Boston Daily Herald* says that the body is not more than half as large as it was twenty-five years ago, and an article in the *Unitarian Review*, the leading periodical of the church, even discusses seriously the question of a denominational decrease, and the same article says: "It is a notorious fact that many, hunger-

driven, leave the Unitarian fold, that they may be fed." A council of Unitarian churches bewailed the fact that, "Unitarians often run away, and from no change of opinion, but in apparent indifference to them, from Unitarian churches to Episcopal and other orthodox churches, to find, as they represent, a more worshipful climate, heartier singing, a livelier participation in the service, a greater interest in the children and the young."

Perhaps these facts are sufficiently explained in the words of Unitarian writers to which we have referred above. The *Christian Inquirer*, in its day (it is now extinct) the leading Unitarian journal, said some years ago: "The chief defect of both Universalists and Unitarians is want of religion. We do not shrink from making this confession. Liberal Christianity has well-nigh stranded on the dry sands of ethical criticism, and will go to pieces there, as it deserves, unless it pushes off into deep religious sentiments, and catches the breath of God in its sails. The future of Liberal Christianity depends upon whether it can pray. If it is not a piety, as well as a philosophy, it will perish."

The *Unitarian Review*, referred to above, said in 1888: "If we could get on without religious faith, we would flourish. The young we cannot fascinate, the feeble have no support, the sorrowing no solace; the strong, active, prosaic natures come to us, and get the minimum of spiritual nourishment, which they consider enough."

Rev. James Martineau, D.D., of London, is regarded as the highest Unitarian authority in the world, and none who have read his recent work, "The Seat of Authority in Religion," will suspect him of the slightest sympathy with evangelical faith, yet he makes the following frank confession: "I am constrained to say that neither my intellectual preference nor my moral admiration goes heartily with the Unitarian heroes, sects or productions of any age. Ebonites, Arians, Socinians, all seem to me to contrast unfavorably with their opponents. I am conscious that my deepest obligations as a learner from others are in almost every department to writers not of my own creed. In philosophy I have had to unlearn most that I had imbibed from my early text-books, and the authors in chief favor with them. In Biblical interpretation, I derive from Calvin and Whitby the help that fails me in Crolius and Besham. In devotional literature and religious thoughts, I find nothing of ours that does not pale before Augustine and Pascal. And in the poetry of the church, it is the Latin or German hymns, or the lines of Charles Wesley or Keble, that fasten on my memory and heart, and all else feel poor and cold. I cannot help this."

These quotations might be extended indefinitely, but we have given enough to show that there is something lacking in Liberal Christianity, according to the confessions of its own advocates. That one thing wanting is faith in the Divine Lord, our Saviour. Whatever rejects Jesus the Christ, as the Son of God, will come to naught. An admiration of a peerless human teacher whom men reject and crucified may satisfy the intellect, but such a Christ can never become the Bread of Life to the souls of men.—*Christian Evangelist.*

THE BEGINNING OF DEATH.

Disease is the beginning of death, its approach should be met at once by appropriate remedies. No better means exists than the use of Burdock Blood Bitters whenever symptoms of any disease of the stomach, liver, bowels or blood appear. B.B.B. is the best life preserver.