

BOTH GREAT AND SMALL.

It seems a thing incredible that He
 Who knows the secrets of the vanished years,
 Who saw the struggles, triumphs, hopes, and
 fears
 Of long-forgotten races, cares for me.
 Poor, fleeting creatures of a day are we,
 Born but to perish. Can it be He hears
 The clamor of our voices, sees our tears?
 The doubting heart repeats, "It cannot be."
 Far, far beyond this tiny planet's path
 Unnumbered constellations hear His voice,
 And He who rules the universe sees all.
 Then let us not with doubtings tempt His wrath,
 But, trusting in His boundless power, rejoice;
 He also guides the infinitely small.

—Clara Boise Bush.

FOR PARISH AND HOME.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

VII. FAITH, FAITHFULNESS (REVISED VERSION).

WHEN Professor Drummond, who has a genius for selecting apt and suggestive titles, called love "the greatest thing in the world," there were many Christians, Spurgeon amongst the number, who were jealous lest faith should be put in the background, or have assigned to it too low a place in the system of Christian truth. Dr. Gordon stood out, amongst others, as the champion of faith, and called his book "The First Thing in the World, or The Primacy of Faith." For faith stands first, and the primacy of faith must be unquestioned. Love may be, and is, greatest, because it is God's nature. "His nature and His name is Love," while faith is part of man's nature, for he is born to trust, but faith is first. For love is born of trust. We must trust before we can love.

Faith, hope, and love are permanent Christian graces. They are so distinguished from the other gifts enumerated by St. Paul in his immortal hymn of love (I. Cor. xiii.), for, while it is said that prophecies will fail, tongues cease, and knowledge vanish away, it is declared that faith, hope, and charity will abide. There is one aspect, it is true, in which love is greatest, because faith and hope will not be needed in heaven, and, therefore, will disappear. In this view love is the end, and faith and hope but the means. Faith will have done its perfect work, and will have been lost in vision, while hope will have gained its fruition. So we sometimes sing:

"Faith will vanish into sight
 Hope be emptied in delight,
 Love in heaven will shine more bright;
 Therefore give us love."

And Prior writes:

"Then constant faith and holy hope shall vie,
 One lost in certainty, and one in joy."

The clearer view, and the deeper in spiritual meaning, seems to be that faith and hope also abide eternal and imperishable, as distinguished from gifts that fail, that cease, that vanish away. Faith abides forever, for it is concerned with immortal truths as well as with bare facts. It is not only belief in things unseen, which may need no exercise of faith in the presence of the realities, but it is also trust in a Person which can never die. Hope abides forever, and, even when all that it looks for is realized, it will still live on throughout eternity in the confident expectation of future good.

It may be said that faith and love are inseparable, joined together by God, and wedded in holy bonds which nothing of earth can sever. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Faith is first; it is the seed principle, but it carries in its heart the flower of hope and the fruit of love. Faith is first, for trust precedes love. Faith is the foundation, the building is joined together by love. Faith is the root, the fruit of the tree is love. Faith is alone in justification, it is supreme in this spiritual province, and through it the soul is accounted righteous before God, but love is greatest in the activities of life. There is the spirit of holy jealousy in our eleventh article, which declares, "that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine." Love is not wedded to faith in justifying. It is rather the way it shows its energy, the living principle of the works which follow after justification by faith.

Faith is a fruit of God's Spirit. It is not a fruit of human effort. It is born of God. What is Faith? is a natural question.

(1) It is trust. When traced to its origin, as Bishop Lightfoot has remarked, it is simply trust, the trust of a little child in its mother. An infant must trust his mother for everything, food, clothing, care, and all else. Its life is a life of trust, as natural to it as it is to breathe or to walk. So we are to trust God. Faith, then, is not merely intellectual assent to certain beliefs as true. It is not a combination of all the Christian virtues. Its main, indeed its vital, characteristic, as Principal Moule says, is an act of accepting reliance. It is the repose of the soul in God. It is, as Bishop O'Brien pointed out in his masterly work on its nature and effects, an attitude of childlike confidence and implicit trust in the Eternal Father. We believe in a thing when we are sure that it is true, in a person when we learn to trust him.

(2) Faith is the acceptance of God's Word. It believes the truth of God's Word. It rests upon the divine promise. It gives its assent to something as credible because God witnesses it to be true. The truth, we believe, is divine, and it rests upon divine authority. To refuse to believe the divine record is to make God a liar, which is an awful thought.

(3) Faith is the acceptance of God's gift of eternal life. When Jesus was asked, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" He replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The same thought is brought out by the Psalmist when he asks, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" and replies, "I will take the cup of salvation." We cannot work for God's gifts, it is beyond our power to merit them, to deserve them in any sense. We can only accept them. This is faith. It is the appropriation of God's gift of eternal life.

(4) Faith is an act of personal reliance. It is confiding reliance in a person. In this sense Abraham was the "father of the faithful," as well as in the other sense of influence, by which he impressed his own faith on the chosen family. His faith ever bore in it the idea of personal reliance, the perfect confidence of a child in a Father's love, the trustfulness of one who ever realizes a Father's goodness, the strong belief of one who ever leaned upon Him who is invisible, the self-surrender of one who rests wholly upon God.

Faith is God's good gift. It is the fruit of His Spirit's work. It is at once our greatest need and our highest happiness. It is through faith that we know God. It is the power that brings us to Christ and keeps us in Christ. It is the "hand of the heart," by which we accept God's rich blessings and appropriate them to meet the needs of our spiritual life.

W. J. ARMITAGE.

WAITING IS SERVING.

WAITING is often the best kind of service a man can render. Indeed, we call a good servant a "waiter." But it is commonly harder to wait than to work. It was hard for the children, the night before Christmas, to wait until morning before they knew what presents they were to have. Yet there was nothing for them to do but to wait. And if they only would wait, the morning would come, and with it all that had been promised to them for the morning.