

"THERE IS NO EXCELLENCE
WITHOUT LABOR."

CANADA

"HAPPY IS THE NATION
WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD."

CHRISTIAN WORKER

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"WORK WHILE IT IS CALLED TO DAY"

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CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

SINCERITY SEEKING THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

CHAPTER IV

As our young friends returned home, after hearing the Calvinist Baptist, he met with a Universalist preacher in conversation with a lawyer of his acquaintance, a skeptic; when the following conversation took place.

Lawyer. Mr. S., what is the matter that you are following the preachers up? Are you about being deluded by the noise and pretenses of religion?

Sincerity. I am greatly distressed in regard to my salvation. I had supposed that religion was a very plain matter, and that one could become a Christian at any time; but the more I think about it the greater my perplexity.

L. Yes, sir; and the more you try to understand it the more you will be perplexed. In my younger days I was in the same condition with yourself. I listened to the preachers several years, but found that I could not understand them, that they disagree among themselves; and, having turned my attention to the law, I have found something tangible, and that can be acted upon, and have, therefore, concluded to leave my salvation to God. I will try and look out for myself in this world, and leave God to take care of me in the next, if there be any.

S. I am inclined to think—indeed, I am compelled to admit—that so far as my experience goes, what you say about the preachers appears to be the case. But then they are good men certainly.

L. I admit, freely, that they are good men. Here is our neighbor H., the presiding Elder, is a good and a self-sacrificing man. He spends his whole time in preaching, and visiting the members of his church, and, I think, only receives some three hundred dollars a year for his services, while I make a thousand a year with far less labor. Yet I have listened to him trying to point out the way of salvation, and I could see no plan or system that any man of sense could act upon, or, in other words, I could see nothing tangible that I could take hold of. Not only so, but I have seen numbers of sincere persons come to him in the church, and inquire of him what to do, and have heard him tell them to pray and be prayed for, and have seen him pray for them and, they would still go away mourning and lamenting that they were not pardoned.

S. I have seen the same, and have had several private conversations with Mr. H., in which he failed to give me any satisfaction in regard to the way of salvation; and, as you say, it does appear to me that he had no plan. I think

that, though he is a good, honest, and a sincere man, he does not understand the gospel.

L. No, Mr. S., you do not apprehend the difficulty. He is, as you say, a good, an honest and sincere man, but he is deluded, and the preachers are all in the same predicament. None of them understand; and the reason is, religion is all a delusion; it has no understanding to it.

S. If I thought all the preachers were as incapable of giving light as Mr. H., I should be even more miserable than I am. But it is mortifying and discouraging to me to hear you ascribe the blame to religion itself. My impression is, that the fault is in the incompetency of some men to set forth Christianity, and not in the obscurity in religion itself.

L. There is where you are mistaken; the fault is not in the men, but in religion. If you desire to obtain relief from your despondency, you had better drive this gloomy subject from your mind. Turn your attention to your business, and try to take care of yourself, for if you do not take care of yourself, nobody will do it for you. Come over the way and let us get something to take, and not allow ourselves to fall into gloomy despondency.

Universalist. Mr. L., I think you have passed but a poor compliment upon religion and ministers. If you will allow me to explain to you the blessed gospel of God's universal paternity I can show how you can find comfort to your mind and how our mutual friend, Sincerity, may find relief from all his troubles. I see what it is, Mr. L., that has driven you, and will drive you, Mr. S., into unbelief, if you are not relieved. It is the Pagan notion of "everlasting punishment"—"eternal damnation." If you once understood the blessed doctrine of a world's salvation, your mind would be at rest.

S. Your idea is then, if I understand you that the source of my distress is in a *misapprehension of mind*, and not in any real danger.

L. I think, sir, that you are actually in a dangerous condition, but the danger is not what you fear. The only thing that will afford your relief is the blessed doctrine of a world's salvation.

S. You consider then that I am really safe if I only knew it and all that is necessary is to show me and our friend here, Mr. L., that we are in no danger, to make us happy.

L. Yes, sir; that is, there is no danger of any "eternal damnation" or "everlasting punishment," as the orthodox teach.

L. Did you say, sir, that the orthodox of "eternal damnation" and "everlasting punishment" is a "Pagan notion"?

U. Yes, sir, I did, and can prove it.

L. Well, then, sir, Jesus taught "Pagan notions," for he used this identical language. He spoke of

persons whom he declared to be in danger of "eternal damnation," and others whom he declared should go into "everlasting punishment." This is the teaching of your Master, and thus you call "Pagan notions" is this the respect you show to the teachings of Jesus?

U. These passages do not mean that—the fact is—

L. The fact is, you do not believe your Bible any more than I do, nor do you any more honor Jesus. He says, "He who believeth not the Son, shall not see life." Do you believe this?

U. That passage means—I—I can prove that all shall see life, and—

L. And, as a matter of course, that your Master did not tell the truth when He said, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life." How is this?

U. I can prove—I can show—the Bible says—

L. The Bible says, that you "strengthen the hands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." Still you will dishonor the Bible in promising the wicked life, and strengthen the hands of wicked that he should not return from his wicked way, will you?

U. That means—I hold—I—I if I talk any more it shall be with a man who has some sense, and not with you, sir. Good-by.

L. You may have some sense, but there is no sense in your doctrine. Friend Sincerity, let me say to you before we separate, that this kind of treatment from preachers has convinced me that religion is all a delusion. None of their doctrine is true. As I said before, I shall try and take care of myself in this world, and trust to God to take care of me hereafter. I must go. Good-by.

Sincerity walked along homeward, ruminating in his mind as follows: "My trouble increases upon me every day. In the place of finding any relief, new difficulties rise before me. These unfortunate men with whom I have been conversing have not one ray of light. If there is nothing better than they can present, the world is lost. Is it possible that people in general have no better understanding in regard to these matters than those with whom I have conversed? I am perfectly confounded! Can it be that Mr. L. is right, and that religion is all a delusion? I hope he is not, for then all must be darkness and gloom. In this case, we must live in uncertainty, and die in doubt. The thought of giving up all hope of finding any better instruction is insupportable. I cannot endure it. I will go home and read my Bible through, at all events. I am wretched now, and certainly should be miserable to die in this condition. I have now found four classes of men, and neither of them have afforded me the least satisfaction.

L. Mr. H. insists upon the necessity of seeking the Lord. In this, he has satisfied me, that

he is right; but he has shown me no directions from the Bible, pointing me to the Lord.

2. The Calvinist Baptist insists that I can do nothing, and that if I am of the non-elect, I never can come to the Lord, no matter how I seek. This I do not believe, for the Lord would not require me to seek him, knowing that I could do nothing.

3. My neighbor, the lawyer, has become disgusted with the whole matter, and has resolved to engross his mind with the affairs of the world, and leave the result with God, believing that religion is all a delusion.

4. As to this Universalist preacher, he is trying to satisfy his own mind, and the minds of others, with the notion that man is safe without any conversion, for there is no danger of being lost, as there is no hell or lake of fire. But this most ridiculous, absurd, and blasphemous doctrine gives the lie to the whole Bible, for its whole spirit is, "except ye repent, ye shall perish."

In my opinion, the latter three doctrines, if they are doctrines, are useless, as neither proper to make the world any better, or do anything for the world. I could see propriety in the position of Mr. H., if he could show what the Scriptures require me to do. But I must read my Bible through, and see if I can find nothing better.

(To be continued.)

IMMERSION OF THE THREE THOUSAND.

"Then they that gladly received His word were immersed, and the same day there were added unto them three thousand souls."—Luke. "Great stress is laid on the baptism of the three thousand, as offering an insuperable objection to the idea of immersion. Can they prove that immersion could not possibly be practised in this case." Prof. Stuart says: "It is true, we do not know that baptism was performed by the Apostles only, nor that all of the three thousand were baptised before the going down of the sun. The work may have extended into the evening, and so many being engaged in it, and more time being given, there was a possibility that the work could be performed, although immersion was practised." "The Scriptures warrant us in saying that the Apostles and the one hundred and twenty disciples mentioned in the preceding chapter, were all present, and as many others in Jerusalem and in that region as could conveniently be at the feast of Pentecost." But there are facts on record in history which remove every difficulty in the way of immersion of the entire three thousand. On the great Sabbath of the Easter festival, the 16th day of April, A.D. 401, Chrysostom, with the assistance of the ministers of his own church, baptised by immersion three thousand persons. Yes, one man, assisted only by his presbyters, in one day, and in one place, immersed three thousand persons; and that, too, notwithstanding the Christians were twice attacked by furious soldiers, the enemies of Chrysostom. So, in 496, Remigius, Bishop of Rheims, baptised in the same day, by immersion, Clovis, King of France, and three thousand of his subjects. I will only remark, in relation to the historical facts, that the baptisms referred to were administered on Easter day, to commemorate the resurrection of Christ, and it was common to reserve all the baptisms of the year for that day. Hence the number of candidates who came forward at the same time—"Learned testimony on Baptism and the Lord's Supper," page 55.

QUESTIONS BY A CHRISTIAN DELPHIAN.

ANSWERS BY H. W.

1. Whoever saw in the Bible a "Thus saith the Lord," the soul is immortal?

Ans. The same man who found in the Bible a "Thus saith the Lord," that the soul is mortal.

2. Is there any mighty man in the Scriptures who can point to one single passage, either in the Old or the New Testament, which affirms immortality of man as a natural attribute of his constitution?

Ans. No, nor is there a man mighty or weak in the Scriptures who can point to a single passage either in the Old Testament or New which affirms the mortality of man as a natural attribute of his constitution. This great question can not be decided by such questions.

3. How can that be said to be death at all which does not terminate the being and consciousness of the subject?

Ans. That is said to be death which does not terminate the being and consciousness of the subject. Proof.—"This my son was dead."—Yet He was living in a far country. May not this be true of all deaths? Let the "how" take care of itself just now.

4. And how can immortality be an attribute of the soul, in view of the fact that the application of the word immortality in the Bible is restricted to: 1st, God (1 Tim. i. 17; vi. 16), 2nd, the spiritual body of the resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 54), 3rd, something to be sought for (Rom. ii. 7) and 4th, something brought to light by the gospel? (2 Tim. i. 10.)

Ans. The perpetuity of the spirit's consciousness does not depend upon the application of the word immortality in the Bible. The word immortality (*Athanasia*, the only word properly translated immortality), is limited in its application to human bodies in the glorified state, yet God and the angels possess immortality (*Athanasia*) nevertheless, although the word is not applied to them in the sacred Scriptures. Why may not the same thing be true also of the human spirit? The quest is misled by our imperfect translation, yet even granting its correctness, the word immortality is not applied in the Bible to angels, yet their immortality is undoubted. Why may not this be true, I again ask, of the human spirit?

5. Since the Bible defines a living man (in Gen. ii. 7) to be a living soul, and a dead man (in Num. vi.

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