

CHRIST THE LIBERATOR.

By Rev. T. L. Cuyler, D.D.

"Loose him, and let him go!" At this command of Jesus they unwind the banages from the limbs of Lazarus, and by the old familiar path he walks back to his old home. This was the master miracle of all which Jesus wrought during his incarnation, but he is still doing for imprisoned souls what he did for the body of his Bethany brother when it had lain four days in the sepulchre.

I looked not long ago with genuine pity on a noble eagle, caged in a public park, as an exhibition for school boys. The old Lay mountaineer felt its galling imprisonment, and occasionally flapped its wings as if it were home-sick for the skies. "Loose him, and let him go," was the thought inspired by the sorry sight, and how he would have sailed off to fly in company with the sun! Eagles are not born for slavery. I thought, too, as I looked at the chained bird, how much he resembled some fettered souls, yes, some Christian souls that are terribly tied down by unbelief. Too many people have enrolled themselves in the Church—some have entered the ministry—with a heavy clog that binds them to the lower earth. It hampers them, hinders them, and is fatal to all spiritual joy or growth in holiness. Many a young convert begins his religious life with a doubting and desponding spirit. He nurses his fears in a morbid war, and mistakes all this guinea-gross for humility. He is a chained bird from the skies.

Others are fettered by besetting sin, from which they have never out loose. They have never made a clean break with the old sinful self, or with the beggarly elements of this world; they are hobbled with practices and associates that they have never out loose from. They have probably passed from death unto life, yet they appear very much as Lazarus would have looked if he had walked the streets of Bethany in his ghastly grave-clothes! This is a pitiable style of religion; it brings but little joy to its possessor, and gives him or her no power in the community. While they are content to be what they are, there is no hope for such manacled professors. Their only hope is in a timely and thorough repentance, and a fresh work of Christ, a deeper and thorough work, and for this they must earnestly seek, or else they will be chained birds in a church cage to the last.

Some really good people are clogged by bodily ailment—dyspeptic stomachs or weak nerves, and they see but little sunshine in their Christian experience. Bunyan has depicted several specimens of these pilgrims who hobble towards heaven on crutches, until death unlooses them and lets them go. Such Christians are to be pitied more than blamed; they are rather patients in Christ's hospital than soldiers on his battle-fields.

False doctrine, false views of sin and of Christ are at the bottom of a great deal of this spiritual debility. Every error is the enslaver of the soul. Truth makes us free indeed. Martin Luther was a chained eagle in the Erfurt Convent, until that heaven-sent truth, "The just shall live by faith," unloosed him. Thomas Chalmers was another chained eagle, but when the great doctrines of man's guilt and Christ's redemption liberated him, he soared up into the empyrean, the king of Scotland's Gossellers. John Wesley never attained to a full salvation until in that little London prayer-meeting his eye rested on these words: "The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

To every member of our churches who is dragging out a half-dead religion, the Holy Spirit comes with the arousing call: "If ye be indeed risen with Christ,

seek those things which are above!" Instead of sitting in the gates of the tomb, cast away your grave-clothes, and begin to live as Christ's freemen and Christ's witnesses, and the heirs of a magnificent inheritance. Look higher! Live higher!—Get a new grip on Christ and then go out and labor to draw sinners from the pit of hell. This is the revival we all need.

A PRAYER.

Oh, Lord, we would that we might have a sense of Thy presence with us here, as had Thy disciples in the upper room; not in grandeur, not in majesty, not in Thy terrible might; but in gentleness, in sweetness, in soothing for our fears, in calming for our troubled spirits. We are so needy, so limited, so often sinful. If only we could know Thy hand was pointing our way, could be sure we understand the meaning of life's experiences, could rest trustfully on the promises which the Word contains, how blessed we would be. And if we would know that Thou art near us as the child knows the mother is near when first it trusts its powers, and walks alone, then we would walk not fearing even though it should be in the dark valley; and we bless Thee for the thought. There be no dark valley when Jesus comes." Then we shall walk in the light, for He is in the light. So we pray Thee give us foretaste of the food on which our souls will feed when He leads us in the green pastures; give us foresight of the lovely land in which He is the light; let these things come to us here, that we may know a little of what awaits us there, where Thy presence is the glory forever and ever. We ask it for Christ's sake. Amen.

NEW YEAR THOUGHTS.

Let us walk softly, friend;
For strange paths lie before us, all untold.
The new year, spotless from the hand of God,
Is thine and mine, O friend!

Let us walk straightly, friend;
Forget the crooked paths behind us now.
Press on with steadier purpose on our brow,
To better deeds, O friend!

Let us walk gladly, friend;
Perchance some greater good than we have known
Is waiting for us or some fair hope flown
Shall yet return, O friend!

Let us walk humbly, friend;
Slight not the heart's ease blooming round our feet;
The laurel blossoms are not half so sweet,
Or lightly gathered, friend.

Let us walk kindly, friend;
We cannot tell how long this life shall last,
How soon these precious years be overpast;
Let love walk with us, friend.

Let us walk quickly, friend;
Work with our might while lasts this little stay,
And help some halting comrade on the way;
And may God guide us, friend!

A man with no sense of religious duty is he whom the Scriptures describe in such terse but terrific language, as living "without God in the world." Such a man is out of his proper being, out of the circle of all his duties, out of the circle of all his happiness, and away, far, far away, from the purposes of his creation.—Webster.

THE TRUE CENTRE OF LIFE.*

Some Bible Hints.

Even if it is a part of the vine, a branch needs pruning (v. 2). Being a Christian does not insure against sorrow.

The branch cannot bear fruit except it is in the vine (v. 4); but neither can the vine bear fruit except through the branches.

Unfaithful Christians are cast out (v. 6), but only because they have first cast themselves off.

If you have become a part of Christ, of course you may receive what you will from Him (v. 7), for thus He is giving to Himself.

Suggestive Thoughts.

The centre determines the circumference; the life aim determines the whole life.

Christ is the centre in which alone the history of the world becomes significant; get near to Him, if you would live a significant life.

Our thoughts, we say, "revolve" in our minds; true, but around what centre?

If our life centre is gold and earthly fame or power, what shall we do when our lives are removed to where they are not? Let us use on earth the geometry of heaven.

A Few Illustrations.

When even an apple falls to the earth, the earth actually rises to meet the apple. So when the least child approaches Christ.

At the centre of the earth, objects lose all weight so at the Christ-centre of life our burdens have no weight.

Planets revolve around the sun, but comets wander through space. Which are you?

Watch a great fly-wheel revolving. Its centre alone is fixed, but the rest is stable because it is fixed. Thus the busiest Christian whose heart is fixed on Christ.

To Think About.

What is the chief desire of my life? Of what do men think chiefly in connection with me?

Will death make any real change in my life?

A Cluster of Quotations.

Creature comforts are often to the soul what suckers are to a tree, and God takes off those that this may thrive.—Ryland.

Abide in me; overshadow by Thy love Each half-formed purpose and dark thought of sin.—Mrs. Stowe.

Apart from Christ men must inevitably wither and die, like the branches cut off from the parent stem, although they may retain for a little while a deceitful greenness and appearance of life.—Lange.

Every action has a keynote: let Christ be that note to which your whole life is attuned.—Henry Drummond.

Daily Bible Readings.

- M., Jan. 6. Christ our Righteousness. Jer. 23: 5, 6.
- T., Jan. 7. Christ our Maker. Ps. 102: 24-27.
- W., Jan. 8. Christ our Saviour. Hos. 1: 1-7.
- T., Jan. 9. Christ the Word. John 1: 1-5.
- F., Jan. 10. Christ our Judge. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.
- S., Jan. 11. Christ our Preserver. Col. 1: 9-7.

A man's attitude toward God may be told by the restfulness of his inner spirit, his ability to rest. And more, a man's attitude toward God's rest-day tells to men his attitude toward God.

*Sun., Jan. 12. Topic—The true centre of life. John 15: 1-10.