

THE BIBLE CHRISTIAN.

COLUMN FROM FENELON.

Everything which happens to us comes from thee, O God. It is Thou who hast done it; and who hast done it for our eternal welfare. In the light of eternity we shall see that what we desired would have been fatal to us, and that what we would have avoided was essential to our well being; it is Thou who doest all things, it is Thou who during every moment of our lives art the life of our hearts, the light of our eyes, the intelligence of our minds, the soul of our souls; all that we are, life, action, thought, will, we are through thy power, thy spirit, and thy eternal will.

How unspeakable are the blessings that piety bestows; pure, disinterested piety, piety that never fails, that does good in secret! It enables us to conquer our passions and our bad habits; it destroys our love of the polluting pleasures of the world; it touches our hearts with the salutary truths of religion; it protects us from the fatal snares that are around us. Shall we be ungrateful for so many benefits? Shall we not have the courage to sacrifice to piety all our irregular desires, however it may wound our self-love?

Everywhere we see men who disfigure religion by vain attempts to make it accord with their own caprices. One is fervent in prayer, but he is insensible to the miseries and weaknesses of his neighbour. Another talks much of the love of God, and of self-sacrifice, whilst he is not willing to suffer the least contradiction. Another deprives himself of allowed pleasures, that he may indulge himself in those that are forbidden. This woman is fervent and scrupulous in works of supererogation, but faithless in the most common and positive duties; she fasts and prays, but she does not restrain her pride or the violence of her temper. Thus we see people who think, because they do what they are not commanded to do, that they may dispense with what is required.

To pray is to say, Let thy will be done; it is to form a good purpose; it is to raise your heart to God; it is to lament your weakness; it is to sigh at the recollection of your frequent disobedience. This prayer demands neither method, nor science, nor reasoning; it is not necessary to quit one's employment; it is a simple movement of the heart towards its Creator, and a desire, that whatever you are doing, you may do it to his glory.

Let us do good, according to the means that God has given us, with discernment, with courage, and with perseverance. With discernment; for charity, while it seeks to promote the glory of God by imparting to man, has reference to the nature, the work, and the condition of him who undertakes it; it avoids disproportionate designs. With courage; St. Paul exhorts us not to be weary in well doing; that is, let us not be wanting in true zeal and faith. With perseverance; for we see weak spirits, light and inconstant minds, soon looking back in the career of virtue.

Never let us be discouraged with ourselves: it is not when we are conscious of our faults that we are the most wicked; on the contrary, we are less so. We see by a brighter light; and let us remember for our consolation, that we never perceive our sins till we begin to cure them. We must neither flatter, nor be impatient with ourselves, in the correction of our faults. Despondency is not a state of humility: on the contrary, it is the vexation and despair of a cowardly pride,—nothing is worse: whether we stumble, or whether we fall, we must only think of rising again, and going on in our course.

Whoever desires to do good must be willing and must expect to suffer. You must arm yourselves with courage and patience. You must be willing to endure tribulations and trials of all sorts, which would overwhelm you if you were not supported by well-established faith and charity. The world will blame, will tempt you; your friends and your enemies may appear to combine against your good designs. Those even with whom you are united to promote a good work may be a snare to you. Opposite humors and temperaments, different views, contrary habits, may cause you great suffering from those upon whom you have depended for support and consolation. Their defects and yours will perpetually clash in your intercourse with them. If true charity does not soften these difficulties, if a more than common virtue does not sustain you under these bitter trials; if an unflinching and fervent piety does not render this yoke easy to you, you will sink under it.

COLUMN FROM WILLIAM PENN.

Such is now become our delicacy, that we will not eat ordinary meat, nor drink small, palled liquor; we must have the best and the best cooked for our bodies, while our souls feed on empty or corrupted things. In short, man is spending all upon a bare house, which hath little or no furniture within to recommend it; which is preferring the cabinet before the jewel, a lease of seven years before an inheritance. So absurd a thing is man, after all his proud pretences to wit and understanding.

For disappointments, that come not by our own folly, they are the trials or corrections of heaven: and it is our own fault if they prove not our advantage. To repine at them does not mend the matter: it is only to grumble at our Creator. But to see the hand of God in them, with an humble submission to his will, is the way to turn our water into wine, and engage the greatest love and mercy on our side.

We are apt to be very forward to censure others, where we will not endure advice ourselves. And nothing shews our weakness more, than to be so sharp-sighted at spying other men's faults, and so purblind about our own. When the actions of a neighbour are upon the stage, we can have all our wits about us, are so quick and critical that we can split a hair, and find out every failure and infirmity; but are without feeling, or have but very little sense, of our own.

Frugality is good, if liberality be joined with it. The first is leaving off superfluous expenses; the last is bestowing them to the benefit of others that need. The first without the last begins covetousness; the last without the first begins prodigality. Both together make an excellent temper. Happy the place where they are found.

Love labour: for if you dost not want it for food, you mayest for physic. It is wholesome for thy body, and good for thy mind. It prevents the fruits of idleness, which many times come of nothing to do, and leads too many to do what is worse than nothing. A garden, a laboratory, a workhouse, improvements, and breeding, are pleasant and profitable diversions to the idle and ingenious; for here they miss ill company, and converse with nature and art, whose varieties are equally grateful and instructing, and preserve a good constitution of body and mind.

Covetousness is the greatest of monsters, as well as the root of all evil. I have once seen a man that died to save charges! "What! Give ten shillings to a doctor, and have an apothecary's bill besides, that may come to I know not what!" No, not he: valuing life less than twenty shillings. But, indeed, such a man could not, well, set too low a price upon himself; who, though he lived up to the chin in bags, had rather die, than find in his heart to open one of them, to help to save his life. Such a man is "felo de se," and deserves not Christian burial.

There can be no friendship where there is no freedom. Friendship loves a free air, and will not be penned up in straight and narrow inclosures. It will speak freely, and act so too; and take nothing ill, where no ill is meant; nay, where it is, it will easily forgive, and forget too, upon small acknowledgments.

A true friend unbosoms freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a friend unchangeably. These being the qualities of a friend, we are to find them, before we choose one.

If thou hast done an injury to another, rather own it than defend it. One way thou gainest forgiveness; the other, thou doublest the wrong and reckoning.

Believe nothing against another, but upon good authority: nor report what may hurt another, unless it be a greater hurt to others to conceal it.

Have a care of vulgar errors. Dislike, as well as allow, reasonably. Inquiry is human; blind obedience is brutal. Truth never loses by the one, but often suffers by the other. The most useful truths are the plainest; and while we keep to them, our differences cannot rise high. There may be a wantonness in search, as well as a stupidity in trusting. It is great wisdom equally to avoid the extremes.

Never esteem any man, or thyself, the more for money; nor think the meaner of thyself, or another, for want of it: virtue being the just reason of respecting, and the want of it of slighting any one.

COLUMN FROM ROBERT HALL.

The exclusion of a Supreme Being, and of a superintending Providence, tends directly to the destruction of moral taste. It robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness for which we are formed, and which kindle such unspeakable rapture in the soul, finding in the regions of skepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an Almighty Parent; in a world which leads the devout mind, step by step, to the contemplation of the first fair and the first good, the skeptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder.

Detesting war, considered as a trade or profession, and conceiving conquerors to be the enemies of their species, it appears to me that nothing is more suitable to the office of a Christian minister, than an attempt, however feeble, to take off the colors from false greatness, and to show the deformity which its delusive splendor too often conceals. This is perhaps one of the best services religion can do to society. Nor is there any more necessary. For dominion affording a plain and palpable distinction, and every man feeling the effects of power, however incompetent he may be to judge of wisdom and goodness, the character of a hero, there is reason to fear, will always be too dazzling. The sense of his injustice will be too often lost in the admiration of his success.

Of an accountable creature, duty is the concern of every moment, since he is every moment, pleasing or displeasing God. It is a universal element, mingling with every action, and qualifying every disposition and pursuit. The moral quality of conduct, as it serves both to ascertain and to form the character, has consequences in a future world, so certain and infallible, that it is represented in Scripture, as a seed, no part of which is lost, for whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap. That rectitude which the inspired writers usually denominate holiness, is the health and beauty of the soul, capable of bestowing dignity in the absence of every other accomplishment, while the want of it leaves the possessor of the richest intellectual endowments a painted sepulchre.

He must know little of the world, and still less of his own heart, who is not aware how difficult it is, amidst the corrupting examples with which it abounds, to maintain the spirit of devotion unimpaired, or to preserve, in their due force and delicacy, those vivid moral impressions, that quick perception of good, and instinctive abhorrence of evil, which form the chief characteristic of a pure and elevated mind. These, like the morning dew, are easily brushed off in the collisions of worldly interest, or exhaled by the meridian sun. Hence the necessity of frequent intervals of retirement, when the mind may recover its scattered powers, and renew its strength by a devout application to the Fountain of all grace.

Though religion in its ordinary exhibition commands but little respect, when it rises to the sublime, and is perceived to tincture and pervade the whole character, it seldom fails to draw forth the homage of mankind. The most hardened impiety and daring profligacy will find it difficult to despise the man who manifestly appears to walk with God, whose whole system of life is evidently influenced and directed by the powers of the world to come. The ridicule cast on religious characters, is not always directed towards their religion, but more often perhaps to the little it performs, contrasted with the loftiness of its pretensions—a ridicule which derives its force from the very sublimity of the principles which the profession of piety assumes.

Slavery, considered as a perpetual state, is as incapable of vindication as the trade in slaves; they are integral parts of the same system, and, in point of moral estimate, must stand or fall together. If it be unjust to sell men into slavery, who are guilty of no crime, it must be equally so to retain them in that state; the last act of injustice is but the sequel and completion of the first. If the natives of Africa were originally despoiled of their freedom by rapine and violence, no man is entitled to avail himself of the condition to which they are reduced, by compelling them to labor for his benefit; nor is it less evident, that they could not possibly transmit the forfeiture to their children of those rights which they never forfeited for themselves. Thus it appears, that the claims of the planters to hold their negroes in perpetual bondage, is vitiated in its origin; and having commenced in an act of injustice, can never acquire the sanction of right.

COLUMN FROM CHANNING.

An humble spire, pointing heavenward from an obscure church, speaks of man's nature, man's dignity, man's destiny, more eloquently than all the columns and arches of Greece and Rome, the mausoleums of Asia, or the pyramids of Egypt.

The worst error in religion, after all, is that of the skeptic, who records triumphantly the weaknesses and wanderings of the human intellect, and maintains that no trust is due to the decisions of this erring reason. We by no means conceive that man's greatest danger springs from pride of understanding, though we think as badly of this vice as other Christians. The history of the Church proves that men may trust their faculties too little as well as too much, and that the timidity, which shrinks from investigation, has injured the mind, and betrayed the interests of Christianity, as much as an irreverent boldness of thought.

No books astonish me like the Gospels. Jesus, the hero of the story, is a more extraordinary being than imagination has feigned, and yet his character has an impress of nature, consistency, truth, never surpassed. You have all seen portraits, which, as soon as seen, you felt to be likenesses, so living were they, so natural, so true. Such is the impression made on my mind by the Gospels. I believe that you or I could lift mountains or create a world as easily as fanaticism or imposture could have created such a character and history as that of Jesus Christ.

It is common to speak of the house of public worship as a holy place; but it has no exclusive sanctity. The holiest spot on earth, is that where the soul breathes its purest vows, and forms or executes its noblest purposes; and on this ground, were I to seek the holiest spot in your city, I should not go to your splendid sanctuaries, but to closets of private prayer. Perhaps the "Holy of Holies" among you is some dark, narrow room, from which most of us would shrink as unfit for human habitation; but God dwells there. He hears the music more grateful than the swell of all your organs; sees there a beauty such as nature, in her robes of spring, does not unfold; for there he meets, and sees, and hears, the humblest, most faithful, most truthful worshipper; sees the sweetest trials severely borne, the deepest injuries forgiven; sees toils and sacrifices cheerfully sustained, and death approached, through a lonely illness, with a triumphant faith. The consecration which such virtues shed over the obscurest spot is not and cannot be communicated by any of those outward rites by which our splendid structures are dedicated to God.

No doctrine is more common among Christians than that of man's immortality; but it is not so generally understood, that the germs or principles of his whole future being are so wrapped up in his soul, as the rudiments of the future plant in the seed. As a necessary result of this constitution, the soul, possessed and moved by these mighty though infant energies, is perpetually stretching beyond what is present and visible, struggling against the bounds of its earthly prison-house, and seeking relief and joy in imaginations of unseen and ideal being. This view of our nature, which has never been fully developed, and which goes further towards explaining the contradictions of human life than all others, carries us to the very foundations and sources of poetry. He who cannot interpret by his own consciousness what we now have said, wants the true key to the works of genius. He has not penetrated those secret recesses of the soul, where Poetry is born and nourished, and inhales immortal vigour, and wings herself for her heavenward flight.

A blow given to a single slave is a stripe on the souls of all who see or hear it. It makes all abject, servile. It is not the wound given to the flesh of which we now complain. Scar the back, and you have done nothing compared with the wrong done to the soul. You have either stung that soul with infernal passions, with thirst for revenge, or, what perhaps is more discouraging, you have broken and brutalized it. The human spirit has perished under your hands, as far as it can be destroyed by human force.

Most Protestant sects are built on the Papal foundation. Their creeds and excommunications embody the grand idea of infallibility, as truly as the decrees of Trent and the Vatican.

I am not sorry that society is taxed for the drunkard. I would it were taxed more. I would the burden of sustaining him were so heavy, that we should be compelled to wake up, and ask how he may be saved from ruin.