

### CHRIST THE LIGHT AND COMFORT OF THE CHURCH.

WHEN the sun takes its course towards us in the season of the year, it drives away the sharp frost and the heavy fogs of winter—it clears the heavens, decks the earth with variety of plants and flowers, and awakes the birds to the pleasant strains of their natural music. When Christ, after a kind of winter absence, returns to visit a declining church, admirable is the change that he produces: all begins to flourish by his sweet influence—his house, his worship, his people, are all clothed with a new beauty; but it is spiritual, and, therefore, none but spiritual eyes can discern it. When he will thus return, all the power and policy of man can no more hinder him, than it could stay the course of the sun in its circle. In like manner, a deserted, forsaken soul, that can do nothing but languish and droop, while Christ withdraws himself, what inexpressible vigour and alacrity finds it at his returning. Then those graces which, while they lurked, seemed to have been lost and quite extinguished, bud forth anew with pleasant colour and fragrant smell. It is the light of his countenance that banisheth their false fears, that strengthens their faith, and cures their spiritual infirmities. The Sun is indeed the sovereign physician,—“Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing under his wings.” Mal. iv. 2.—*Leighton*:

#### THE BIBLE.

CASTING away the fear of being accounted superstitious, cultivate the habit of looking at a Bible with respect and reverence. Open it with a kind of solid pleasure—for God is there, in all his greatness, and holiness, and love. Read it with thankfulness—for it is a grant to you under the hand of God, and it is sealed to you by the blood of Christ; and the grant secures to you, if you be a humble believer, forgiveness and sanctification, and victory and heaven. It secures to you “all things,” for “you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” When good old Bishop Latimer was led to the stake, he took the Bible with him. He clung to it with holy affection. It had pointed out to him a Saviour—it had taught him how to live with comfort—it was now to teach him how to die with triumph. There is scarcely a page in the Bible which does not show more of God than all the wonders of creation.—*Life of Rev. R. Housman.*

### THE CHRISTIAN MIRROR.

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OPPOSED as we have always been, in the conducting of this journal, to religious controversy, we have studiously avoided making any remarks calculated to lead to it; neither are we disposed to give pain to any individual, or individuals, by interfering, in the most remote manner, with the peculiar tenets of any body of professing Christians. But, nevertheless, we conceive it to be our duty to remark, that we have noticed, with mingled feelings of pain and astonishment, the attempts which have recently been made, on the part of a highly respected section of the Protestant Church, (or, to speak more correctly, a portion of it,) to assume to itself the exclusive right to the title of THE CHURCH—founding its pretensions upon a claim to apostolical succession, and insinuating, nay more, positively affirming, that all without her pale are in error, and, consequently, (as we conceive) beyond the reach of salvation. We had always supposed that but one opinion pervaded the whole Protestant Church respecting what constituted the Church of Christ, viz. that it is simply the “body of the faithful,” embracing every individual who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, being “passed from death unto life,” to whatever section of the Church he may belong. But we are obliged to confess, however reluctantly, that the party already noticed forms an exception to the general rule.

Now, we would ask the supporters of this arrogant assumption, whether such reasoning

is likely to lead to increased spirituality and growth in grace?—or whether, on the contrary, it is not eminently calculated to produce the most destructive consequences in the minds of all who suffer themselves to be influenced by it? At the present crisis especially, when the necessity of united exertion amongst the professed disciples of the Saviour, is so generally apparent, it is much to be deprecated, that such uncharitable and unscriptural feelings should be indulged by those who profess to be the followers of Him who died for ALL, and who offers salvation upon the simple terms of “repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

We have derived much pleasure from the perusal of some extracts from a “Charge of the Bishop of Chester, (of the Established Church of England,) recently delivered, which is replete with sound evangelical instruction, and which we make no apology for presenting to our readers. It will be perceived that the views of this eminent Prelate are diametrically opposed to those of the party above alluded to. We regret that our limits prevent us from giving the whole of the extracts in this number, but they shall be continued in our next.

I. RESERVE IN COMMUNICATING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.—“The principle by which, in all ages and countries, the power of Satan has been most successfully assailed, and the human heart most strongly actuated, is that of simple reliance on Christ Jesus; simple acceptance of the truth, that He is ‘made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.’ Accordingly, this doctrine, that, living under God’s wrath and condemnation, we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, has uniformly been assailed by every instrument which the enemy could bring to bear against it. From the time when certain men went down from Jerusalem, and troubled the Church at Antioch—from the time when Paul had to grieve over the disciples in Galatia, that they were ‘removed from the grace of Christ into another gospel, which was not another,’ for it was no gospel at all—from the earliest days until now, this has been the point of attack, because on this all depends. We are still experiencing the same, and from the same cause.

“Through the merciful Providence of God, the true principles of the Gospel were prevailing through the length and breadth of the land, and effects were following which they alone are capable of producing. Meanwhile the enemy is on the watch—knows well where his danger lies—and contrives to cast reproach upon the doctrine which is the hinge of Christian truth and Christian practice; to confound things which ought to keep distinct—things inherent in man with things extraneous to man—individual duties with vicarious merits—and to reduce religion to that doubt and uncertainty which never has led, and never will lead, to a consistent course of action.

“This attempt, frequently made, and too often successful, has been renewed in the present day. The Author of our salvation, ‘not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth,’ has commanded that the Gospel should be preached to every creature. Those have now risen up who affirm that the doctrine of the Gospel, the propitiation made for sin, is a doctrine too dangerous to be openly disclosed, too mysterious to be generally exhibited; and would thus deprive the sinner at once of his motive to repent, and his comfort in repenting. It has been another part of the same system to involve the article of our justification in obscurity; what has been done for us, and what is to be wrought in us, are confused together; and, practically, man is induced to look to himself, and not to his Redeemer, for acceptance with God.

“In all this, there is nothing that was unforeseen. The Apostle has plainly warned us to ‘beware of philosophy and vain conceit,’ lest they turn us aside from the simplicity of the Gospel—that very simplicity which fits it for the reception and benefit of all, but of which some men profess to be afraid, lest mercy should be too free, and the way of return to God too open. It is, in truth, the offence of the cross renewed under a fresh disguise—the objection which corrupt na-

ture has always opposed, under various forms, to the apostolical doctrine, ‘By grace are ye saved, through faith—not of works, lest any man should boast.’

“The scriptural truth is as clear as it is simple. ‘When all were dead, Christ died for all; so that ‘he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life.’ By one way alone can man possess the Son—that is, by believing in him. And, therefore, faith alone can justify—faith alone can appropriate to us that remedy, which God has appointed for the healing of our plague—faith alone can give us an interest in that sacrifice, which God has accepted as the satisfaction for sin. Thus, ‘being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ.’

“It is true, that, being thus accepted with God, and endued with his Spirit, man becomes a new creature. But he is not accepted with God, because he is a new creature, but because Christ has made atonement for the wrath which, in his old nature, he had incurred. His faith in that atonement which led to his acceptance, leads also to his doing works meet for one who is accepted; but the works which follow his being justified, and are its effect, can never also be the cause of his justification. If a remedy were proposed to a man lying under a mortal disease, and by applying it he were restored to life—it would be sophistry to affirm, that, after all, it was not the remedy which saved, but that the constitution, strengthened by the remedy, resisted the disease. It would be injustice to the remedy, and ingratitude to the physician. And so it is injustice and ingratitude to depreciate the virtue of Christ’s propitiation, by mixing up with it the righteousness of his redeemed people. Let no misrepresentation pervert, let no false philosophy corrupt the wholesome truth, that man is ‘delivered from the wrath to come,’ ‘not by works of righteousness which he has done,’ or may do, but by Him alone who ‘died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.’ The statement which came fresh from the Reformer’s age, is the statement to which we must still recur: that we are accounted righteous before God through the merits of Christ alone, and not ‘for our own works or deservings;’ that a lively faith is known by its works, as a sound tree by its fruits; but that they do not bear the root, but the root them. And we are at no loss for the reason why the Reformers were so diligent in laying this foundation. They had seen the consequence of departing from it. If works are to contribute to justification, ‘then grace is no more grace.’ If man can assist in expiating his own sin, he is not the corrupt being which needs redemption. And such was, in fact, the process through which human error superseded scriptural truth. Our Reformers knew how the corruption of man had been lost sight of, and then the atonement made for it virtually neglected; they knew how the satisfaction of Christ had been set aside, and human works substituted in its stead—often such works as were neither acceptable to God, nor profitable to man—till at length a system overspread the world, under the name of Christianity, which had neither God for its author, nor the welfare of mankind for its end—who were debased by what was sent to purify them, and deceived by what was ordained to deliver them from error.

“If these facts have been forgotten by the tendency of certain writings which have been lately pressed upon our attention, it is high time that they be brought back to our remembrance. Experience proves that the only doctrine which conveys real comfort to the soul, is the only doctrine which produces the genuine spirit of Christian piety. Experience proves, that the more we labour to establish ourselves in the practice of holiness, the more need we find of clothing ourselves in the righteousness of our Redeemer. And the more firmly we trust to that righteousness which is not our own, the nearer we advance towards the personal righteousness which we are giving to attain, and cannot be satisfied without attaining.”

THE Rev. Mr. Bridgman writes from Canton, that he believes God is about to open a part, at least, of China to the influence of the Gospel. God seems to be saying to that proud empire: “Who art thou, great mountain? Before Zerubabel thou shalt become a plain.”