

Pastor and People.

Assurance of Faith.

The Augustinian or Calvinistic system furnishes the ground of the strongest assurance. If Christ is mine now, He is mine forever. By the Arminian system, I may be the child of God to-day, and the child of the devil to-morrow. What security can I have that I shall ever see God's face in peace? None except a reliance upon myself. True, there may be an indefinite sort of trust in God; a vague hope that He will help me, but after all He cannot keep me from falling on any Arminian hypothesis. He might desire to do so; His heart might yearn over me with an unutterable longing to present me blameless before His face with exceeding joy; but poor being, He cannot preserve me, He cannot preserve any of His children into everlasting life without interfering with our free agency. Man rules, not God.

The hearts of our Arminian brethren are sounder in theology than their heads. They hope in God in spite of their doctrinal errors. They love the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in fact, while they deny it in theory.

How much better for head and heart to go together! How much better to have no gloomy misgivings, no cold fears creeping in serpent-like over the flower and fruits of our christian experience!

In another aspect of the subject, our doctrines give the only perfect ground of assurance. We hold that Christ has done everything that was to be done. He has not only suffered for us; He has also obeyed the law for us; He has closed the gate of hell, and He has opened the gate of heaven.

Jesus paid it all All the debt I owe

Hence there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; and being justified by faith we have peace with God.

HENRY CLAY.

This great man was at one time considerably annoyed by a debt of ten thousand dollars due the Northern Bank of Kentucky at Lexington. Some of his political friends in different parts of the Union heard of his condition, and quietly raised the money and paid off the debt without notifying Mr. Clay. In utter ignorance of what had been going on, he went to the Bank one day, and addressing the Cashier, Matthew T. Scott, so well known to commercial circles twenty years ago, said:

"Mr. Scott, I have called to see you in reference to that debt of mine to the bank."

"You don't owe us anything," replied Mr. S.

Mr. Clay looked inquiringly at him, and said:

"You do not understand me, Mr. Scott, I came to see you about that debt of \$10,000 which I am owing the Northern Bank."

"You don't owe us a dollar."

"Why! How am I to understand you!"

"A number of your friends have contributed and paid off that debt, and you do not owe this bank one dollar."

The tears rushed to Mr. Clay's eyes, and unable to speak, he turned and walked out of the bank.

This is a faint image of what Jesus has done for us. He has met our immense obligations to God's law. He has purchased eternal life for us. Dear Saviour, we cannot express our sense of the greatness and the tenderness of Thy love. Let our tears, our sighs, our sobs, let our broken utterances and our self-reproaches tell Thee what our lips cannot speak. We are bought with a price; therefore may we glorify God with our bodies and our spirits which are Thine.

Driven to the Bible.

One of the uses of affliction is to drive us to the Word of God for counsel and comfort. In prosperity we do not so much feel the need of the rich treasures contained in the Bible; but when afflictions, like mighty waves, roll over us, so that we are stripped of all human prospects, and must rely simply on God, then it is that we want to know what is our privilege to obtain from God by prayer; what God has done for others under similar circumstances; what our best course may be under our peculiar trials, and how we may find relief. These teachings and directions are in the Bible for us, but how few search them out or get a correct understanding of their practical import without being led to see and feel their need of them. The closest Bible-reader will find occasion, in times of affliction, to search more diligently for the deep things of God as revealed to us in His Word. After all, we should not wait to be thus driven to the Bible, but should make ourselves so familiar with its promises, that we might always have them at hand when we need the directions and the comforts which they alone can give us.

If, however, we have been negligent about searching the Scriptures until we have brought leanness of soul upon ourselves, it should be esteemed a mercy that afflictions come upon us and cause us to feel our need of the "green pastures" of God's Word. Who would ever learn how much others could or would help him, without first being brought into such a state of dependency as to call for aid? God often in mercy leads us through dark paths so that we may more clearly discover our need of His light. Often He permits us to come into such extremities as will drive us to lay hold upon His strength alone. Then it is that we want to know more of God. Then it is we fly to His blessed Word. And, as a hungry man relishes food, so do we relish the Word of God when driven to it by affliction. We do not wish to be understood as though we could not relish the Bible in days of prosperity, but when a deep sense of want leads us to search and meditate in the law of the Lord, we do it with unusually keen appetite and with great satisfaction to our souls. Blessed is the man that delighteth in the law of the Lord, and in it doth meditate day and night; and blessed be God for that discipline in life that leads us to discover the hidden treasures of His precious Word!—Exchange.

The Duty of a Public Profession of Religion.

At midnight, as the clock struck twelve, a messenger rang my door-bell, and announced that Mrs. D. was very sick and wished to see me at once. In the darkness of the night, aided by the glimmer of a few street-lamps, I hastened to the house. On entering it and ascending the stairs, I heard groans and exclamations that indicated the deepest distress. The house was beautifully furnished, and bore all the marks of comfort and luxury. Approaching the bed, I extended my hand to the sufferer, a young wife and mother, who had been suddenly prostrated by disease. I asked her the cause of her anguish. She replied: "I am about to die, and I have never made a public profession of my faith in Christ. Oh! she added, "If I could only live long enough to unite with the church I would willingly die. Pray earnestly that I may be spared just long enough to attend to this duty! I cannot enter eternity without doing it."

Moved by her deep distress and agonizing tones, I referred to her belief in the Saviour which she had expressed to me in the past; for at different times for two years I had conversed with her in regard to her soul's salvation, and finding that she gave evidence of being a disciple of Christ, I had urged her to come out from the world, and make a public profession of her faith. One excuse that she had given was, "at she was waiting for her husband to take this step with her."

In my attempts to offer what consolations the circumstances of the case permitted, I utterly failed to soothe her troubled spirit. Her passionate appeals, the deep agony depicted upon her countenance, and her cries to me to know what she should do, revealed a degree of distress over this neglected duty, such as I never before witnessed.

After the most tender expressions of sympathy, and quoting some of the Scriptural promises, I knelt by her side, and fervently prayed that God would extend His mercies to her and spare her life, that the earnest desire of her heart might be gratified. On leaving her, I promised to call again early in the morning, though, from her appearance, she did not seem to be in such immediate danger of dying as she supposed. Early in the morning I returned to the house, and the craps on the door told me that all was over. She died about two hours after I left, her mind unrelieved to the last.

God had given to this lady many precious opportunities for professing her faith in Jesus. This most important Christian duty and exalted privilege she had neglected. She had been kindly and repeatedly urged to obey the Saviour's command—"This do in remembrance of me." She was familiar with the declaration of Christ (Matt. x. 32, 33): "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven."

In the light of this sad case, how impressive are these words of our Saviour. The original word here rendered confess is the same that is elsewhere translated profess, as in 1 Tim. vi. 12—"And has professed a good profession before many witnesses." The duty here inculcated is a public profession of the believer's union with Christ; his hope of salvation through the atoning sacrifice on the cross; his free and full testimony to the divinity, incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God; and the public consecration of himself and all he possesses to the service of God. This duty is performed when the believer separates himself from the world and unites with the church, which is Christ's body, and of which He is the living head. "Whosoever therefore will do this," the Lord Jesus says, "him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven." He will profess or acknowledge before his Heavenly Father, the Sovereign of the universe, and all the holy angels that such are his friends, and joint heirs with him of the holy inheritance.

Whatever diversity of opinion may prevail in regard to the importance of making a public profession of religion, and whatever speculations may be indulged with reference to the final condition of those who privately express their belief in Christ, and yet neglect to profess Him before men, it is clear that Christ and His Apostles lay great stress upon the duty we are considering. They present it as an essential proof of genuine faith; as an evidence of a true and ardent love for the Saviour; and as a means of growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans says (x. 9, 10): "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

It is equally evident that if Christ is to have a visible church on the earth, His disciples must separate from the world and publicly confess Him. In Ephesians (v. 25, 27), we are told that "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without a blemish." But how is it to be accomplished, except through an organized body of believers who have come out from the world and publicly avowed their allegiance to Him.

Nothing can be clearer than that the place for a Christian is the Church of Christ. Here he becomes a vital part of the organization. Here he receives the commands from the leader of the hosts of God's elect, and comes under the blessings of His "exceeding great and precious promises." Here his influence is greatly augmented. Here he is a branch of the true vine, and may glorify God by bearing much fruit (John xv. 8). Here, having fulfilled the spiritual conditions of membership, he is a member of the body, of which Christ is the head, and derives his inspiration and strength from a divine source. Henceforth he lives and acts with Him who said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18).—Dr. R. W. Clark, in *Chris. Intelligencer*.

The Ritual of the Temple.

Every morning before the break of day the Captain or chief officer of the Temple guard opened the door of the court, where the priests in residence for the week had slept for the night, and the procession often passed round the court in white robes and bare feet to kill the morning sacrifice. As the first rays of the rising sun struck upon the golden lamp above the porch, the trumpets sounded; and those of the priests who had drawn the lot entered the temple for the offering of incense. That was the moment, if any, for any preternatural visitation to the priests. Then they came out, and having slain the lamb on the altar, they pronounced the benediction, the only relic of the sacerdotal office which has continued in the Jewish Church to our own time. On greater days the solemnities were increased, but the general plan was the same, and it was this worship, with its sacrificial shambles and its minute mechanism, that furnished the chief material for the theological discussions and ecclesiastical regulations of the Jewish Church of that period. The High Priest was still to be kept from falling asleep on the eve of the great fast, by pinching him and by reading to him what were thought the most exciting parts of the Bible. Five times over in that day had he to take off and put on his eight articles of pontifical dress, and on each occasion, behind a curtain put up for the purpose between him and the people, he plunged into the great swimming bath or pool, which, if he was old or infirm, was heated for him. He then put on all his gilded garments—goat's hair gilt—to penetrate into the innermost sanctuary and sprinkle the blood, like holy water, round the pavement eight times, checking his movement, like the officer who laid on stripes on an offender, by numbering them. When he came up he was thrice to utter the benediction, when all were hushed in deep stillness to catch the awful Name—which then only in each year of an Israelite's life could be heard—pronounced in that silence so distinctly that, in the exaggerated Rabbinical traditions, its sound was believed to reach as far as Jericho. The story of the scapegoat still continued, though it had all the appearance of a terrified ritual in its last stage of decadence. The creature was conveyed from the Temple to Olivet on a raised bridge to avoid the jeers of the irreverent pilgrims of Alexandria—who used to pluck the poor animal's long flakes of hair with the rude cries of "Get along and away with you!" Then he was handed on from keeper to keeper by short stages over hill and valley. At each halt where he rested an obsequious guide said to him, "Here is your food, here is your drink." The last in this strange succession led him to a precipice above the fortress of Dok, and hurled him down, and the signal was sent back to Jerusalem that the deed was accomplished, by the waving of handkerchiefs all along the rocky road.—Dean Stanley's *Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church*.

Faith and Science.

Last Sabbath morning week, Rev. John Hall, D.D., selected as his text the third verse of the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." In the course of his sermon he said:

"The statement in the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, is the strongest mode of stating the fact furnished by the Hebrew language. It states that the world is a creature; that matter is created in an article of faith. Not so, however, is it that the world was necessarily created in six literal days of twenty-four hours each. We may view the verse last quoted as an introduction of all the rest of the first chapter of Genesis in stating that matter was made. The Fourth Commandment has been used as an argument in favor of the theory that the days mentioned were periods of twenty-four hours, but the essence of reason for the Divine resting was not the number of hours of resting, but the proportion of time, which recalls Dr. Chalmers's beautiful suggestion that in dividing the seven decades of a man's life he should use the first six of them in active work and the last of them as his Sabbath. But some may say that this theory of periods of creation has been invented for the purpose of answering the assaults of modern geologists. A glance at the history of the two theories is a sufficient answer.

"St. Augustine, whom you all know not only as a great theologian, but also, like St. Paul, of high literary and scientific acquirements, suggested the theory that the world was created during periods as distinguished from days. Leonardo da Vinci, a man of universal and wonderful genius, about the sixteenth century, was the first to call attention to the study of geology, and as a science it has had but little standing until the present century; so that we find that the Bible has been the leader of scientific thought; that imperfect science has caused misunderstanding of its statements, and that upon further progress of science its perfect truth has been established.

"Men of science are wont to regret that theologians do not know a little of science, and so I frequently regret the ignorance of scientists of Greek, Hebrew and especially of logic. There is a great difference between collecting facts and reasoning upon them. A simple illustration coined for the purpose will exhibit this point. Suppose a man comes to me and says that on the first of January, 1877, we shall be on a gold basis because the price of coal has fallen, and insists that I shall believe this. I ask him his reasons, and he says that he has just been to the gold mines of Colorado and the coal mines of Pennsylvania. I venture to differ with him, not seeing the logical connection. He triumphantly asks me whether I have ever been into a coal mine, then whether I have ever been into a gold mine. I tell him that I have never been into either. He says that he has been in both, and I say that I possess reasoning faculties and shall insist upon exercising them upon the facts which he has derived from his observation.

"There is nothing in the point that there are diverse readings of Scripture. I would ask whether there are not diverse readings of fossils? Faith rests on the testimony of the living God. Let me illustrate this, so that the children may understand what I mean. Suppose a boy, the son of a father who lived in a foreign country, has left to him by his father's will, his estate and a history of his early days and of his family. In the latter he finds an account of the old school house, where his father was taught, the fields in which he played, and the friends with whom he associated. The boy goes back to his father's home, visits the old school house and meets his father's friends. Now, because he meets friends of his father not mentioned in the history, does he believe that the whole story is false? Every lawyer will tell you that omission is not contradiction. The office of science is to corroborate the Word of God, even in those most advanced in their condition. It is publicly confessed, and especially in geology, where materials are so scattered and the gaps so many, that it cannot be relied on for evidence against the testimony on the other side. Especially does this apply to recent writings. A writer in Appleton's 'Encyclopedia,' apparently an earnest believer in the doctrine of evolution, states that discoveries made in regard to sponges in 1872 change entirely the doctrine of evolution. So that these people claim to overthrow the Mosiac account by a theory invented within four years."

"What did He Do About It!"

The mystery of iniquity works—so subtly and mightily in the heart of man and in the world, that there are times when all attempts to meet and overcome it seem vain. The regular means of grace are often half abandoned, as if they proved insufficient, and moral reforms are brought forward to supplement, if not supersede them. And yet there is a great longing for apostolic days, and a wonder what Paul would do, if he were placed in the discouraging circumstances by which we are surrounded.

But it is evident that the world is no worse at this time than it was when those immediately commissioned by the Saviour were sent forth to pull down the strongholds of Satan and administer the only true antidote for the all pervading poison of sin; and if we wish to know what the apostles would do now, we can best learn it by finding out what they did then. Nor is it hard to get at the truth of the matter.

When Paul went to Corinth, that city was about as "bad" as any the world has since known. The most debasing form of vice was indulged in unblushingly, and the best religion that cultivated Greece had yet known gave it sanction. Genius had exhausted its highest powers in building monuments and statues to those as much distinguished for their profligacy as their talents, and the finest expressions of art perpetuated the obscene. The temple of Venus crowned the Acrocorinthus, and to that temple were attached a thousand beautiful but lewd women, who, under the cover of holy rites, pandered to the passions of citizens and strangers.

To this place the apostle went, about seventeen years after the crucifixion of our Lord, and when the power of His resurrection was but little known in the world. The representative of the gospel was a sore-eyed person, of contemptible bodily presence, and there was little in his outward appearance to commend him to men. He went, as he himself tells us "in weakness and fear, and much trembling;" for notwithstanding his faith in the divine commission, he was often "cast down." He had seen too much of the vain glory of art in Athens to be greatly interested in Corinthian columns and gushing fountains. He had made a most adroit and courteous address on Mars Hill with so little success, that he had but poor confidence in splendid diction, and afterwards wrote to the Corinthians: "I came to you, not with wisdom of words or excellency of speech."

Still, there was the world's civilization and the world's sin confronting him. What did he do about it? Did he go to some retired merchant and solicit a subscription to build a church, and thus approach his work money-end foremost? Hush! hush! Did he try to get the endorsement of leading citizens and scholars to give himself prestige? No, no; a thousand times no! Did he go to the palaces of the rich, that the truth might flow from aristocratic heights upon the humbler classes of men? No. He commenced his work in the tent factory of Aquila, probably on some back street, and doubtless among the toiling mechanics.

And what then? Did he inaugurate human reforms that were to raise men up to Christ? Did he establish an antislavery society, and get men to sign a pledge, as if there was power in the unaided human will by which the evil in man could be overcome? Did he send Priscilla out on a crusade, to sing before the temple of Venus? No; he preached the simple Gospel of Him, whose regenerating, helping power alone could reach and eradicate the sin, and in two years there arose in that vile city a congregation that had a wondrous history, a congregation that was in the world and had its besetments of false doctrines—a congregation some of the members of which were enticed by the lusts of the flesh, requiring his rebuke, as his epistles show; but a congregation that grew in grace until its fame had filled the whole earth.—*Reformed Messenger*.

PREACH Christ to sinners and bring individuals into fellowship with God, and you do more for the Master than all the conventions that ever assembled to palaver about the names and leagues and associations for massing a heterogeneous host of professors of religion into uniformity of Church regimentals.

THE past is not; the hues in which 'tis dressed Fond memory supplies.

THE future is not; hope-born in the breast Its fancied joy arises.

THE present is not; like the lightning's gleam Its brief illusions seem.

THIS is the life allotted unto man— A memory, a fleeting moment's span;

Canon of the Old Testament.

No earlier direct statement of the number of the books of the Old Testament is found than that given by Josephus, and that is not free from difficulty. He counts up the books which are justly held to be divine as including five books of Moses, thirteen prophets, and four containing hymns and rules of life. The total makes up twenty-two, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. It is not easy, however, so to arrange the books of the received canon, even taking the twenty-two prophets as a single book, as to bring the number of each group into harmony with Josephus's statement.

Singularly enough, the earliest actual list of named books is given by a Christian, not by a Jewish authority. Melito, Bishop of Sardis (A.D. 179), made a special inquiry into the exact number of sacred books, and enumerates all that we have, except Nohemiah and Esther, of which it may be conjectured that they were grouped with Ecdras or Ezra, as belonging to the same period. Origen gives the Jewish number twenty-two, but adds the Epistle of Jeremiah to Barnuch, which we now find in the Apocrypha. Practically, however, the views of Christendom on the subject of the Canon of the Old Testament have been fashioned more by the authority of Jerome than of any other writer. To him we owe the broad line of demarcation between the canonical and apocryphal books.

The books recognized as sacred by the Jews of Palestine corresponded closely with those of our present Bible, and so far as we may judge from the writings of Philo, the great Alexandrian interpreter of the first century, the Jews of that city recognized the same books and no others. The literary activity of Alexandria led, however, to the composition of other books in Greek, or to translation from Aramaic books, and these were read as religious and edifying books, first by Jews and afterwards by Christians. . . . In this way what is known as the Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament (from the tradition that it was made by seventy elders summoned from Jerusalem by Ptolemy Philadelphus, B.C. 271), presented a different order, and included other books than the Hebrew Bible as it was read in Palestine.

The volume thus made up was widely spread in the first century among the Hellenistic or Greek-speaking Jews, and though not read in their synagogues, was extensively studied in private. . . . It naturally fell into the hands of Greek-speaking converts to the Christian faith. If they were Jews, or under the influence of Jewish opinion, the traditions of the Palestine schools would keep them steady in their judgments as to the relative authority of the two sets of books thus brought together. But those who were converts from heathenism would naturally take the volume as a whole and make no distinction. . . . The tendency was for the most part in this direction; and one of the earliest extant MSS. of the Septuagint version—the Alexandrian—one used in Christian worship, contains a Psalm of David after his victory over Goliath, and Psalms of Solomon, which are not found even in our apocrypha. When the Septuagint was translated into Latin for the benefit of Christians in Rome and Africa, there was still less—removed as they were one step farther from the fountain-head—to check this tendency, and a spurious Apocalypse, like the Second Book of Ecdras, which had not even a Greek original, was received as part of the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

The drift in this direction was happily stemmed by the scholarship and spirit of inquiry of the great Jerome. When he undertook the work of revising the existing Latin versions, and, where necessary, translating anew, he determined to qualify himself for his task by learning Hebrew. With this view, when at his hermitage in Bethlehem, he put himself under the teaching of a Jew, and was thus brought into contact with the Palestine tradition as to the canon, which the Rabbinic schools had never modified. He recognized that they were in this respect true to their vocations as those to whom had been committed the oracles of God, and adopted their canon. In his prologues and introductions to the several books of the Old Testament he traced, more distinctly than had been done before by any writer of equal authority, the Jewish line of demarcation as to the books which were in the Hebrew canon. And though he did not exclude them from his version, and followed, for the most part, the order of the Septuagint, he fixed on them the name of *Apocrypha*. His great contemporary, Augustine, less under the influence of Hebrew tradition, was less clear in his estimate, and oscillated in his language, and could not bring himself to disparage what the whole Church had up to that time received with scarcely a question.

The result of the conflict of authority was that Western Christendom was for about a thousand years more or less divided on this point. The term "Apocrypha" was seldom used as Jerome had used it, and "Ecclesiastical" took its place, as indicating that the books so called were read and acknowledged by the Church. The greater influence of Augustine, and we may add, the fact that the two sets of books were not divided from each other, even in Jerome's version, gave gradually a preponderance to the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew canon, and it was not till men undertook once again the work of translation, and thus came in closer contact with Jerome's writings, or with the Hebrew text, that the old distinction was revived. Thus Wiclif, though he kept the books in their old order, spoke of the non-Hebrew books as Apocrypha. Luther, in his first edition of his complete German Bible (A.D. 1534), grouped the greater part of the apocrypha together, as "books which were not of like worth with Holy Scriptures, yet were good and useful to be read." Coverdale, with a strange exception in favor of the Book of Baruch, places the books apart as "not held by ecclesiastical doctors in the same repute as the other Scriptures." Cramer's Bible followed this arrangement, but used quite inaccurately the middle term "Hagiographa" (holy writings) instead of "Apocrypha."—*Bible Educator*, published by Cassell, Pelter, and Galpin.