

arguments for and against each side of a question, and at length avow their convictions, impelled thereto by the force of truth, calmly but coldly dictating the course which ought to be pursued. These are not the men who take the lead. Their influence is deep and abiding; but it is less prominent. Their works remain, but they themselves are forgotten. Whereas, of the men who are leaders, the writings are forgotten; but their names, their personal history, their actions, themselves are remembered forever. The stream which runs still and deep, attracts little attention. The cataract, where the water takes its headlong leap, startling and stirring us with its grandeur, is visited by thousands.

Thus, the men who take the lead are the men of action. Peter speaks before the contemplative John. Thus, of the Reformers of the 16th century, the best remembered, he whose history possesses the deepest personal interest is Luther; a man, the greater portion of whose writings is of little value now; a man who retained many errors to the last,—hasty, impulsive, obstinate, one-sided in many things,—but generous and noble, and over whose biography we love to linger. The name of Calvin, on the other hand,—the reformer who shaped the stones taken roughly out of the quarry by Luther, and fitted them into the temple,—though a man of clearer, more penetrating, and more highly cultivated intellect,—though his writings exert a profound influence to this day, and are quoted to a greater extent than any others of the period in all more recent commentaries upon the Bible,—calls up no sunny memories. The events of his private life are uninteresting, and awaken no sympathy, no affection for the man apart from his works. Luther was, in a manner, the rock of the Reformation, as Peter of the Apostolical Church. Without pressing the parallel—for no two men are in all respects alike—and the one was an Apostle, while the other was an uninspired man;—this and kindred illustrations may help to throw more light upon the passage than the most labored analysis.

Let us view the question in one other aspect. God works by instruments. He sustains the universe in being by a continued instrumentality. Every object of sight, every wandering sound, every floating fragrance, every hidden root, laws of matter, lives of plants, instincts of animals, thoughts of men,—all are his servants. He continues his Church in being in the same way. Our Saviour appeared on the theatre of time as an instrument to make known the will of God for man. The Father sent him, saying, "They will reverence my son." Then following in his footsteps we see the long succession of the faithful, apostles, martyrs, preachers, each adapted to his assigned position, each working the work of God, while to him it was today, and when his night came, leaving the work to another.

Now what men are God's most effectual instruments in hewing out stones to place in the temple of His Church? Take an Old Testament example. Who contributed most to the good of Israel in the days of Ahab the plow but timid Obadiah, or the daring Elijah, who, though single-handed, avowed opinions to the face of a monarch who hated him, and of 450 priests who despised him? Yet that very Elijah, after awakening a new life in Israel, fled ignominiously before the threat of the queen, and is heard exclaiming, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my father." Obadiah, on the other hand, continued at his post, maintaining his piety, but not extending his influence. The men, by whose instrumentality God does his work, are the fearless, outspoken, who assert their opinions daringly and believably; and who, though they are unfrequently commit great blunders, or, like David or Peter, fall into great sins, yet attract us towards them by their earnestness, honesty, heartiness, the thoroughness of their humanity. There are some who are great in relation to truth. But their words and writings are only for the student. The Church is composed of men. The influence of the man of thought is more extensive but less intense than that of the man of action. Take Whitefield in the 18th century. There were divines that century, with whom, in point of learning and profound thought, Whitefield cannot be named. But compare the immense work performed by him with that effected by the scholars, and we must acknowledge that the great preacher was a more valuable instrument in building up the Church, than the great thinker. "For God hath chosen foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and it hath pleased Him," by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Now this spirit of dauntless assertion of the truth, as it appears to a man unbiassed by prejudice, and thinking for himself, which animated Peter now, which animated Luther at the Reformation; or, to take an illustration employed already, the disposition manifested by Galileo in science, when directed to spiritual things, and used as an instrument by the Spirit of God;—in a word, the willingness to hear what "the Father reveals" and to act accordingly, is the "Rock against which the gates of hell shall never prevail." Christianity is nothing apart from men. It is a spirit, a life which identifies itself, and grows into unity with persons,—its outward manifestation being the unhesitating avowal of what is felt to be truth, in love. To this spirit, this life, which lay enfolded in Christ Jesus, diffused itself immediately over the circle of the twelve, first taking an outward form in Peter; and spread itself, afterwards, over those wider circles which were gradually formed, as the Church increased among men. Every man, who becomes a new man, so