

seem bold in what I am about to say; but I fearlessly venture the assertion, that four-fifths of the semi-Romanism of the last quarter of a century would never have existed if English people had been taught more fully and clearly the nature, veniency, and sinfulness of sin.

(d) In the next place, a right view of sin is one of the best antidotes to the overstrained theories of Perfection, of which we hear so much in these times. I shall say but little about this, and in saying it I trust I shall not give offence. If those who press on us perfection mean nothing more than an all-round consistency, and a careful attention to all the graces which make up the Christian character, reason would that we should not only bear with them, but agree with them entirely. By all means let us aim high.—But if men really mean to tell us that here in this world a believer can attain to entire freedom from sin, live for years in unbroken and uninterrupted communion with God, and feel for months together not so much as one evil thought, I must honestly say that such an opinion appears to me very *unscriptural*.—I go even further. I say that the opinion is very dangerous to him that holds it, and very likely to depress, discourage, and keep back inquirers after salvation. I cannot find the slightest warrant in God's Word for expecting such perfection as this while we are in the body. I believe the words of our Fifteenth Article are strictly true,—that "Christ alone is without sin; and that all we, the rest, though baptized and born again in Christ, offend in many things; and if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."—To use the language of our first Homily, "There be imperfections in our best works; we do not love God so much as we are bound to do, with all our heart, mind, and power; we do not fear God so much as we ought to do; we do not pray to God but with many and great imperfections. We give, forgive, believe, live, and hope imperfectly; we speak, think, and do imperfectly; we fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh imperfectly. Let us, therefore, not be ashamed to confess plainly our state of imperfection."—Once more I repeat what I have said: the best preservative against this temporary delusion about perfection which clouds some minds,—for such I hope I may call it—is a clear, full, distinct understanding of the nature, sinfulness, and deceitfulness of sin.

(e) In the last place, a scriptural view of sin will prove an admirable antidote to the low views of personal holiness, which are so painfully prevalent in these last days of the Church. This is a very painful and delicate subject, I know; but I dare not turn away from it. It has long been my sorrowful conviction that the standard of daily life among professing Christians in this country has been gradually falling. I am afraid that Christ-like charity, kindness, good-temper, unselfishness, meekness, gentleness, goodness, self-denial, zeal to do good, and separation from the world, are far less appreciated than they ought to be, and than they used to be in the days of our fathers.

Into the causes of this state of things I cannot pretend to enter fully, and can only suggest conjectures for consideration. It may be that a certain profession of religion has become so fashionably and comparatively easy in the present age, that the streams which were once narrow and deep have become wide and shallow, and what we have gained in outward show we have lost in quality. It may be that the vast increase of wealth in the last twenty-five years has insensibly introduced a plague of worldliness and self-indulgence and love of ease into social life. What were once called luxuries are now comforts and necessities, and self-denial and "enduring hardness" are consequently little known. It may be that the enormous amount of controversy, which marks this age has insensibly dried up our spiritual life. We have too often been content with zeal for orthodoxy, and have neglected the sober realities of daily practical Godliness. Be the causes what they may, I must declare my own belief that the result remains. There has been of late years a lower standard of personal holiness among believers than there used to be in the days of our fathers. The whole result is that THE SPIRIT IS GRIEVED! and the matter calls for much humiliation and searching of heart.

As to the best remedy for the state of things I have mentioned, I shall venture to give an opinion. Other schools of thought in the Churches must judge for themselves. The cure for Evangelical churchmen, I am convinced, is to be found in a clearer apprehension of the nature and sinfulness of sin. We need not go back to Egypt, and borrow semi-Romish practices in order to revive our spiritual life. We need not restore the confessional, or return to monasticism or asceticism. Nothing of the kind. We must simply repent and do our first works. We must return to first principles. We must go back to "the old paths." We must sit down humbly in the presence of God, look the whole subject in the face, examine clearly what the Lord Jesus calls sin, and what the Lord Jesus calls "doing His will." We must then try to realize that it is *terribly possible* to live a careless, easy-going, half-worldly life, and yet at the same time to maintain Evangelical principles and call ourselves Evangelical people! Once let us see that sin is far viler, and far nearer to us, and sticks more closely to us, than we supposed, and we shall be led, I trust and believe, to get nearer to Christ. Once drawn nearer to Christ, we shall drink more deeply out of His fulness, and learn more thoroughly to "live the life of faith" in Him, as St. Paul did. Once taught to live the life of faith in Jesus, and abiding in Him, we shall bear more fruit, shall find ourselves more strong for duty, more patient in trial, more watchful over our poor weak hearts, and more like our Master in all our little daily ways. Just in proportion as we realize how much Christ has done for us, shall we labour to do much for Christ. Much forgiven, we shall love much. In short, as the Apostle says, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

Whatever some may please to think or say, there can be no doubt that an increased feeling about holiness is one of the signs of the times. Conferences for the promotion of "spiritual life" are becoming common in the present day. The subject of "spiritual life" finds a place on Congress

platforms almost every year. It has awakened an amount of interest and general attention throughout the land, for which we ought to be thankful. Any movement, based on sound principles, which helps to deepen our spiritual life and increase our personal holiness, will be a real blessing to the Church of England. It will do much to draw us together and heal our unhappy divisions. It may bring down some fresh out-pouring of the grace of the Spirit, and be "life from the dead" in these later times. But sure I am, as I said in the beginning of this paper, we must begin low, if we would build high. I am convinced that the first step towards attaining a higher standard of holiness is to realize more fully the amazing sinfulness of sin.—Rev. J. C. Kyle.

AN EVENING HYMN.

At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around thee lay;
O in what divers pains they met!
O with what joy they went away!

Once more 'tis eventide, and we
Oppress'd with various ills, draw near:
What if thy form we cannot see?
We know and feel that thou art here.

O Saviour Christ, our woes dispel;
For some are sick, and some are sad,
And some have never loved thee well,
And some have lost the love they had;

And some have found the world is vain,
Yet from the world they break not free;
And some have friends who give them pain,
Yet have not sought a friend in thee.

And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,
For none are wholly free from sin;
And they, who fain would serve thee best,
Are conscious most of wrong within.

O Saviour Christ, thou too art man;
Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried,
Thy kind but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide.

Thy touch has still its ancient power;
No word from thee can fruitless fall;
Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in thy mercy heal us all.

INDOLENCE CRAVING AUTHORITY.

"It is very pleasant to some minds to be told exactly what to do—to have every question resolved, so that there may be no trouble in deciding; and perhaps the power which Popery gets over some minds is as much to be attributed to that natural indolence or timidity which shrinks from deciding—or, rather, is glad to be spared the exercise of conscience in deciding—certain questions as before God, as to the spiritual dominion which is claimed by the priest. The priest pleads the authority of the church, and the people love to have it so, because by the authority of the church they are spared exercise of conscience in judging of what is right and what is wrong, and so they come to look upon themselves as not responsible for the truth of what they believe. Such texts as 'Search the Scriptures,' 'Take heed what ye hear,' 'How read ye?' 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good,' are altogether set aside; and when to this is added the dogma of infallibility, the conscience is left perfectly easy.

"But we, as Protestants, must remember that if we claim and maintain the right of private judgment, we must accept the responsibility connected with it. Indeed, the habit of having things decided for us is neither edifying nor safe. Its tendency is, first, to make an arm of flesh, and then to lean upon it; whereas our only foundation must be God—our only guide, the Lord, in His Word by His Holy Spirit; and people should be striving to live in intercourse and communion with the Lord; for this, if you are so striving, will keep in diligent exercise the habit of studying the Word of God to know what the will of the Lord is. This will stimulate to prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit on the Word, as well as for communications of light and knowledge from a throne of grace. This will help to maintain the habit of steady obedience to the Word of God, for 'If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' This will also maintain communion with God, for 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.' This will secure holiness, for 'If we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' And, though last not least, this will maintain peace; for 'If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'—*Lectures on the Thirty-second Psalm, by the Rev. J. W. Reeve, M.A.*

If there be within us any sparks of divine love, the best way not only to preserve them, but to excite them, to blow them into a flame, is by the breath of prayer. O prayer, the converse of the soul with God; the breath of God in man returning to its original; the better half of our whole work, and that which makes the other half lively and effectual."—*Ibid.*

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WORDS OF THE WISE.

A SOFT answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.—Prov. xv. 1.

There is great danger, at the present day, of compromising truth for the sake of union. This should be carefully guarded against. There can be no true union attained at the expense of truth. The true Christian's motto should ever be—Maintain truth at all cost; if union can be promoted in this way, so much the better, but maintain the truth.—*Mason.*

All who make any pretension to the office of shepherds visit their flocks; yet there is a wide difference in the kind of visits which shepherds give. One does it formally, to discharge his duty and to quiet conscience; another makes it his delight. And of those who make it their delight, one goes forth on the regular plan of addressing all in somewhat of the same style; while another speaks freely, according as the wounds of his sheep come to view. On all occasions, this difficult and trying work must be gone about with a full heart, if it is to be gone about successfully at all. There is little in it to excite, for there is not the presence of numbers, and the few you see at a time are in their calmest, every-day mood. Hence there is need of being full of grace, and need of feeling as though God did visit every hearer by your means. Our object is not to get duty done, but to get souls saved.

UNSEARCHABLE GOD.—Though the sun is the source and fountain of light, there is little good in gazing at the sun except to get blinded. No one ever saw the better for looking the sun directly in the face. It is a child's trick; grown up people know better. We use the light which the sun gives, to see by, and to search into all things—the expected sun. Him we cannot explore beyond what He reveals of Himself in the light and heat which he sheds upon us, and in the colors by which he is reflected from the earth. There is no searching of the sun, our eyes are too weak. How much less can we search the sun's Creator, before whom the myriads of suns are but so many cloud-lodges! His revelation of Himself, in His works and in His word, in His Son and in our souls, is more than enough for us. Persons who dare to go, as they say, in a direct way to Himself, are like children looking at the sun, who, instead of getting more light and better eyes, get less light and an infatuated eye.

CONSTANT MERCY.—All the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us; both when we sleep and when we wake, His mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave off shining, but our God will never cease to cheer His children with His love. Like a river His loving-kindness is always flowing, with a fulness inexhaustible as His own nature, which is its source. Like the atmosphere which always surrounds the earth, and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all His creatures in it, as in their element, they live, and move, and have their being. Yet as the sun on summer days appears to gladden us with beams more warm and bright than at other times, and as rivers are at times swollen with the rain, and as the atmosphere itself on occasions is fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than heretofore, so is it with the mercy of God: it hath its days of overflow, when the Lord magnified His grace and lifteth high His love before the sons of men.

"A LITTLE of God would make my soul bankfull. O that I had but Christ's off-fallings; that He would let but the meanest of his love-rays and love-beams fall from Him, so as I might gather and carry them with me! I would not be hard to please with Christ, and veiled visions of Christ; neither would I be dainty in seeing and enjoying Him: the parings and crumbs of glory that fall under his table in heaven, a shower, like a thin May-mist, of his love, would make me green, and sappy, and joyful, till the summer sun of an eternal glory break up. O that I had anything of Christ! O that I had a sip, or half a drop, out of the hollow of Christ's hand, of the sweetness and excellency of that lovely One! O that my Lord Jesus would pity me, and give me but the meanest alms of felt and believed salvation! O how little were it for that infinite Sea, that infinite Fountain of love and joy, to fill as many thousand, thousand little vessels like me, as there are minutes of hours since the creation of God!"—*Rutherford.*

PHILIP SAITH UNTO NATHANAEL, "COME AND SEE."

Wiser counsel than this it would be impossible to conceive! If Philip had reproved Nathanael's unbelief, he might have driven him back for many a day, and given offence. If he had reasoned with him, he might have failed to convince him, or might have confirmed him in his doubts. But by inviting him to prove the matter for himself, he showed his entire confidence in the truth of his own assertion, and his willingness to have it tested and proved. And the result shows the wisdom of Philip's words. Nathanael owed his early acquaintance with Christ to that frank invitation, "Come and see."

If we call ourselves true Christians, let us never be afraid to deal with people about their souls as Philip dealt with Nathanael. Let us invite them boldly to make proof of our religion. Let us tell them confidently that they cannot know its real value until they have tried it. Let us assure them that vital Christianity courts every possible inquiry. It has no secrets. It has nothing to conceal. Its faith and practice are spoken against just because they are not known. Its enemies speak evil of things with which they are not acquainted. They understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm. Philip's mode of dealing, we may be sure, is one principal way to do good. Few are ever moved by reasoning and argument. Still fewer are frightened into repentance. The man who does most good to souls, is often the simple believer who says to his friends, "I have found a Saviour, come and see him."—*Ryle.*