

we have usually to be content with only such knowledge of his sentiments as his book supplies. The author goes not with the book, and is not present with the reader. I might wish while perusing some abstruse or profound treatise, to have the writer by my side as its interpreter. I might wish to have him near me, that I might ask him to elucidate his doctrines or solve my difficulties. But the wish were vain. The writer is far distant from me, or perhaps he has gone to his grave, whence he cannot come back to help me. But quite otherwise is it with the Divine Author of the Bible. He is everywhere present. He is by the side of every reader of His holy Book. Ay, and instead of being reluctant to aid the efforts of the struggling soul, He takes pleasure in opening men's eyes to understand the Scriptures, and in establishing their hearts in the truth. His promise is, that He will be with His people alway, even unto the end of the world. And never does that precious promise fail—never does the prayer go up to His throne, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of Thy law," without being followed by a divine manifestation of the truth to the mind and heart of the earnest applicant.

However, then, it may be with those who are without the Scriptures, and have not heard whether there be any Holy Ghost, there can be no doubt that, by every one of us, divine truth may be bought and acquired. And it deserves special remark that, when actually bought and acquired, divine truth becomes a man's own, in the strictest and fullest sense of the phrase. We call a man's wealth his own; but in how limited a sense is it his! Though his, to be held and used in trust, so long as he has it, yet his, it is not and cannot be, in the sense of enriching him permanently. We call a man's estate his own; but how loose is his hold of it! To-morrow he may have to sell it to meet an unexpected liability; and, sooner or later, he must die and leave it to others, himself wholly and forever losing it. How different is it with divine truth! It, when possessed, does not stand outside of a man and apart from him, like his money or his estate. It enters his intellect, his conscience, his will, his affections. It becomes the food of his soul; and, just as bodily food is turned into flesh and blood, so it is turned into thought and motive. It becomes, so to speak, part and parcel of his being, and, as such, it abides with him, to attend him in all his duties, to support him in all his trials, cheer him on the bed of death, and pass up with him to his heavenly mansion. Moneyless, landless, possessionless he may be as regards this outward world; but he is a real possessor, notwithstanding—the possessor of a rich and inalienable domain in the kingdom of truth.

III. On the third lesson of the text I must speak at greater length, because of all the three it is the one which we most need to be taught, and yet are the slowest to

learn. It is this—that divine truth can become our actual possession only by our paying a price for it.

Of course, in speaking of a price, I do not mean money. To any one who should expect to procure truth at such a price, the only fit reply would be, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." The price I speak of is of another quality. It is a price to be paid, not by the hands, but by the mind and heart. It is an expenditure, not of outward, but of inward wealth—an expenditure of mental and moral effort.

If man's judgment was unbiassed by the love of sin—if his mental eye was single, so that his soul might freely admit the light—then no self-denying effort would be needed, in order to a clear apprehension and cordial belief of the truth. In that case an attentive perusal of the sacred Book would be enough; he would have but to read, in order to understand and approve, and become wise unto salvation. But unhappily, in the present state of human nature, there is no such singleness of mental vision. Man's judgment is blinded by his love of sin, and is therefore disabled from readily apprehending and approving God's truth. He loves darkness, because the light condemns him; and, loving darkness, he refuses to look at the light; or, if he looks at it, it is only to behold it refracted and discolored by the darkness in which he abides. There is a cloud between him and the bright stars of heavenly truth—a cloud created and fed by the fogs and vapors steaming up from his own corrupt heart. And hence, although those heavenly stars are ever shining serenely on in the Scripture firmament, and shedding down their holy light to guide his darkling steps in the way of peace; yet by him they are either wholly unseen, or only beheld through a medium which distorts their form, and dims their splendor.

Now it is obvious that, in such a state of spiritual blindness, no man can buy divine truth and make it his own, unless he is prepared to pay down a price for it of strenuous and self-denying effort. Nor will it suffice to put forth merely such an amount of effort as may enable him to peruse the Scriptures, and to pray for the teaching of the Spirit. The Scriptures, indeed, must be perused, and the teaching of the Spirit prayed for; for it is only by the study of the Scriptures that divine truth can be surely known; and it is only through the help of the Spirit that divine truth can be clearly understood and cordially loved. But these, though the primary, are not the only conditions of success. Apart from the temper of mind in which we read and pray, no mere study of the Scriptures will transfer the truth from the printed page to our souls, and no mere prayers for the Spirit will bring down illuminating grace. Here, everything depends on the spirit of mind which underlies our efforts. And quite bootless, therefore, must be our reading and praying, if we fail to read and pray in a right spirit—that is, as I under-

stand it, in an earnest, and independent, a deferential, and an obedient spirit.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

Fast day Sermon, St. Paul's Church, Montreal, Friday, November 24th.

The Rev. William Snodgrass, pastor of the congregation, preached from these words of 2. Kings, ch. 12, v. 24;—"This thing is from me." Having stated the occasion of the fast, and remarked that Her Majesty the Queen, followed by her chief ministers in the other British Colonies in imitation of her example, had appointed a similar day for humiliation and prayer in the Papal Kingdom, the preacher said:

Our Christian people have not, indeed, waited for or required an authoritative edict to incite them to cry for mercy and deliverance. Night after night at the domestic altar, Sabbath after Sabbath in the House of God, the prayers of the righteous have been loudly presented at a Throne of Grace. But we ought to regard it as a matter of thankfulness that our rulers, not disregarding the vast resources placed by God at the command of the British Empire, and not undervaluing the Christian intrepidity and bravery of the British warriors, but feeling, as we trust they feel, that all strength is from the Lord of Hosts, and that without His blessing the most prompt and powerful efforts to quell rebellion are in vain, have invited the people, for whose benefit they are clothed with authority, to look to the Ruler of the Universe as their refuge and defence in this day of trouble. There have been times when the propriety of this course has been loudly questioned, and angrily discussed. Many have doubted, and many others have denied, alike the right and wisdom of the State in the appointment of days of humiliation and prayer. It has been held to be a departure by the civil authorities from their proper functions. It has been regarded as an intolerant abrogation of sectarian opinions, and an injudicious over-riding of conscientious scruples. It has been interpreted as a meddling interference by Cæsar with the affairs of Christ. But the present occasion stands out from all preceding ones of a similar kind in so bold a relief—so terrible and imminent has been the danger with which we were threatened; so horribly has every feeling of humanity been outraged; so savage and unrestrained has been the madness for destruction; so brutal and blood-thirsty has been the immolation of unoffending women and helpless children—that the nation's heart has been shocked by the wail of a crime which has reached the nation's ears. Judging from the readiness with which the conduct of our rulers has been approved, and their calls obeyed, it would seem that everywhere the disposition to cavil and object is less than heretofore, and that for once the general sentiment of the subject has been righted. Oh! that it