Truths and Half-Truths.

The world is misled by half-truths. No truth stands by itself. The assertion of a truth is liable to convey, if not by necessary implication at least by natural suggestion, an error, if there be silence respecting the truth which forms its counterpart and so converts the hemisphere into the globe. If it had been barely affirmed by Copernicus that the sun stands still, and had he not at the same time taught that the earth moves in an orbit round the sun, he would have brought in more confusion than light. No religion is totally false. Mohammedanism proclaims a great truth—the dominion in the world of an almighty will. The creed of Islam is mischievous, not in virtue of what it thus declares, but on account of that which it ignores. There is no type of theology calling itself Christian which is wholly erroneous. Few sermons are delivered in which there is not a positive inculcation of something that is true But if you are to judge of the value of the sermon you must take into the account the things that are left out or called in question. There will be reactions in theology. An undue emphasis in one place gives occasion to an undue emphasis in another. So the integrity of Christian doctrine is broken. The symmetry of Christian truth is sacrificed to the detriment of the congregations who listen to pulpit instruction.

Leaving these generalities, I will illustrate them by a reference—I wish it did not need to be so brief—to certain tendencies just now more or less prevalent.

We hear a great deal said, in churches regarded as "Evangelical," of the fatherhood of God. Now there is a *natural* fatherhood of God in relation to men. It is a precious truth. He is even said to be the "Father of Lights"; that is, He creates, and His energy sustains, the heavenly bodies. More than this is true of His relation to men. We are made in His image. As the apostle Paul teaches, quoting heathen poets, we are "the offspring of God." Like Him we are spiritual beings. It is probable that Luke, in the genealogy which he gives of Jesus, designates Adam as a son of God. It is right to dwell on this indestructible relation of the soul to the divine Creator, Preserver and patient, merciful Benefactor. But leaving out passages which are misinterpreted, the verses of Scripture that touch on the natural fatherhood of God, important as that truth is, can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The passage which speaks of Him as "the God and Father of all," refers, as the context shows, to Christian believers. The "children of God" in the Old Testament and the New are those who do His will and are like Him. The "children of God" are distinguished from the world at large. "As many as received Him (Christ), to them He gave power (the right) to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name." They *become* children by believing on Jesus. So writes the apostle John. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." "And if children, then heirs," etc. So writes the apostle Paul. The teaching of Jesus is to the same effect. The peacemakers are blessed, "for they"—*they*, not people of a different mind—"shall be called the children of God." Christ bade His hearers do good to their enemies, "that ye may be the children of your Father"; that is to say, be like Him.

The Lord's Prayer was given to disciples. In the early church it was used in worship only in assemblies of disciples. In keeping with this use of terms, Christ said to a class of wicked men, "Ye are of your father, the devil;" "ye do the deeds of your father." If the parable of the prodigal son implies the *natural* fatherhood of God, it must not be taken as in the least inconsistent with the ordinary doctrine of the New Testament as to the *moral* fatherhood. The design of that parable was to teach one thing—the joy in heaven over a repentant sinner. To use it to prop up other beliefs—for example, the denial of the atonement, or of the need of conversion in order to become a child of God in the deeper sense—is to misuse it. Through all the Scriptures, in the Old Testament and in the New, God is represented as having a people separate morally and spiritually from the world. That people in the New Testament is composed of the true followers of Christ. They it is who are God's children. To cast aside this fundamental part of the New Testament teaching is to mutilate the Gospel.

Let me give another illustration. There have been times when the direct bearing of the life and work of Christ on men has been allowed to retreat into the back ground. Attention has been concentrated on the immediate relation of what was done and suffered by Christ to God and to His character and administration. It was assumed by some preachers that it was enough to hold up the Saviour as a makeweight in a theological system. A certain amount of suffering was required to meet an exigency in the moral government of the world, and this was furnished by the crucifixion. But now the pendulum swings to the opposite extreme. If the atonement, in the historical and correct sense of the term, is not distinctly denied, it is not seldom practically left out of sight. Attention is directed exclusively to the man-ward influence of Christ, to His merciful teaching and the persuasive power of His death, apart from any atoning efficacy that inheres in it. No other significance is attached to His death beyond its agency in winning men from the practice of sin. I have nothing to say here of particular theories concerning the atonement. Just how it brings in reconciliation, as being the ground of the forgiveness of sin, is a question which possibly admits of no more than a partial solution. Whatever may be the "mysterious obstacle"—to use a phrase which I lately met with in a letter of Archbishop Tait—to the exercise of the divine compassion in the pardon of sin, such obstacles really exist unless we are prepared to reject the unequivocal testimony of the Scriptures. This cardinal truth of a great reparation in behalf of mankind is imbedded in the teaching of the Bible. It has entered as a vital element into Christian experiences in all ages. It pervades the hymns and the prayers of the church from the apostolic days until now. It is involved essentially in the Eucharist. The fundamental fact has been well expressed by my friend, Dr. R. W. Dale, in an excellent sermon at the opening of Mansfield College. The relation of mankind to God is determined by the relation of Christ to Him. Such is the substance of Dr. Dale's remark, if it is not his precise language. The opposite interpretation—the Socinian interpretation of the Scriptures on this subject—is exploded on the field of scientific interpretation. It is discarded by Baur and other critics, who have no liking for orthodox doctrine, yet on this topic are quite free from dogmatic prepossessions. I can think of no German commentator of any respectability, of whatever school, who does not sanction for substance the Evangelical interpretation of the teaching of the New Testament on this theme.

The passages in the Scriptures that speak of the reconciliation of God to the world (withithe *possible* exception of Col. 1: 20) all signify, as the context clearly indicates, not a change in the attitude of the world in reference to God, but a change in His relations to the world, a change, however, of which He is the ultimate author. Yet we not unfrequently meet—where we should not look for it—with the abandonment of the Evangelical and the adoption of the Socinian exegesis. If history is worth anything as a witness, the result of such a step, wherever it is taken, will be to deprive the gospel of an essential element of its power over the consciences and hearts of men. A half-truth cannot be made to do the work of the truth.

There is space for one other illustration of the remarks made above on the danger of half-truths. It is connected with the doctrine of retribution. No doubt it is a gain to be rid of a certain hard and harsh way of presenting this truth. No doubt a disproportionate prominence was once given in the pulpit to this side of Christian truth. The motive of fear was often plied in such a manner and in such a degree that the sweeter, more attractive influences of the gospel were not allowed their due place. An overshadowing dread repelled many from coming to God, and eclipsed the revelation of His love. Punishment was conceived of as an external infliction, if not as a literal furnace of fire, and hell as a vast torture-chamber.

But now comes the reaction. Not a few preachers are almost silent respecting the penalties here and hereafter of unrighteousness. The fears which lurk in the human conscience are soothed by methods different from those prescribed in the New Testament. It is evident that Christ and the apostles considered that there is a rational ground for fear. "I will forewarn you," said Jesus, "whom ye shall fear." There was peril, great and imminent. There was a doom to be escaped. The laws of character are pronounced to be laws of nature. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Much is said of the possible loss of the soul. When Paul preaches, Felix trembles. There is a gospel of grace, of pardon and purification, but evidently no gospel of good nature and easy-going indulgence. These "elemental fears" in the human soul are not to be narcotized. That kind of preaching which deals with them as if they did not exist, or, at least, had no right to be, will never permanently command the attention of men. It will never be a "power" unto salvation. There may be a momentary attraction of novelty. Literary finish or graceful oratory may draw hearers for awhile, but the interest will die out. Imagine the great preachers of the church, from Paul to Augustine, from Augustine to Bernard, from Bernard to Luther, from Luther to Wesley, from Wesley to Chalmers, to have discoursed in the fashion of which I am speaking, to have prophesied only "smooth things." Would their names ever have been heard of? No; what men need for the malady of which they are more or less conscious, but which they are often indisposed to look into, is a faithful diagnosis and a proportionately thorough remedy. "Behold the goodness *and the severity* of God." The last words of the injunction are not to be erased. Besides the appeal to the affections, there must be an address to the conscience.

There is progress in theology. We are learning, or ought to be learning, something every day. We are escaping from errors, we are acquiring new truth. But this progress is not revolutionary. The great lines of theology are not to be drawn anew. Whatever may be true in any "new theology"—and for one I am ready to receive whatever is true—there is no "new theology" worthy of the name that has the effect to undo the teaching of the past in its fundamental character. If the knowledge gained to-day were to sweep away the knowledge we had yesterday, then we might expect that to-morrow would abolish our present beliefs. Absolute skepticism would be the logical consequence. But those who are over-zealous for innovation seldom look forward to such a result. They appear to think that they are speaking the last word, and that they mark the boundary between a past which is all darkness and a future which is all light. There is now a prevailing interest in Biblical criticism. It is plain to the discerning that the old doctrine of inspiration will have to be formulated anew. So much the more is it requisite in this period of partial unsettlement to keep a firm hold of the truths which enter into the warp and woof of Scripture and to which the church has borne witness from a living experience of the reality.—*Prof. George P. Fisher, LL. D., in Congregationalist.*

Denominational Honesty.

Honesty is as important in theology as in trade and commerce, in a religious denomination as in a political party. Denominational honesty consists, first, in a clear, unambiguous statement of a church of its doctrinal belief; and, second, in an unequivocal and sincere adoption of it by its members. Both are requisite. If a particular denomination makes a loose statement of its belief which is capable of being construed in more than one sense, it is so far dishonest. If the creed of the denomination is well-drawn and plain, but the membership subscribe to it with mental reservation and uncertainty, the denomination is dishonest. Honesty and sincerity are founded in clear conviction, and clear conviction is founded in the knowledge and acknowledgment of truth. Heresy is a sin, and is classed by St. Paul among "the works of the flesh," along with "adultery, idolatry, murder, envy, and hatred," which excludes from the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5: 19–21.) But heresy is not so great a sin as dishonesty. A heretic who acknowledges that he is such is a better man than he who pretends to be orthodox while subscribing to a creed which he dislikes, and which he saps under pretence of improving it and adapting it to the times. The honest heretic leaves the church with which he no longer agrees; but the insincere subscriber remains within it in order to carry out his plan of demoralization.—*W. G. T. Shedd.*

Begin the Day with God.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

One hour of the morning is commonly worth two hours of the evening. A man of average duration of life sees about ten thousand mornings in the course of his existence. He begins ten thousand days; and as the after-conduct of the day depends so much upon a right start, it is vitally important to begin each day with God. Morning piety has much to do with the whole current of one's every-day religion.

The eyes that open after a night's slumber should turn heavenward. "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up," exclaimed the devout Psalmist. He begins the day unwisely who leaves his chamber without secret conference with Christ, on whom he is to depend for strength. The true Christian goes into his closet for his armor; he knows not what sudden assaults of temptation may be before him, so he puts on his panoply. He needs his spiritual rations also for the day's march. As the Oriental traveller sets out for his sultry journey over the sands by loading up his camel with food under the palm-tree, and by filling his water-jars from the cool fountain at its roots, so doth the Christian wayfarer draw his early supplies from the unexhausted spring. Morning is the golden hour for devotion. The mind is fresh. The mercies of the night provoke to gratitude. A buoyant heart that is in love with God makes its earliest flight, like the lark, toward the gates of heaven. Thankfulness, dependence, faith and humility all prompt to early and tender interviews with Him who waits on His throne for our morning orisons. We all recall Bunyan's beautiful description of his Pilgrim, who "awoke and sang" in that "Chamber of Peace" which looked towards the sunrising. If the Egyptian Memnon made music when the first rays of the light kindled on his flinty brow, a living Christian heart should not be mute when God causes the outgoings of his mornings to rejoice.

No pressure of household duties or of business should crowd out prayer. An eminent Christian merchant told me that it was his rule to get a good quiet half-hour in his chamber on his knees and over his Bible before he met his family; and then he went into his business—as Moses came down from the mount—with his face shining. Dr. Arnold of Rugby had a favorite morning hymn which opens with these stirring lines:

"Come, my soul, thou must be waking;
Now is breaking
O'er the earth another day.
Come to Him who made this splendor;
See thou render
All thy feeble powers can pay."

(2) Closet devotions are the fit precursor to family worship. Family religion underlies both the church and the commonwealth. No Christian government, no healthy public conscience, no Bible-philanthropies, no godly church-life, can exist without God in the household. Let me be assured that a family-altar stands in every home, and I care little what political party bears rule at the seat of government. The picture which Robert Burns drew of household worship tells us of the secret of old Scotland's "grandeur that makes her loved at home and revered abroad." No prelude to the day is so powerful in its sacred influence as the union of loving hearts around the throne of grace. Family worship is a strong seam well stitched on the border of the day to keep it from ravelling out into contention, confusion and ungodliness. Wise is that Christian parent who hems every morning with the Word of God and fervent prayer. When the inroads of wealth and fashion crowd out family devotions in the morning and the weekly prayer-meeting in the evening, there is but small hope of rearing such households in the nurture of the Lord. The "church in the house" is the best feeder of the church in the sanctuary; home-religion is the sheet anchor of our nation's well-being.

(3) When the early devotions of the morning have equipped us for the day's work, let us shoulder up the day's duties cheerfully. God will both direct the path and lighten the loads if we trust Him. The happiness of each day depends very much on a cheerful start. The man who leaves his home with a scowl on his brow, a tart word at his wife and a snap at his children is not likely to be pleasant company during the day, and is apt to return at night with the acid flavor of a vinegar-cruet. More than cheerfulness is required for many a day behind whose veil are concealed sudden shocks or powerful temptations. Unexpected trials may break on us ere the sun goes down. Little do we know what the day may have in store for us. Let us then make ready every morning by putting ourselves under the wing of that loving Lord and Saviour who promises "Lo, I am with you always." We cannot tell when we shall see the last sunrise, nor how soon we may hear from our loved ones the last "Good morning." Begin every day as if it were to end in eternity.

"Begin thy day with God;
He is thy sun and day;
His is the radiance of thy dawn,
To Him address thy lay.

Take thy first meal with God;
He is thy heavenly food;
Feed with and on Him; He with thee
Will feast in brotherhood.

Thy first transactions be
With God Himself above;
So shall thy business prosper well,
And all the day be love."

— *Evangelist.*

— As was to have been expected, the delivery of Miss Willard's annual address, as president of the National W. C. T. U., was one of the grand occasions of the recent Boston convention. The audience to which it was delivered in Tremont Temple is described by a religious paper of "the Hub" as "an enormous and elegant crowd." Some paragraphs which seem especially worth quoting from the address are given below:

"Questions about our attitude toward different creeds are often asked for, and I have no answer better than the one that you perhaps have noticed this year floating in the great Gulf Stream of the daily press: 'Our creed is Jesus Christ. Any belief in Him—the smallest—being assumed better than any belief about Him—the greatest—or for that matter about anything else.' There are many denominations, but the different branches bear the self-same fruit; they all draw life from the same hidden root, which we seeking it know as life. By this we judge rather than by the words written in their creeds. . . .

"There are two doors now open that I would, had I the power, lock before sunset; first, the mouth of the moderate drinker, by enlarging his scientific knowledge, and mellowing his heart in wiser love to God and man; and next, the door that shuts every brewery, distillery and grog shop. The key that would do this is prohibition by law, prohibition by politics, and prohibition by woman's ballot—may we soon grasp it in our firm and steady hands! We can do this; we propose to do it; we will do it. Well has it been said by that heroic leader, Ellice Hopkins, of England, 'I cannot' is a lie on lips that say, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.' The king is the man that can, and there are kings in character who, as the combat deepens, still cry, 'On ye brave!' . . .

"For my part I believe the steady head of the world when clarified from alcohol and nicotine will perceive that its supreme achievements are in the continent of philanthropy, in the fertile valleys of human nature, not in the coarse mud-embankments and roaring sluiceways of our present material civilization. Then let us glorify the vocation of motherhood above all other, for the only queen that shall survive is the mother on her rocking-chair throne, with a curly-headed subject kneeling by her side, a soft hand on its pure forehead, and its sweet voice saying, 'Now I lay me down to sleep.' But that mother must be regnant over all earthly powers, even the divine one that dares invoke another life; she must be God's, and her own, a free woman to whom shall never come the annunciation of her highest office and ministry save from the deepest intuitions of her nature responding to the voice of a love so pure that it is patient and bides its time until the handmaid of the Lord shall say: 'Be it unto me even as Thou wilt.' . . .

"The newest idea in philanthropy is the giving of one's self. As was playfully said by somebody, 'Here's my check, send somebody else,' but it is rapidly becoming, 'Here am I, send me.' By this was meant, 'Send me across the wide oceans into wild and savage islands, send me into some foreign clime and race.' But in the fullness of time, behold, all races have sought us, the English speaking people, on our own shores, and the home missionary is a foreign missionary too. There are to day in this country twenty-five different groups of deaconesses who are being trained and taught their work, four denominations at least having officially sanctioned this old way newly restored in the church. These women, in consideration of being relieved from all thought of what shall we eat or what shall we drink and wherewith shall we be clothed and sheltered, give their entire time and efforts to the less fortunate classes, going among them from house to house, counseling with them, reading the words of life, kneeling in prayer, and at the same time learning the practical needs of the household; helping the poor, nursing the sick, and in every way proving that the religion of Christ is not a theory, but a reality. All the theologians combined are not doing so much to reinstate the Gospel among the masses as are these every-day workers sent out from Moody's training schools, from the homes of the deaconesses, from the barracks of the Salvation Army. When the dockmen had their great strike in London, a good Christian who was among their leaders, a workman like themselves, but taught of God, gathered around him an audience of these rough, uncouth men who were standing idly about, and he told them what he thought Christ would do if He lived in that great city to-day and owned the wharves. So earnest were his words and so practical his representation of the Christ life, that when he had finished, one of those rough men took off his hat and cried out, 'I never heard of Him before, but here's three cheers for Him anyhow,' in which the mob joined with a right good will. What a lesson was in that scene for the thoughtful Christian man and woman! The world will always cheer for those who comfort its heart when it aches, who feed it when it is hungry, who go out to it when it is hopeless; and this is just what the disciples of Christ are for, and unless they do this they are a libel Him and an embodied blasphemy upon His good-news Gospel.

Of equal interest, perhaps, in a different way, was the sermon of Lady Somerset. Her text was Heb. 11: 24-26, and her theme "Victory through Suffering." A few paragraphs from the discourse are here given:

"If I were asked to summarize that which I believe condenses the whole secret of every great leader's history, I should go straight to these words, for in them I find the whole inspiration of every life that has been called to lead humanity—self-sacrifice, suffering and pain. Right through the ages this principle has come down to us, even from the time when it was breathed in the old legend, which tells how Curtius leaped into the dark chasm, which closed on the flashing form of horse and rider, and we realize that the divine in the human heart struggling in the twilight of the world had grasped, as it must always grasp—as it did when Fr. Damien went to the leper island—the sublime God-given principle that one man must die—nay, better, one man must be willing to die—for the people. . . .

"Every life accepted by God must be, in a measure, rejected by man. Every great victory will be won because we have shared the sorrow. Humanity is the great work God would have us build with careful patience and infinite, tender perseverance. The only power to grasp and hold the minds of men today is direct contact with the Divine; expressed not in the pictures or in the grand monuments of art, or in the vaulted arches of infinite beauty, gorgeous ritual or solemn organ peal, but through that living, breathing humanity which has become the shrine of the indwelling Presence.

"This is the grand witness we are all called to give. We want to see Jesus Christ as He is, not as He has been so long represented in the light of a dead and worthless Christianity; to hear again the first words ever uttered from an earthly pulpit: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bound.'

"But I think the modern paraphrasing of these words by His professed followers is too often, 'I come to hunt down all heresy, to see that each man's teaching should be exactly conformed to the exact limit of what I hold; to stop my ears to the cry I do not wish to hear and believe it does not exist; to make the very best for myself of this world and to hope for the very best in the world to come.'

"My dear, dear sisters, this Christianity will never win the world for Christ, and that is our one calling, our one object, our one prayer. Men and women are atheists and freethinkers because they have seen a spurious Christianity. They want to see a real reflection of the living Christ, and that will be the bow set in the cloud which will tell them the Sun of Righteousness has indeed arisen, with healing in His wings. The world will recognize that likeness, does recognize it, whenever it finds the reality. The skeptics, the literary cynics of Paris have remained spellbound hour after hour listening to the pleading words of a simple English girl, because in Catherine Booth they recognized a living power which they could not understand, and they were obliged to bow their heads before the reflection of the living God."

"CLAUDIUS CLEAR" writes to the *British Weekly* concerning Dr. Pierson, who is now occupying Mr. Spurgeon's pulpit:

Did I like him? No, I did not. Why? Because on Sunday morning I missed in his preaching tenderness, depth, passion, a sense of the mystery of the Will of God. All is clear, but dry—bone-dry. Dr. Pierson is a sharp, clever, pushing man, but of the qualities of the great minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle I could not trace anything. I could not catch in prayers and sermon any echo of the pity of God for His church still militant.

Still militant in Southwark. Looking round that congregation, it came home to me, who know the poor, how hard is the battle of life. You could see how many had passed through driving storms of care—through poverty, sickness, disease, loneliness, shame. Once I heard Mr. Spurgeon say, "Are you hungrry to-night? Has it even come to this? And have you God's promise that you shall be fed? Then you shall be fed; you shall be fed." And I saw how it went home. In the sermon he said something like this: "Some of you are very exact with your rent, however you may be pinched; you are ready before twelve, and you tell me, 'My landlord never had to wait. I was always at the door to the moment.' " Then the new style extra-orthodox teachers puzzle me about their attitude to the Cross. They point to it, but they do not explain it. They fix charges of heresy very fast on a man who may think and speak of it continually, but cannot use every old formula. But I miss that saturation of their preaching with the doctrine which is inseparable from any real faith in it, and which is the mighty power and charm of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons. That morning I had read Hannah More's account of Johnston's death, "Believe a dying man, there is no salvation except in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God." "I offer up my soul full of pollution, but in full assurance that it will be cleansed in the blood of my Redeemer." Perhaps preachers will find their way to that strain; then they will be heard. And, once more, I do not believe in any arithmetic of redemption. It is easy to say, do this and that, and the result will be such and such, and in a certain time all will be right. No; there is an inscrutable element. Call it what you please—I, being old-fashioned, call it the sovereignty of God. It is there; you cannot get round it or rid of it. All is dark but duty. That is plain.

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— Cromwell said that it was his "aim not only to strike while the iron was hot, but to make the iron hot by striking!" Some men wait for opportunities, and others make opportunities and circumstances wait upon them.

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