

Pastor and People.

The Study of Christian Doctrine

The study of Christian Theology is the most useful and comforting study for the believer. We do not refer here merely to the intellectual development of Christian doctrine. On this ground alone we might obtain for religious truth, a higher mission and power than for all other. The Psalmist has well said, "The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple." As a civilizing and educating power, the Bible has had no equal. It conveys to man "the history of times which must have otherwise been given up to conjecture and fable. Instructing us as to the creation of this magnificent universe, and revealing the nature of its splendid material and mental furniture, it frees the mind from vague, pherile and unbinding theories, which reason, in their unaided progress, proposes in respect to the origin of all things; opening up new sources of truth and simple systems of theology, it emancipates the world from degrading superstitions, which, dishonouring God by their representations of His character, turn vice into virtue, and so tend only to degrade and embitter the condition of man." So if the question simply were what study will best develop, cultivate, strengthen, and enrich the human mind, the answer would incontrovertibly be, the study of Christian truth. There is no history so accurate and comprehensive; there is no narrative so simple and life-like; there is no logic so vigorous and unquestionable; there is no description so splendid and graphic; there is no poetry so beautiful and sublime; there is no eloquence so glowing and masterful; in a word there are no elements of intellectual cultivation so rich and powerful as those of the Bible. A student of Christian truth cannot fail to grow stronger in mind as he grapples with the deep things of God. No ages have produced such intellectual giants as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And no ages have been so distinguished for the study of the great truths of the Christian revelation.

But there is another influence exerted by this study, which is even more precious than its power to develop the intellect. It brings rest and comfort to the mind. In this respect it is far superior to all forms of philosophy and all natural science. These may develop, but they cannot rest and comfort the mind. There is always more or less of doubt or uncertainty, or speculation connected with these studies. They may excoriate, they may fascinate the mind; but they bring it no repose. Wherever there is room for multiplied theories and abstract reasonings, there is little foundation for intellectual or spiritual comfort. Some of the greatest and best cultivated intellects among men who have confined their studies to the sciences of nature or the theories of philosophy, have confessed whatever else their studies had done for them, they had never brought them rest.

But the study of Christian theology introduces us at once to real, substantial, permanent truth. We feel at once that we are brought into contact with "that which really is." As we proceed in its investigation, we see that there is nothing like chaos, but a symmetrical, harmonious, complete system. We see from the very nature of these truths, that there can be no uncertainty about them; nothing to vex or disappoint or bewilder the mind; nothing to distress, and chill the affections. Some things there are—such as above, and nothing contrary to right reason; and nothing which it is not more reasonable to receive than to reject. Everywhere in the realm of Christian theology, the explorer sees "the foot-prints of the Creator," and everywhere finds good anchorage for faith. And what an inestimable blessing this is to every Christian; to be firmly settled in his faith as on an eternal rock, from which no assaults of scepticism or doubt can drive him; to know whom he has believed; to accept a system which, the more he studies it, the more he finds adapted to his intellectual, moral, and sensitive nature; coherent, reasonable and satisfactory, with an intelligent and implicit faith, child-like in its simplicity, yet mainly in its energy, this lifts the believer above the stormy sea of doubt and unrest, into an atmosphere of serene and eternal peace. Such a man will be fitted in the highest sense for usefulness in the Master's service. No doubts of the truth and consistency of the system will paralyze his efforts.

No covert or open attack of the foe will drive him from his post or force him to abandon his ground. Inspired with a lofty faith in the truth and permanency of the Christian theology which he has learned from the inspired Word of God; finding rest and comfort for his own tired and tempted soul in "the faith once delivered to the saints," and not based upon the wisdom of man, he will be a most effective worker in the vineyard; a dauntless champion in the arena where truth and error wage their constant strife. Realizing in the calm depths of a believing soul that he has received "a kingdom that shall never be moved," such a man will have "grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." And his latest testimony will be, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there remaineth for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will give me at that day."

Suffer us then to urge upon all Christians the importance of the systematic study of the great truths of the Christian revelation. They should be able to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in them. Amid the engrossing pursuits of business, the excitements of political strife and the duties and attractions of the social circle, some moments should be devoted to the study of that system of truth to which they profess to hold. We would also plead for a more faithful training of our children in these truths. For we are confident that our whole duty to God, to our country, and our age, cannot be met by a piety which is not based on settled, consistent knowledge of God's Word. The truths of that Word, the science of Christianity, underlie every interest of society; and there are disorgan-

izing elements at work, industriously and vigorously both in Church and State, which cannot be checked and defeated, but by those who not only are firm believers in Divine truth, but are "able to give an answer to every man who asketh a reason for the hope that is in them with meekness and fear."

The day is approaching preparatory to dawning of the latter glory which is to witness the greatest conflict between truth and error, between darkness and light. Intellectual and moral forces are to supercede carnal weapons on the world's great arena. The thinking mind, braced by the solid convictions of the understanding and inspired by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, is to be the great power among men in the coming age. And no Christian can be fitted for the foremost ranks in the advancing army of the Lord, unless he is not only a sincere but an intelligent Christian. Let him know when he has believed, let him be able to say not only that he believes, but what and why he believes, let him be able to give every one who asks, whether honest inquirer or hostile sceptic, a reason for the faith that is in him, and he will be a good soldier of the Cross, and will conquer in the grand crusade. Let the children of the Church be thoroughly trained in her faith and order; let her standards of doctrine be ever kept before the minds of her people, let her seminaries both of sacred and secular learning be faithful in the indoctrination of their pupils in Christian truth, and let her pulpits and presses never divorce what God has united—faith and practice, doctrine and duty—and then let the struggle come. We shall be ready for it. The Church arrayed in the panoply of truth will meet her last foe, "fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." And when the last battle is fought and the victory won which ushers in the bright day of millennial glory, then shall go up the loud, transporting shout swelled by every tongue, borne on every breeze and re-echoed from angelic choirs, "HALLELUJAH FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH!"—*Rev. E. P. Rogers, D.D., N. Y. Christian Intelligencer.*

True Wealth.

We dedicate our other talents to God, but what of money? Has he nothing to do with that? or is it to be the one talent wrapped up in a napkin and returned as it was given? It has been very useful in its way; it has furnished handsome houses, and bought choice specimens of art; paid for sumptuous entertainments, and made Christian women look very fashionable in their expensive dresses. It has built exquisite conservatories, brought orchids and exotics from distant lands, and helped the followers of a crucified thorn-crowned Saviour to surround themselves with beautiful sights, musical sounds, and sweet fragrance, before they get to the promised land; it has encompassed them with domestic enjoyment and abounding comforts. But what of the Master's increase? Is money too sordid a thing to present to Him? Is there no bank for the gold and silver which pays interest beyond time? No investment for eternity? When the servants are called for, can it be that the stewards of wealth, God's wealth, will not pass muster?

Oh Christians! Christians! the Bridegroom is coming, the Judge is at the door! Will you show him your accumulated treasures, your luxurious houses, your costly jewels, your well filled coffers, and satisfactory balances and say, "There is Thy talent;" or will you point to the blood-washed, white-robed souls—once lost and outcast and miserable—and say, "I found them in the streets and lanes, in the highways and bridges, and compelled them to come in, that my house might be filled?"

Books Upon the Book of Books.

The sacred Scriptures have called forth the efforts of the human mind for the purpose of elucidation and instruction, to a greater extent than could have been supposed previous to inquiry. An English gentleman, who for thirty years was connected with the Antiquarian Bookstore in London, has interested himself in ascertaining facts upon this subject. With immense labor he has collected the names of works upon the whole or single portions of the Bible, and made an able and valuable classification of them. He has ascertained that their number is not less than sixty thousand! This number, in a single collection, would equal some of the largest libraries which embrace books upon all subjects.

On the first five books, twenty-five hundred different works have been published; and this, exclusive of commentaries on the whole Bible; and not less than five thousand works on the Psalms. The evangelical prophet Isaiah has had two thousand commentators; and about six thousand different volumes have been published on the four Gospels, as a whole, and Matthew, in particular, exclusive of commentaries on the whole New Testament and the other Gospels singly. There have been about three thousand works on Romans and two thousand on Revelation.

But all this mighty labor bestowed upon the Sacred Volume does not exhaust the mine. Pens are busy now, and thought is flowing from them, deep and earnest thought, drawn from the same blessed Book. If there be now three thousand men upon the Gospels, yet the depths of these living waters have not been sounded, nor all their treasures brought to light.

Mind after mind, sharpened by holy curiosity, and burning with love and zeal, will be brought into contact with these lively Oracles, as years and generations roll on—these minds to be illumined and refreshed by these sacred studies, and communicating the results of them to the hungering minds of others.

We confess it would gratify us to walk into a library devoted to this one subject, and to find ourselves in the presence of those sixty thousand volumes. What a vast congregation echoing and re-echoing the sublime doctrines and sentiments of the Book! What a cloud of witnesses to the value of it.—*Boston Traveller.*

"As Thou Art."

No spot, no stain, in all Thy wondrous beauty,
No cloud upon to a summer of Thy love,
No murmur on the ocean of Thy goodness,
Faithful and true, for evermore, above.

No spot, no stain, in all Thy wondrous beauty,
No shadow on the sunshine of Thy face,
No ebb or flow in all Thy loving kindness,
Nothing but truth, and sympathy, and grace.

No spot, no stain, in all Thy wondrous beauty,
No wanting in Thy clear, unshadowed light;
Nothing but sweetness, infinite, eternal,
And love, which holds us ever by its might.

No change, no shade, in what Thou art Lord Jesus,
Thou art to us as Thou hast ever been;
Oh teach these wondering hearts to sing Thy praises
And on Thine arm of strength forever lean!

'Tis thus we see Thee when, from off our faces,
Falls the veil of unbelief and sin,
Revealing Thee in Thine own changeless beauty,
Of these poor hearts the Comforter and King.

For Thou art with us in this world of sadness,
Thy presence is unutterably sweet,
And life is filled with sunshine and with fragrance,
Since in Thyself all joy and fragrance meet.

Entrance my spirit with Thy love, Lord Jesus,
Unto the infinite of night,
As at Thy feet I bow, and, veiled, worship,
Make known to me its length, and breadth, and height.

For in its ocean-tide of grace and fulness,
No want, no fear, no poverty, is mine;
My Father tells me, and I know He means it,
"All that My well-beloved hath is thine!"

Where Art Thou?

We who profess to be Christians, where are we? Do we honestly believe that, if the professing Christians were living as God would have us live, that there would not be thousands of people converted in thirty days? I haven't the slightest doubt about that. I tell you the world has got tired and sick of your shams. The charge that they bring against us, and I do not blame them, is that we profess something that we do not possess; that, if we really believed what we preach, what we talk about, and what we profess to believe, we would be in earnest about their salvation. And I say they are right. Can you find a church whose members are really burdened for the salvation of souls? To be sure, you may find one here and there. But is the Church of God to-day in its true position? Are we not living like the world? Are we not mingling with the world, so that the world can not tell the difference between the professors and the ones who do not profess? I tell you they are tired and sick of sham professions, and where one ungodly man reads the Bible, a hundred read you, and by the strength of your love for Christ, represented through your daily life, they judge you, and presume that our Christianity is a myth. They say it is a sham: that it is not real.

A young friend of mine, talking to a young man some time ago, and pressing on him the claims of Christ, the young man turned up his nose and said: "I don't believe a word of your Christianity." "Why, you don't really mean that, do you?"—you don't really believe that all Christians are hypocrites?" "Yes, I do." The young man knew that his mother was a professing Christian, and he said: "You don't think your own mother is a hypocrite, do you?" "No." The young man didn't want to speak disrespectfully of his mother. "No, I can't call her a hypocrite, but she don't believe what she professes, for if she did she would have talked to me about my soul. My mother never talked to me personally about my soul." And the young man didn't believe that his mother believed what she professed. I say the young man had the best of it.

And isn't that just the condition of hundreds and thousands of us to-day—that with us Christianity is merely an empty name? We profess something we do not possess. We have not published the glory of heaven. We have not put off the old man and put on the new man. We have not separated ourselves from the world. We are not living with God and Christ, and the world goes stumbling over us. That is what Paul meant when he said: "Ye are living epistles, known and read of all men." The world reads the heart, and if we do not live as God would have us live, the world will stumble over us.

I remember a few years ago being in a country town, and the most prominent merchant in that town had died, and was then lying a corpse in his house. I was told a story that I have never forgotten—that, when the family physician, who was a professing Christian, came to the dying man, he said to the merchant: "You cannot live," and then thought he would talk to him about Christ. There are a great many just such Christians. They never talk about Christ until they hear the death-rattle in the throat and the sands of life are about running out, and then they wake up and find that they have not been faithful. So it was with this very man when he talked with his neighbor about Christ. The merchant looked up to his old friend and says:

"Doctor, how long have you known these things?"

"Oh," says the doctor, "I became a Christian before I left the East. I have been a Christian ever since you have known me."

"Why," says the merchant, "it is very singular you never told me that before. You have been a friend of mine, have been in my store every day, or I have been in your office; you have been my family physician for years; you have been in my home, and I have been in yours, and you never told me this before. Doctor, why didn't you tell me that these things were true? You knew; why didn't you tell me?"

The doctor tried to apologize and to gain time; and, as he went to his house, it kept ringing in his ears: "Why didn't you tell me?" He tried to rest but he couldn't. He went back to his dying friend, he was nearly gone, and all his friend said when he came to his bed-side was to whisper: "Why didn't you tell me before?" and he was gone. Ah! how many friends you have got. If they should be summoned away by death, and you should attempt to talk to them, wouldn't most of them ask

you why you didn't talk to them before?

"Why didn't you tell me?" Oh I my friends, the world is waiting for you to come and tell them of Christ; and they will not know Christ unless we publish the tidings. The devil tries to make people believe that Christ is not real,—that Christ will not save the world; and if we know Him to be our Saviour, if God has revealed to us Christ, shall we not publish it, shall we not tell it, shall we not be bold and speak right out for Christ?—*D. L. Moody.*

Our Citizenship.

With Siles, Loring come as a stranger to Phillippi, he and his colleague were cruelly scourged and imprisoned at the inauguration of an excited mob. But when, the next day, they asserted their citizenship, the magistrates were alarmed, and led them forth from the town with every token of respect.

So again at Jerusalem, as soon as Paul asked, "Is it lawful to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" no one dared to touch him. Once more at Caesarea the moment that the magic words had been uttered, "I appeal unto Cæsar," all local authority was suspended. The judges bowed to their prisoner's will. To Cæsar he must go. How precious is the truth thus shadowed forth! Did this connection with Rome serve as a talisman or shield to the apostle? immeasurably higher and surer are the privileges of every true citizen of heaven.

Ours is, indeed, a charmed life; the Almighty is our Guardian. "Our Shield and Defender is the ancient of days." A special providence watches over His children. The very hairs of our head are all numbered. Satan cannot assault us, the hand or the tongue of evil-disposed men cannot harm us; sickness cannot touch us, danger cannot befall us; death itself cannot surprise us, without the permission of Him who worketh all things for the good of those who love Him. Under all difficulties and perplexities, in all trials and temptations, an appeal lies open to the throne of the King of kings. We may at once transfer our cause to the highest court of judicature; and are sure of a gracious hearing as well as of a wise and equitable decision. But when our appeal shall receive its final and fullest response, and we are called to appear in the very presence of our Sovereign, then indeed, the blessedness of our position will be known as it never was before. The citizen of Rome though he might have come from the remotest province, could not find himself altogether a stranger in its streets. Its imperial splendor might dazzle him; its statues, temples and palaces might fill him with delight; but the language, the laws and customs of the people would be familiar to him, and he would soon be recognized as a true citizen. So will it be with the true believer when he crosses over Jordan, and enters the celestial city. His eye will gaze upon the radiance of the golden streets and the pearly gates; his ear will be ravished by the music of the star-born melodies and of the dulcet harps of the blessed. Above all his heart will overflow when he beholds the King Himself in His beauty. The language he will discover to be the pure language of Canaan, which he had learned to speak, though with stammering lips, on earth. The heavenly songs will already have been in some degree familiar; the society will be quite suited to his taste. The employments, too, he will welcome as those in which, during his life he was wont to find his sweetest pleasure. He will enter the New Jerusalem a genuine and acknowledged citizen.—*Sunday at Home.*

How Old Art Thou.

A most familiar question. We hear it almost daily. It constantly requires a different answer, for our age is at no two periods the same. We are always travelling. Time, that "ever independent variable," is ceaselessly changing our place on the pathway that lies 'twixt cradle and coffin. We all have our birth-day anniversaries, recurring with persistent uniformity, and we can no more delay them than we can stay the stars above us; and they suggest that we are swiftly going—somewhere. And their recurrence suggests the question of Pharaoh to the patriarch Jacob, "How old art thou?" As an immortal being, how old?

The self-existent God is without beginning of days or end of years. There never was a time when God was not. There never will be a time when God will not be. The animals around us begin to be, and cease to be. They are in every sense mortal. But you and I are different from both. A man has a beginning, but no ending to his existence. There was a time when he was not; there never will be a time when he is not. Like the animals, he begins to be; like God, he never ceases to be. An immortal career once entered upon will never close. Empires may flourish and perish, the heavens roll away, the very elements melt, but the soul shall eternally live.

How insignificant and pitiable is a newborn babe! There is nothing born in the animal world so dependent and helpless. The animals have instincts; besides, they have fur, or feathers, or scales, or shell, to protect them; while the new-born immortal man is destitute of all these. But he has begun to be, and he shall outlive worlds. The feeblest thing in all the universe is the child of God when born on earth; the most exalted creature in all that universe is the child of God translated to glory—not only "equal unto the angels," but a blood relation of the Son of God, and a member of the family of heaven.

Have we begun such an existence as this? Is it impossible that we can perish? And is all this life preparatory to the life to come? In this view how grand is life! What powers, capacities, gifts, opportunities are ours! And as the years come and go, do we justly estimate our exalted place in the scale of being? Do we truly realize what it is to be a mortal that is immortal? Do we rightly appreciate the responsibilities that gather round us in this ceaseless journey toward eternity?

Hard Names.

There is seldom, if ever, anything to be gained for the cause of truth by attaching reproachful or opprobrious epithets to its enemies. There are occasions, indeed, when the doings of bad men should be exposed, and they themselves denounced. But these are chiefly cases in which there is involved something of immorality or corruption, public or private; and where an evil aim or tendency appears in outward action.

Erroneous religious beliefs may, and often do, involve, ultimately, the worst consequences of this sort. But they may also frequently have no such direct result, either in fact or by the purpose of those who hold them. These persons may be honest and well meaning men and good citizens. Reproaches directed against such men will not appear to be just; and will miss their end and return upon the one who sends them forth. And what is more important, they will not be just in truth, since the man who is reproached has no such evil designs.

The bad consequences of false belief we may freely point out, and its untruthfulness, especially, we should expose. We shall do both these things with the best effect when, along with our reasoning in behalf of the truth, we show the proper effect of the truth upon ourselves in fairness and charity.—*Congregationalist.*

Random Readings.

FAITH is the hand with which we grasp Christ; assurance is the ring God places on it.

THE three whom Christ raised from the dead were—an only son, an only daughter, and an only brother.

SAID Louis Agassiz: "I do not believe that I am descended from a monkey; God is my Father."

IT is only in the Bible that the all-pure Spirit of God breathes. I am afraid of human theology, lest it "savours the things which be of man."

WE cannot walk in two ways at the same time. We cannot follow our own will and the will of God. We must choose the one or the other. We must deny God's will to follow our own, or we must deny self and self-will to follow the will of God.—*Wesley.*

WHAT WE HAVE IN CHRIST.—Believers are in Christ for a covering of beauty, as in a fair, unsullied garment; for protection, as in a city of refuge; for nourishment, as in a "living Vine;" for guidance, sympathy and impulse, as the members of the body are dependent on the head.—*J. Halley.*

BACKSLIDING is generally gradual—like the ebbing tide, wave after wave breaks upon the shore at apparently the same point, and it seems impossible to tell, by any two or three separate waves, whether it is the ebb or flow; but watch a few moments, and the outgoing waters soon tell their own tale.

THERE are men whose presence is a blessing and a benediction; whose company and conversation have the effect to confirm our faith, to strengthen all our good purposes, and fill the future with bright visions of honor, success and usefulness. Again, there are those in whose company you cannot be for half an hour without feeling that virtue has gone out of you; "their feet go down to death their steps take hold on hell." You are to make your choice between them; and remember, it is for your life!

WHAT progress have I made in holiness since I professed to be a Christian? I am taught that sanctification is a progressive work. I am taught that Christ's kingdom in the individual soul has a development. How much more am I like Christ now than I was years ago? How much better prepared am I now for heaven than then? A pilgrim, during the year referred to, surely should have made a perceptible advance towards his journey's end. I know that I am nearer the grave, but am I any nearer heaven? Am I any better prepared for heaven?

THE grace which God gives is for the real occasions of life. To forget this is to make the whole of our moral and religious life morbid and unreal. For a man to ask himself deliberately on his wedding morning whether he is so resigned to the will of God that he is perfectly prepared to consent to his bride's immediate death, is preposterous folly. The grace he needs just then, is grace to make him heartily grateful to God for the new brightness and joy which have come to him, and grace to enable him to treat his wife with the chivalrous devotion she has a right to claim, and grace, while he loves her with what seems all his heart, to love God still better. If we have honestly accepted the will of God as our supreme law, we shall receive strength from God to do God's will and submit to it as occasion demand. When God sends us work, He sends us strength to do it; and when he sends us trouble, he sends us strength to bear it. For troubles which we imagine for ourselves, we must go through to our own imagination—not to Him.—*Rev. R. W. Dale.*

THE first step toward the abyss of infidelity, is a doubting or sceptical state of mind in regard to some parts, or the whole of the Scriptures; the next is either into the wilderness of universal doubt, or into the wildness itself. Scepticism is a most dangerous state of mind. Like moderate drinking, it leads on its unhappy victim from bad to worse, till both mind and heart are ruined and damned forever. It is the moral inebriation of the man in its incipient stages. Beware of it, ye young men, as ye would the contagion of death. It has no power of fascination. Its breath is tainted and repugnant. Its administrations to the soul are those of sorrow. Break from the first symptoms of its deadly approach. Let not a corrupt and unbelieving heart beguile thee with the promises of a proud and vain philosophy. There is no safety in a cultivated intellect, nor in all the resources of a Christian education, the watchfulness and teachings of friends,—no, not even under the "droppings of the sanctuary." In the faith of Jesus only there is safety. Believe in Him to the salvation of the soul; then you will "know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."