

The Bercan.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—Acts xvii. 11.

No. 31.]

QUEBEC, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31. 1844.

[Vol. I.

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR."

How favoured are the poor!
No earthly wealth or pomp have they
With worldly cares to lead astray,
Ensuring only to betray;
Thus favoured are the poor.

How honoured are the poor!
With them their Lord delights to be,
For them He bore His agony,
From death and hell to set them free:
Thus honoured are the poor.

How blest shall be the poor!
What tho' no treasure here they own,
Their great reward shall soon be shown
When Christ himself before God's throne
Shall say, Come blessed poor!

Favoured, honoured, blessed, poor!
Oh let me be but poor below,
So, Lord, thou wilt on me bestow,
The treasures which unceasing flow
From Thee, to bless the poor.

This would be wealth indeed!
God's sacred word my solace here,
His promises my soul to cheer,
Until my Saviour should appear
And make me rich indeed.

G. S.

Quebec, Oct. 26, 1844.

AGAINST PREVAILING ERRORS.

WORDS OF COUNSEL TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF RIFON.

From the Lord Bishop's Triennial Charge, delivered at the Parish Church, Leeds, on the 12th of September last.

Having thus, my Reverend Brethren, touched upon those points either of local or general interest, which seem to invite attention at the present moment, allow me, before we part, to offer a very few words of counsel as to discipline and doctrine. The experience of the last three years has entirely confirmed me in the view which I took when I last addressed you from this place on the matter of ritual observances; and has illustrated the danger of endeavouring to enforce the revival of such as have fallen into desuetude with no fault of our own, in spite of a manifest repugnance to them on the part of the people. The same experience, however, has clearly demonstrated the wisdom of restoring as soon as practicable those which are clearly and unequivocally prescribed by the rubric, or of preparing the way for their restoration, where the state of things may not as yet admit of it. It is quite true that uniformity in externals does not necessarily carry with it internal unity; but if a tendency to disunion exists, outward disunions will assuredly foster it. Touching that matter of doctrine which is truly the cardinal point of controversy that at present unhappily prevails in the Church, some of my younger brethren in the ministry may possibly have been staggered by the bold assertions of those who do not scruple to avow their intense abhorrence of the Reformation, and who stigmatize the doctrine exhibited in our Article on Justification and in the Homilies of Salvation and Faith, as a branch of what they term the Lutheran heresy. Some of my younger brethren may have been tempted perhaps for a moment to waver in their adhesion to the principles set forth therein. Though the Anglican Church is their "witness" in these matters, they may have ventured perhaps to refuse the light which she holds out as "an interpreter of Holy Writ," and may in fact have launched on the ocean of private judgment without the compass with which she would provide them. But I can well believe that a short and painful experience will have convinced them that just in proportion as they have shifted their ground have they found themselves trusting to a foundation of sand. Their hopes, their peace, their comfort in the Gospel of grace has been impaired, and they have been insensibly returning to the bondage of the law. To such, if such there be among us, I would say, be not deceived by the insinuations that this wholesome doctrine as promulgated by the Church, discourages the practice of self-discipline or Christian watchfulness. But the doctrine on the one hand, and the practice on the other, are emblazoned in letters of burning light on the pages of holy writ. That light, reflected as it is by the mirror of our Church, can never be hidden from our eyes, so long as we are permitted to search the Scriptures, and see whether these things are so. And the written tradition of the everlasting word, inspired by the Holy Ghost and inscribed by the pen of the Apostle Paul, will outlive all more recent traditions, whether of this or of an earlier age. Never, then, allow this doctrine, the very key-stone of the blessed Gospel, to be obscured either to your own spiritual vision or in your preachings to your people. This caution, however, I would add, while you preach the cross of Christ, beware (I may be allowed the expression) of stopping at the cross. Beware, I mean, of satisfying yourselves with the ceaseless repetition of the same generalities, but carry the cross into the round of your own daily duties as well as into your preaching and exhortations to those about you on all the infinite detail of Christian practice, so that your people may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Finally, my Reverend Brethren, let us all strive to cultivate that spirit of unity which should be the bond of peace among our holy brotherhood. Let us not waste our energies in contests with each other, instead of uniting us against that common enemy of souls who is carrying desolation through our borders. The fate and fortunes of this Church and country rest, under Providence, on her clergy. And while I will not utter one word of despondency, for, never, in our days at least, were the prospects of the

Church so cheering, and the various talents and opportunities for redeeming the past, to which I have already referred, those various encouragements which I have shown you abound on the other side, as a proof that we are still on our trial, and that the Lord has not yet cast us off; yet, I recall to your memory the doom of ancient Churches that perished for their lukewarmness and unfaithfulness, and remind myself and those who hear me, that we beware lest our candlestick be removed, and our place and nation taken away. If as faithful servants of our Lord in heaven, we be men of God and men of prayer—often by the bedside of the sick and dying, comforting the mourners, strengthening the feeble-hearted, visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and labouring each in our respective provinces to heal that widening breach which unhappily severs the poor from their wealthier neighbours, we shall find the keen edge of controversy blunted, we shall be so much the safer from all sympathy either with the frivolities of the world or with mere formalism in religion; there will be more of earnestness and solemnity in our ministrations, and we shall be quickened with fresh zeal in devoting ourselves more fully to the great work which the Lord has laid upon each of us. Brethren, the time is short; whatever our hands find to do, let us do it with all our might, as though the end of all things were at hand. Let us be sober, and watch, and pray.

HOW TO READ THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Letter from the Rev. W. Romaine, to Ambrose Searle, author of the "Christian Remembrancer."

My dear Friend,

I have good news to tell you from a far country, as refreshing as cold water to a thirsty soul. God has spared me to read over my Bible once more: O what a treasure—what unsearchable riches are there in this golden mine! I never dug deeper, nor found more precious jewels than upon this last perusal. You know it is my constant custom, as soon as St. Dunstan's lectures are over, to begin the Bible, and without stopping or interruption, to go on from Genesis to the end of Revelation; this exercise is always begun with prayer, and carried on with a settled dependence on the Spirit of prayer; and I am always wishing to ascribe all the profit (and it has been very, very great) to the praise of the glory of his grace. At present, I am not reading my Bible, in order to find out some new truth, but to be established in what I do know, and to attain more confirmation of it. This I would chiefly seek for, that I may get growing experience of the wisdom of God, and of the power of God in his word, and may thereby enjoy the blessings of his love promised in it. With this view, I send you some of my observations on the reading of the Bible in the year 83. I am happy in believing, that your heart harmonizes with me in them. One of the first things to be noticed and expected is, the actual fulfilling of the promises to this day, namely, that the Holy Spirit is still in the world: he works in it, and by it. He makes it at present, as much as he ever did, the great ordinance of God unto salvation, as you may observe in Isa. lix. 20, 21: hence it is called the ministration of the Spirit, because in it he holds forth Jesus Christ to be the Almighty Saviour: and whosoever he calls by it to come to the Saviour, he makes his call to them effectual. They receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith, as Gal. iii. 2.

This, my good friend, is what you and I should above all things seek. We should be always praying for the Spirit to accompany his own word. It is our duty to hear and read—but we should always do it with the fixed dependence of our hearts upon his divine teaching, without which, the word itself will profit us nothing, as we read, Heb. iv. 2. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them who heard it." May the good Spirit keep us in the use of means, but entirely dependent upon Him in the use of them. Thanks be to him, that in this frame of mind, I have once more gone through his word—settled and grounded more steadfastly than ever before; that the word of God can be made useful to me, only by the Spirit of God. The next thing that engaged my attention, was the divine and infallible truth of the Holy Scriptures, of which I have been convinced with all the riches of the full assurance of understanding. Our Lord said in his last prayer, "Father, thy word is truth;" and I say the same. I have set my seal to it on this last reading: every line, every word is according to the mind of the infinitely wise God. It is his revealed will; and it discovers to us objects in God's light, as he sees them—Whereby the Holy Spirit renews us in true knowledge, after the image of Him that created us: he brings our understanding to submit to be informed by his unerring word. Whatever it reveals of Jehovah, of the three persons in the Godhead, of the God-man, of his salvation, of the way of receiving the benefit of it in time and in eternity; he has made me willing to live in entire subjection to its teaching. My constant inquiry is, What it reveals, not why? I study to know it, not as a metaphysician, but as a Christian. I seek, not so much to comprehend it, as to believe it. Nothing appears to me more reasonable, than that my reason should submit to God's reason: and therefore I am kept praying for divine grace, to make his word, like the light of the sun; clear in my head and faithful in my heart. My dear friend, let me recommend to you this method of reading your Bible. Ever take it up as the oracles of God, the infallible standard of truth. The abiding persuasion of this, will save you a great deal of trouble, and will bring you in vast profit. You will not have much occasion to consult authors, or to spend your time in perusing many books.

If you take up your Bible with a settled conviction that it is the truth of God, and that it has the stamp of divine authority, this will be the means of your understanding more of the Scriptures, than all the comments in the world could give you: because your mind, having received the impression of divine truth, is now disposed to receive the impressions of divine power, which is another matchless excellency of the word of God.

The Spirit of God still works in it, and by it, as in the first creation, so in the new creation; He does all by his Almighty Fiat. He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and is obeyed. His is a creating word: he calls, and the dead hear. It is a life-giving word. He follows the call, and the quickened sinner believes; faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and this faith is as great a demonstration of divine power, as raising Christ from the dead was; as you may see Eph. i. 19, 20. &c. Then He puts his word into the inward parts, and the believer is enabled to feel upon it, and to be nourished thereby, even unto life everlasting: so that he often says to his Lord Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." This divine efficacy of the Scriptures, is the principal thing, by which God magnifies his word above all his name. He has made it his ordinance, like the fixed laws of nature, by which he still keeps up intercourse and communion between himself and his people, and gives them to see and to enjoy his perfections. His Spirit makes it effectual to begin, and to carry on fellowship with the Father and the Son, and thus he is daily magnifying it, by realizing the promises, and putting believers into possession of the graces and blessings promised in it. So that it is to this hour, the mighty power of God, as truly as when he spake the world into being; as effectual, as when he said, "Lazarus, come forth." My dear friend, may you and I feel it more, still more: may we live happy partakers of its influence, and whenever we hear it, read it, or meditate upon it, may we get fresh experience of the power of God in his word: which will bring us another blessing peculiar to the Scriptures: by acknowledging them to be the truth of God, and finding them to be the power of God, we shall come to experience their divine sweetness.

It is by continual dependence on the teaching of the Spirit, in and by the word, and by mixing faith with it, that we come to find its value, and to taste its pleasures: for it then opens a new world to us, a spiritual and eternal world; it reveals to us the God of that world; our Father loving us in his Son.—It makes known the Son's wonderful person, this heavenly work in salvation, with all the blessings of it, which faith brings into present enjoyment. The believer is made alive to them, and then has his spiritual senses exercised upon them; and each sense has its proper object, and its peculiar delight, as we read, O come taste, and see how gracious the Lord is; hear his voice, for it is sweet; smell the good odour of his perfume, for his name is as ointment poured forth: come and handle the word of God. What a paradise is here! as real, but more blessed than Adam's. Believe me, Sir—I know you do—in my last reading, God has thus blessed me: what the word reports, the Spirit has realized. In the way of believing the promises, I have found the fulfilling of them. I speak for God, and his glorious word. Away self. The Holy Ghost the Comforter, does by it at this day make good his name, and his office; he shall take of mine, says Jesus, and shall shew it (manifest it) unto you; the spiritual world, all the graces, all the glories of it, he will not only manifest them to you clearly, but he will also enable you to believe them with a pleasing earnestness, and to enjoy them with many a sweet foretaste of the glory that is to be revealed.

There is a very delightful account of this in the 19th Psalm. What if I should set my seal to it, and say that I know what is spoken in the first part concerning the light of the spiritual world: would not you allow me, Sir, to be a competent judge of both? and when the same prophet adds, "O, what love have I unto thy law! I rejoice in it as one that findeth great spoil! Yea, it is dearer to me than thousands of gold and silver;" blessed be God, I find it so. Indeed, upon every reading of the Bible, it grows more precious to me, as it did to David: because it is not only the discovery, but it is become also the conveyance of the unsearchable riches of Christ: these are revealed in the word, and applied by the word. Faith is the lawful key which opens the infinite treasury, and hears the proclamation of grace; "O ye that are seeking double riches, these, all these, are yours; come, take all you want, use all you wish, you cannot do the free Giver a greater favour than to enrich yourselves daily out of his boundless store. Read his promises, how exceeding great, how exceeding precious they are. Read his faithfulness to them—only trust, take, use: all that is in the promises shall be your's in time; yea, your's in eternity." This proclamation of grace I have heard. I believe it. Blessed be a promise-keeping God, I enjoy it. And I can assure you, Sir, there is more to be had out of Christ's fulness than any one upon earth has yet enjoyed. For he not only giveth fresh grace, but also more grace. I have never been more thoroughly convinced of this, than upon my last reading. God has humbled me, and has made me feel more of mine own poverty, and has thereby led me to live more upon Christ's ever-lasting treasury. You do not suspect me of boasting: O no. I would glorify the word and work of the Almighty. A beggar would not be reckoned proud for saying, "when I was just starving, I met with a charitable person, who not only fed me, but also feasted me; and that most generously provided for me, all the rest of my days. Should not such an one acknowledge his benefactor and bless

him? So do I. Thanks be to him, who realized to me his word, who opened mine eyes to see wondrous things out of his law, who often made me to look up and say, "O how sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth." Blessed be God for his good word; it is really manna, it is angels' food; it comes from heaven, it tastes of heaven.

When I sat down to write, I little thought my pen would run so fast, or that it would hold out so long. Will you excuse this long scribble? you will. I am writing to a friend, who knows that I have still much more to say of my last reading. I bespeak your candour, while I am mentioning one thing more, and that is, the great end and design of the Scripture, which is to conform us to it. This is the completing work of God the Spirit by his word; all the rest were to lead to this. When the word is understood, and believed, and lived upon, then he makes it the means of conforming the whole man to it. The believer is cast into the mould of it, he takes the impression, every feature. It is so assimilating, every tint is to be seen upon him. He lives the word, it is to be read in his looks, visible in his walk, manifested in his tempers. See him, study him, he is the lively picture of a Bible-Christian: let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ. By this rule, he orders it; he seeks to be a pattern of the truth as it is in Jesus, and does not seek in vain. The Spirit, by faith, makes Jesus very precious. The heart loves him, loves to be like him; much fellowship with him endears him more to the heart and it becomes true liberty; it is real happiness to have constant communion with him, especially to feel the influence of his cross, and the power of his resurrection.

My much beloved, may this be your experience. Outstrip me, as far as you can; may your sentiments, your life and conduct, all of them be conformed to the rule of God's word. I shall pray for it, for you and for yours; that you may live by Gospel motives, and do all to Gospel ends, and may the Bible be made good and fulfilled to you in earth and in heaven.

I stop; but not because my subject is exhausted. I have daily fresh matter of praise. Still I am reading and admiring. New beauties spring up. Yearly, daily, I shall have praises to give for this most blessed work; and if I live to walk with you on Heckfield Heath, I may continue the subject. May your Lord and mine open our understandings, that we may understand the Scriptures.

Mrs. R.'s with my real love to Mrs. S. My blessing on all your children. Do not cease to pray for

W. R.
Selected for the Bercan by an absent friend.

THE OFFICE OF FAITH IN JUSTIFICATION.

There is a mode of representing the office of faith, which, though found, not infrequently, where the true doctrine of Justification; in other respects, is, for the most part, distinctly preached, we are far from considering as involving a mere difference of expression. We refer to the representation of the office of faith, as if it were efficacious unto justification, not as a single act of the soul, by which we embrace Christ, operating merely as the appointed instrument of participation in his righteousness, and justifying only because it lays hold on that righteousness; but as efficacious, because it is "the root of all Christian virtues," "the originating principle of love and every good work," and thus, in root and branch, the "complex of Christianity."

If this representation be correct, there is no propriety in saying that we are justified by faith, which there would not be also in saying that we are justified by "love, joy, peace, long-suffering," &c., by all those virtues of godly living which are "the fruits of faith," and which "follow after justification."

Now that the word faith is sometimes used in the Scriptures for the sum of Christianity, we freely grant; that Justifying Faith is indeed the root of all christian virtues, so that they "do all spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith;" we consider a most necessary truth, exceedingly to be insisted on with every soul to whom the Gospel is preached. But that faith derives any of its justifying virtue from these fruits, which are not its life, but its evidences of life, we hold it of great importance to deny, and on the contrary, to maintain that, though working by love, as it must if living, faith is effectual for justification, simply as an act of embracing Christ, in all his offices, and benefits, and requirements, whereby the sinner lays hold of his promises and puts on the garment of his justifying-righteousness. To some it may seem that the difference between these divergent views is too slight to be made of any importance. We apprehend, however, that it is the point

* Romanist writers speak of a "fides formata" or formed faith—that is a faith clothed in, or made perfect by, all the fruits it should produce, and so justifying by its fruitfulness. They say that when the Scriptures speak of justification by faith, they mean a faith not merely working by love, but formed with love, and availing through love, and, of course, through all that fulfilling of the law, of which love is the parent grace.

+ "The word Faith (says Bishop Sanderson) first and most usually in the Apostolic writings, is used to signify that Theological Virtue or gracious habit whereby we embrace, with our minds and affections, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the alone Saviour of the world, casting ourselves wholly upon the mercy of God through his merits for remission, and everlasting salvation. It is that which is commonly called a *fides* or *justifying* faith: whereunto are ascribed in Holy Writ, those many gracious effects of purifying the heart, adoption &c.—not as to their proper and primary cause; but as to the instrument whereby we apprehend and apply Christ, whose merits and Spirit are the true causes of all those blessed effects." Sermons: vol. p. 60.

of divergency where lies the unseen origin of those very errors which have for their legitimate issue, when carried out, nothing less than justification by inherent, and therefore by our own, righteousness.

Two ways may separate at so small an angle, that to some it may seem of little consequence which you choose; and for a long while, you may go on in one, without being very far separated from the other—but still they are getting wider apart, and if the lines be carried out, they will become separated by the breadth of the earth. So we think concerning the divergency above described. These two views of faith seem to begin their separation at an angle scarcely measurable. Many an eye would not detect it. But the angle is there nevertheless, and the minister, though he may never trouble his people with its measurement, should know the importance of accuracy there, and govern his views and language accordingly. Two minds, taking the two ways from this point, may long continue very near one another, in doctrine, and spirit, and fellowship; and because the tendencies of the way that leads erroneously may never be carried out, they may never be parted any further asunder. But evil tendencies are not always in such good hands. Let the wrong way be carried out. The issue will be, as appeared at the Reformation, and as now appears in the true Protestant and the consistent Romanist,—the two poles of doctrine, as far asunder as the North and South.—Justification by the righteousness of Christ imputed.—Justification by our own righteousness inherent.—The Right Rev. Bishop McIlvaine's Charge, 1839.

NOLO EPISCOPARI.

[In the year 1810, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont was without a Bishop. Massachusetts was the only portion of it which had had Bishops, the last of whom died in 1804, a few months after his consecration. Great anxiety was felt about the best mode of obtaining the Episcopate, and in 1810, the four States before mentioned united themselves in one body as "The Eastern Diocese" and elected the Rev. Alexander Viets Griswold, of Bristol, Rhode Island, Bishop. This Clergyman had just then made up his mind to remove from Rhode Island into the Diocese of Connecticut, which had a Bishop. He gives the following account of his election, after recording an effort which the Church in Rhode Island had made to obtain the offices of a neighbouring Bishop.]

After that, nothing respecting this business was done, till the proposal which was made for a union of the Eastern States in one Diocese. This was first mentioned to me by the Rev. Wm. Montague, whom for the first time I then saw. But, as I had already determined to return to Connecticut, I thought it not proper that I should take any part in the business; and I have often wondered since, that I did not then feel more interest in it, and make more inquiry about what was done and doing respecting it. At that time, I was still relying too much on my own wisdom, and occupied with what seemed to me the best course for my future life. Notice was sent me of the proposed Convention of the four States, to be held in Boston for the purpose of electing a Bishop. But, considering that I should not belong to the new Diocese, I thought it was not my duty to take any part in the choice of its Bishop. And it so happened that my appointment to visit Litchfield and make preparations for my removal, was at the same time with the meeting of the proposed Convention. The Rev. Mr. Ward, then officiating in Newport, who was a native of Litchfield and wished to visit his friends there, had agreed to accompany me. But, a day or two before we were to commence our journey, he sent me word that he had been taken ill, and requested me to postpone it till the following week. I was not a little disappointed; still, I consented to his request.

While I was thinking of this disappointment, it suddenly occurred to me, that as my school had been dismissed, and I was therefore not particularly engaged, it would be pleasant to attend the Convention and become acquainted with the Clergy, who were then almost all strangers to me. On my way to Boston, my mind became suddenly and deeply impressed with the importance to the Church of the business, on which we were about to meet; and most earnestly did I pray that the Lord would mercifully direct us in what we should do. In Boston, I called on the Rev. Mr. Bronson (the clerical delegate from Vermont) who was a native of Connecticut, and with whom I was acquainted, and informed him that I had for some time been of the opinion that the Rev. Mr. Hobart of New York, could they obtain him, was, of all the Clergy of my acquaintance, the best qualified to be their Bishop. It had not then occurred to me that he might be expecting an election in his own State. Mr. Bronson replied, that he had written to Mr. Hobart on the subject, and (if I remember right) read me the answer, which he had received, declining to be a candidate for the office in the Eastern Diocese.

What the election was, is well known. To the gentlemen who communicated to me the result, I replied that I was ready then to give an answer; and should not hesitate to decline the acceptance of an office for which I deemed myself unqualified. And if I ever uttered a word of truth, I uttered it then: One of the first thoughts that entered my mind, and that caused me no little anxiety, was, that the Lord, in displeasure, had suffered such an election. I was, however, earnestly requested to delay my answer, and to give the subject the most serious consideration: a request to which I assented.

The subject was, of course, very seriously considered. One of the first points, on which I came to a determination, was, that in case even one Clergyman in any of the four