

between the student and Mephistopheles in Faust, will at once occur to the reader in this connection. Student: "I should almost like to study theology." Mephistopheles: "I do not wish to mislead you. As for this science it is so difficult to avoid the wrong way; there is so much hidden poison in it, which is hard to be distinguished from the medicine. Here, again, it is best to attend but one master, and swear by his words. Generally speaking, stick to words; you will then pass through the safe gate into the temple of certainty." Student: "But there must be something connected with the word." Mephistopheles: "Right! only we must not be too anxious about that; for it is precisely where the meaning fails that a word comes in most opportunely. Disputes may be admirably carried on with words; a system may be built with words; words form a capital subject for belief; a word admits not an iota being taken from it."

And of another universal disposition and habit of religionists, the habit of seeking to prove and fortify their party tenets and favorite doctrines by the use of mere "forms of words" and isolated texts, Shakespeare, who observed everything, says, in his own blunt, strong way:

"In religion  
What damned error but some sober brow  
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,  
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament."

We reckon it a dire calamity to the progress of religion, that, in the hands of the theologians, who have ever sought to reduce religion to an exact science, there has grown up about it a technical phraseology—words and expressions which are used by partisans as party shibboleths to conjure with and rally their clans to party conflict in defense of their peculiar doctrines. In this way it has come to pass, we think, that such words as justification and atonement and faith and repentance have assumed a technical theological sense and are supposed by the multitude to possess an entirely different meaning when used in the pulpit or in connection with religion, from what they possess when used in regard to any other subject of thought, so that when a preacher begins to talk of repentance and faith and justification, there falls at once upon his hearers a sense of mystery, of something very indefinite and profound, something far removed from the grasp of the common mind. And the priests and preachers, as we think, are themselves in large measure responsible for this hurtful misapprehension, and have not been slow to make capital for themselves out of it, playing, for their own profit, all the changes upon this weakness, this error, of the masses, until the common people have come to feel that a man even needs some new faculty, some peculiar gift, in order to understand the scriptures, and, as a logical consequence, to think that heaven has set apart a peculiar class of men, the priests, on whom it has bestowed a divine monopoly in religion—whose exclusive power and right is said to read the scriptures and interpret them to the common people. The Bible, therefore, is a sealed book, the priests' book, and not the book of the people, not a revelation at all.

Among all the technical words in religion there is no one about which so much mystery hangs for the common mind as about the word "conversion." In the current theology it always involves the idea of miracle, and the words "be converted" are especially dear to those theological teachers whose entire system of religion rests upon the cornerstone of the "total hereditary depravity of the human race." Of course, if this assumed tenet be true, if a man "cannot possibly, or himself, think a good thought, or experience a good emotion, or exercise his will to do right," conversion, if it ever

takes place at all, must be miraculous—must be the result of a special "direct operation of the Holy Spirit." This miraculous doctrine of conversion finds no little countenance in the form of words—"be converted"—and hence we find the older theologians of the Calvinistic type, clinging to-day to the old words, so familiar and so dear, even though they have disappeared altogether from the New Testament. These words do not appear at all in the Revised Version of the New Testament, the place of the Latin "convert" in every case being now filled by the simpler Anglo-Saxon "turn." "Be converted," Latin passive, now reads in every case "turn," or "turn again." "Repent ye therefore and be converted." Acts iii. 19, old Version, now reads, "Repent ye therefore and turn again;" and so in every one of the seven or eight instances in which the term occurs in the New Testament, "turn" takes the place of "convert." What a grand advance in religious doctrine is it for men to learn that God does not require them to "be converted," a thing they do not understand, and could not do for themselves if they did, but simply to "turn themselves"—something they can both understand and do—and that, after all, conversion is only turning! God in the Gospel calls on all men everywhere, who are travelling the broad road to ruin, to "turn," to "face about" and travel in the very opposite direction, and men hear the call and turn, and that is conversion. The gospel is the power of God to turn men, to save every one that hears and believes it. It is a matter of profound regret that the Revision had not been equally sensible and faithful in regard to the proper translation of the word baptize, and so struck a death-blow to another great theological error that, along with that about conversion, has survived the lapse of ages chiefly by reasons of the simple fact that it became crystallized at an early day in a technical word taken from a foreign tongue.

Now, we would not be understood in what has been said, as decrying the proper use and the great value of "proof texts" or crystallized "forms of words"—especially of Bible words and phrases—but we protest against the idolatrous use of "dead words," of Bible terms even, especially, when such terms are no longer in the Bible. We quote with approval the apt words of another in regard to this very matter:

"Paul evidently attaches an importance to words as forms of statement. They form a 'mould of doctrine,' giving it shape, and so aid in preserving and communicating it. Paul's exhortation is 'hold the pattern of sound (or healthful) words which thou heardest from me.' Only when the pattern itself becomes warped by such changes as may happen in the accepted significances of words, it is allowable to change the form of words. Then it is not only allowable to change them, but duty to change them. We cannot keep truth without words. It is very easy to keep words without keeping the truth which they once enshrined."  
—Christian Evangelist.

#### IMITATION OF CHRIST.

The epistle to the Ephesians, though among the briefest of the epistles, ranks among the greatest in the breadth and majesty of its thought, the boldness and grandeur of its doctrine, and the sweetness, simplicity, and practical value of its exhortations. Some one aptly describes the epistle as "instruction passing into prayer, a creed passing into an impassioned psalm." Witsius calls it a divine epistle, glowing with the flame of Christian love and the splendor of holy light, and flowing with fountains of living water. Alford call it the

most heavenly work of one whose very imaginations is peopled with the things in the heavens, and whose faculty even is wrapped into the visions of God.

The Apostle has but one theme in the epistle, and that is to set forth the end and aim of the church of the faithful in Christ, to unfold the great truth that this sole object and purpose is to transform carnal men into the likeness of Christ, that the consummation, the very essence of Christianity, is Christ-likeness. This truth he states grandly in Romans 8: 29: "For whom he did foreknow, he also fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren;" and all things work together for this good end to them that love God and are called according to his purpose. In this epistle the statement of this fundamental truth is more elaborate, the apostle giving in detail some of the "all things" that thus work together. In the fourth chapter he says: "And he gave some to be apostles . . . for the perfecting of the saints . . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

In the development of this theme, the epistle naturally falls into two marked divisions, the first three chapters being doctrinal, in which the apostle unfolds the relation between Christ and His Church and magnifies the grace of God in calling these Ephesian Gentiles into the fellowship of the saints, using the dark background of their former carnal lives on which to paint his glorious picture of God's amazing love, and then states the object and purpose of their calling; and the last three chapters being in the main hortatory and practical, the apostle setting forth definitely that this likeness to Christ is both subjective and objective, involving both the inner spirit and the outward conduct, and giving, as to little children, the very details in which they must be imitators of Christ.

First, there must be likeness to Christ in the inner life. Christians must be renewed in the spirit of their mind, and put on the new man which after the likeness of God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth. For if any man have not the spirit of Christ—the spirit of humility and obedience and consecration and love—he is none of his. But this great change, though radical, is not a constitutional, organic change, as the old theology teaches, involving the loss or destruction of any one of man's original faculties of body, soul and spirit, or the impartation of any new ones. The converted man thinks, reasons, remembers, imagines; he did all these before conversion. The regenerate heart feels, desires, loves, hates; it did all these before the "new birth."

But the converted man—the "turned" man—is changed objectively, in all of his relations. The chief subjects of thought, of love, of hatred, are changed, are revolutionized; what he hated before conversion, he loves now, and what he loved before he now hates. The supreme inclination of his affections is changed; he receives a "new heart." There is a change of masters, associates, employments and enjoyments; of will and purposes and plans. This is conversion.

Then follows of necessity the changed life; the "former conversation,"—manner of life, conduct—"is put away." The choice of Christ is conversion; the creation of a new life is sanctification. There is a radical change of character, of conduct. And this change always involves time. Even when men have the new life, there is a long and hard battle to be fought against evil. We are born "babes"—and the perfect life according to Paul's teaching in his epistle, and indeed, throughout his entire teach-