

The Brevian.

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

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[Vol. I.]

Poetry.

THE BATTLE-FIELD OF WATERLOO.

A scene more dread
Meets faith's keen eye, athwart that gloomy gulf
Which heaves unseen betwixt Eternity
And Time. Far, far away, in that dread void
Where spreads the world of spirits, what a day
Was that of Waterloo! Oh, who might tell
The dumb dismay with which those souls, dismiss'd
From yonder battle plain, dropped down into
Th' unchanging life of that unknown abyss
Thousands on thousands as they crowd along
The viewless path—how dread, how still the scene,
To which it leads! The loud assaults 'veant—
The rallying war-cries, the victorious shout,
All, all are past. Eternity's begun!
And how it is begun? Who durst reply?
Was it a silent prayer the angel caught,
Who, on his high behest of guardianship,
Hovered, appall'd, above that vale of death?
Was that the Saviour's name, thus whisper'd forth,
Which rose amid the battle-din on high?
Haply it was; and from the sanguine scene
Some white-robed spirits smiled to see heaven's gate
Wide open thrown, to welcome to his rest
The follower of the Lamb. But, oh, that gulf!
Bottomless, wave toss'd,—how its face is through'd
And yielding waves! Oh, Death, may never thou
That ebon crown adorn thy bloodless brow
With such a triumph! Earth's proud rulers, pause,
Nor let your dreadful game of power be play'd
With such a stake. Oh, haste! ye glorious days,
When wars shall cease for aye, beneath his rule,
Whose glorious title is, "The Prince of Peace."
W. M'ILWAINE, of Belfast.

REGENERATION.

BY THE REV. JOHN HAMBLETON, M. A. MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL OF EASE, ISLINGTON.

JOHN III. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

(Concluded.)

Nicodemus appears to have shown great, though silent amazement at this doctrine, to him so new and mysterious; for our Lord now says to him, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Here is a personal application, which is always necessary with general truths. Not merely now, a man must,—but ye Jews, ye Pharisees, ye who are Christians in name only, ye must be born again." And though this divine birth appears so mysterious, "marvel not." You may find mysteries even in the kingdom of nature; marvel not if you meet with them in the kingdom of grace. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof." (It may be, my brethren, they could hear the wind whistling without at that very season of the night.) "but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Listen to the wind blowing, now from this quarter, now from that; it is mysterious in its origin, mysterious in its course; the wisest of philosophers cannot explain all its variations; and yet it is mighty in operation, certain in its effects. It purifies, refreshes, invigorates. It comes in the balmy breeze to the sick; it revives, while it blows upon the fainting traveller; it is the bracing gale for the strong. Under God, whose agent it is, "He bringeth the wind out of his treasures." It is the life, the breath, the animating principle, of the natural creation. It breathes in the soft breezes of spring, and the buds burst forth. It waves amid the leaves of summer, and wafts coolness and refreshment. It rustles mid the undulating corn of autumn, and forwards its maturity. It rides and careers among the storms of winter, and purifies the turbid atmosphere. Such is the wind, so mysterious, yet so mighty, and so beneficial. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The Greek word for the wind and the Spirit, is the same. This gives great force and beauty to the illustration. Our word Spirit has a similar derivation, coming from the latin *spiro*, to blow or breathe. The operations of the Spirit of God upon the spirit of man are, we confess, mysterious as the blowing of the wind. His grace comes unseen by human eye. It may at this moment be at work.—God grant it may!—upon many a soul here present; while others may be as unconscious as the dead, or as we, in the depth of sleep, are of the blowing of the wind around us. Surely you would not say that the wind does not blow because you do not hear it when asleep. Yet some, asleep in carnal security, are ready to deny the Spirit's operations upon others. We cannot account, I said, for all the course and variation of the wind. Neither do we pretend to account for all the course of the Spirit's operations. I cannot explain it, yet so the fact often is, that one man gets good, great and solid good, and another man gets none, by the same sermon. Yet our personal duty, in regard to the Holy Spirit, is plain. Desire his influence. Pray for it. Cherish it. Resist it not. Quench not the spark he kindles, but rather ask him to fan it into a flame. There is man's duty. Numbers, though told of this, though invited one day, and warned another, yet neglect all this. They pray not for the Spirit; they grieve and resist the Holy One: their guilt is great. Yet, after all, I readily admit, there is something mysterious in the Spirit's operations. He is a free agent. He bloweth where he listeth; and, like the Son, "quickeneth whom He will." His effects, however, are great and certain, and indisputable. MEN ARE BORN AGAIN under his mighty operation. Old things do pass away, and all things become new. Their views of themselves, of God and Christ, of holiness and sin, are completely changed. The bias of their wills, and the current of their affections, are altogether turned. They walk in a new course. They live for a

new object. They have new pleasures, new joys, new hopes, new expectations. They have new principles of conduct. They have a new heart. They are become, to all intents and purposes, new creatures. And whence all this? The Holy Ghost is the Lord and Giver of spiritual life. He wafts health to the spiritually sick, in the knowledge of Christ, as the good Physician, and the all-healing balm. He giveth power to the faint, in the supply of his refreshing grace. To him is owing all the vigour of the spiritually strong. Without him the state of the soul is like as when there is a dead calm at sea, when the ship, though she spread all her sails, can make no way. In the spring-tide of life, it is he that wafts showers of blessings, and breezes of spiritual life to the young, and causes the lovely blossoms of early piety to burst forth in clusters. In the summer of life, amid the burden and heat of the day, he gives coolness and freshness to the soul. In the autumn of man's years, it is he that mellow and sweetens the Christian's spirit, ripens him for glory, and makes him to abound in all "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." And when we come, my brethren, if we are ever permitted to come, to the winter of human existence, he can cause even the storms of old age to purify our moral atmosphere, and can even render death the means of waiting us, as the whirlwind did the prophet Elijah, to heaven.

We resume the narrative. "Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Our Lord thus answers one question by another, which is sometimes an emphatic method of enforcing truth. At the same time, he gives him, you observe, a mild, yet close rebuke: "Thou, a master and teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?" This is no new doctrine, however new and strange it seem to thee. It is as old as the prophet Ezekiel: "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." It is as old as the time of David: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." It is as old as the fall of man; yea, the remedy is as old as the disease. If man be a fallen, corrupt, fleshy, creature, he must be born again, or never see the kingdom of God. Had Nicodemus known and understood the Scriptures, he would not have said, "How can these things be?"

Let us not, however, forget that, through Nicodemus, our Lord rebukes some of us. Art thou a Christian, and knowest not these things? Art thou baptized with the baptism of water, and so ignorant of the baptism of the Spirit, as to account it foolishness? Hast thou not read the inscription over the very portal of the school of Christ, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*? It is remarkable, that after this rebuke, Nicodemus says no more, but listens in silence to the instructions of Jesus. This was, I think, a proof that, unconsciously to himself, he was under the very teaching of the Holy Spirit, and experiencing the very things which he had professed his inability to understand. Happy they, who can receive faithful rebukes from Christ with docility and meekness!

Our Lord then tells Nicodemus of the testimony for the truth of his doctrine, and herein he appeals to his divine nature as a proof of his knowing heavenly things: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." (Ver. 13.) Of course, then, he knows the way to heaven, and also the character and state of mind essential to the enjoyment of heaven. *Heaven would not be Heaven to an unregenerate soul.* Then he opens the doctrine of his cross, illustrating it by Moses lifting up the brazen serpent in the wilderness. (Ver. 14.) "So must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (Ver. 15.) Has this, you may ask, any thing to do with regeneration? I answer, yes; it is by the word of God, the testimony of Christ, and especially by the doctrine of his cross, which so strikingly exhibits God in the fulness of redeeming love, and sin in all its enormity and guilt, that the Holy Spirit loves to work upon the hearts and consciences of men. That single doctrine of *Christ crucified*, faithfully set forth, has, I venture to affirm, done more to reform—that is to weak a word—to regenerate a fallen world, than all the writings of philosophers and moralists ever did toward the promotion of morality and virtue. The cross of Christ is connected with his resurrection, and who will deny that the doctrine of Christ's resurrection has also a connexion with regeneration? Hear St. Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (Ver. 16.) Our Lord next (ver. 16) tells Nicodemus of the wonderful love of God in giving his Son, of the necessity of faith in him, of the happy safety of true believers, of the guilt and condemnation of unbelievers. Do you again inquire, What has this to do with regeneration? I answer, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." You must then see the close connexion between regeneration and the receiving of Jesus

Christ. Ask you yet again, What has regeneration to do with faith in Christ? St. John in his epistle shall tell you: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Ask you, what has men's *loving darkness* (mentioned by our Lord in ver. 19) to do with showing that they are not regenerate? St. John shall again answer: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; that is, allowedly and habitually, as the unregenerate do, and as they themselves once did."

Thus, my brethren, you see from this hasty review of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, that the Spirit's instrument in effecting regeneration is the word of God, the doctrine of the cross, the declaration of the love of God, of the necessity of faith in Christ, of the guilt of unbelief. St. James attributes regeneration to the same means: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." And so St. Peter: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "In Christ Jesus," says St. Paul, "I have begotten you THROUGH THE GOSPEL." Yes, brethren, if, as is your ministers' anxious prayer, souls are to be born again under our ministry, it will be by the faithful, scriptural, affectionate preaching of the great doctrines of the gospel. Other doctrines might make you what Nicodemus once was, a self-righteous Pharisee. This alone, by the Holy Spirit's power, can make you what there is cause to hope Nicodemus became, a regenerate, humble, spiritually-minded and devoted Christian.

You would like, perhaps, to know with that thoughts Nicodemus returned home; whether he slept that night, for thinking on regeneration; what his course henceforward became. You are not told. You are rather to inquire, what effects the same doctrine produces on yourself. Nicodemus, in fact, re-appears but twice more in the sacred history. Once in chapter vii. The officers had been sent to seize Jesus. They returned without him. How this? "Why have ye not brought him?" "Never man spake like this man." What! "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" Well may the evangelist remind us, that it is "he that came to Jesus by night;" for he is a changed man, bold enough to stand up before the council in defence of the injured Saviour, and in expostulation with his powerful foes. I put down this increased boldness in confessing Christ before men, as a proof and effect of his regeneration. Your consciences, my brethren, must judge how far you have the same or similar evidence of your regeneration. This faithful conduct, however, brought on reproach: "Art thou also of Galilee?" To be called a Galilean was one of the first terms of reproach given to disciples of Christ: the last and newest you may have perhaps heard. It is said, if we refuse to bear an ill name for Him who bore far more for us.

In St. John, (chap. xix.) Nicodemus, in whose character we must now, I think, feel interested, re-appears. You will remember the occasion. The Saviour is now dead. His side is pierced. Joseph of Arimathea, having obtained Pilate's permission, came and took the body of Jesus. "And there came also," we are told, (ver. 38, &c.) "Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night." Surely the evangelist is afraid we should forget this, and think it must be some other Nicodemus. It is the same, even he "which at the first came to Jesus by night." But see, how changed, how bold he is waxen. "And he brought," we hear, "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes, with the spices, and laid it in the new tomb." This was, indeed, confessing Christ before men, and that at a time when apostles shrank with fear. Here was a deed of tenderness and pious affection to the person of Jesus, emanating from lively gratitude for spiritual benefits received. Here was a consecration of his reputation, influence, wealth, to the service of Jesus at the very foot of his cross, while that cross was still reeking with his sacred blood. Perhaps Nicodemus, I have often thought,—yet if the thought should appear fanciful, you may reject it,—perhaps Nicodemus, while aiding Joseph in taking down the sacred body from the accursed tree, while he gazed upon the pale, yet blood-stained countenance, might have remembered, and wept while he remembered, the affecting words which he had heard uttered by those very lips now sealed in death: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." "Lord, I believe," may have been his feeling, "help thou mine unbelief."

My brethren, I can tell you no more of the history of Nicodemus. In vain do we search for his name in the Acts or the Epistles. He appears, as it were, for one object, to draw your attention to regeneration. He delivers his message, and he is gone. But let us aim to profit by what is written. Are you what Nicodemus once was? Outwardly moral and decent, respected in the world, and having a regard for the form of religion and for Christ as a teacher? Nicodemus was all that. Yet he needed regeneration. You need it also. Despise not the faithful hint.

Some may be much worse than Nicodemus was,—open, gross, notorious sinners, evil lives, disorderly,—I may have one such here to-day. If the moral and the decent need a regeneration of heart and soul, surely you do.

If Nicodemus, the Pharisee, must be born again, so must the publican and sinner. The Holy Spirit is freely offered you in and through Christ. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." You must earnestly seek the Holy Spirit and a new heart, Christ and pardon, heaven and holiness, or you will perish. I cannot be plainer. Despise not the faithful message.

There is another, like Nicodemus, desirous to inquire; but, like Nicodemus, he is half-ashamed. Why is this? On the subject of religion men will not own their ignorance. They will consult the physician about health, and the lawyer about law; but in religion they are ashamed to own their ignorance, and to consult a Christian friend, or a minister, or the Saviour himself. But now a suspicion may have arisen. There is a something in religion of which I know nothing. I do not understand this regeneration. Yet, according to Christ himself, it must be experimentally understood, or no heaven for me or for any man. Then I will search and inquire. I will apply, as directed, to Jesus. But it must be by night, by stealth, privately. Be it so. Only do inquire, and seek, and pray. Come to Jesus. Come to the Bible. We invite your inquiry and examination. If you dislike my account of regeneration, though I have endeavoured simply to follow Scripture, then try to make out another from Scripture, and let me have it. I promise to give it the best attention in my power. Only do not trifle with this vital subject. Your soul's life is concerned. Be serious, be earnest, and I shall have hope of you.

But perhaps some of you have gone farther, and have entered experimentally into the great doctrines which Nicodemus heard with so much astonishment, and which still form a stumbling-block to many. Then I can call on you for gratitude. Try and love God, as God for Christ's sake hath loved you. You cannot fully do it, I know; yet try. Seek grace, to enable you. Live as God's dear children should; in the spirit of adoption; in child-like simplicity and teachableness of heart. Love as brethren. Love all the children of your heavenly Father. Pray, and weep, and labour, for those who are still strangers to his fatherly compassions in Christ. And then be ready, as Nicodemus was, to endure a few frowns or a few hard names from the world for the sake of Christ. Watch also, as he did, for opportunities of serving Christ, and testifying love to his name before an ungodly world. You may serve him, as Nicodemus did in the Sanhedrim, in the senate, the college, the counting-house, the shop, and the social circle, as well as in the house of God. And then consent also, and think it a privilege and honour, as Nicodemus did, to devote a portion of worldly goods to his cause—not indeed to purchase myrrh and aloes for his body, but to make known far and wide his saving name, which is "as ointment poured forth."

Lastly, as you begin, as Nicodemus did, with hearing the doctrine of Christ crucified, I so prepare to end with testifying faith and love to Christ crucified. Let your former character be remembered as a contrast with your present, your new, your truly Christian character. "This is he that came to Jesus by night." This is that timid creature, now so bold. This is that worldly-minded man, now so heavenly-minded. This is that blasphemous, "Behold he prayeth." This is that thoughtless youth, now penitent and serious. This is Zacheus the publican, now just and liberal. This is Mary Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, now a weeping penitent. This is that Pharisee, now the humble believer. This is that vile, guilty, polluted creature, now a regenerated, justified, yea, glorified saint. That thought takes you to heaven. There I shall rejoice to meet you.

AGAINST PREVAILING ERRORS.

THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER, (C. R. SUMMER, D. D.)

Are we then, as a church, in risk of incurring any such danger? Is our glory in any jeopardy? Is there heard, as it were, something of a confused sound of voices at a distance, which might make some Eli, sitting in the gate, to tremble for the ark of God? If there be in the horizon as much as the earliest rising of a little cloud, you have a right to expect from one in the position which the duty of my office bids me discharge this day, the explicit declaration of my fears. And you will give me your candid attention a little longer, while I attempt in honest jealousy for what I deem the truth, to point out some of the grounds of my apprehension.

There is reason, as it seems to me, for fearing injury to the distinctive principles of our church, if a cloud be raised again around that great doctrine which involves the mode in which we are "accounted righteous before God;" if it be even called in question whether "the Protestant doctrine of justification" be "a fundamental of faith;" if instead of the satisfaction of Christ, singly and alone, as the ground of acceptance, a certain inherent meanness of sanctification be so connected with the qualification *ab extra*, as to confound the operation within with the work of Christ without. Let him to whom universal consent has assigned the praise of judicious, pronounce his opinion. "This maze, the Church of Rome does cause her followers to tread, when they ask her the way of justification."

There is ground, I think, for fear, if a system of reserve in communicating religious knowledge be introduced, and we are taught to treat salvation by grace as "a great secret" to be kept out of the sight of the ungodly, for fear of an "indelicate exposure of religion," and that "to require from both grown persons and children an explicit declaration of a belief

in the atonement, and the full assurance of its power, appears equally untenable." Is this conclusion drawn from the analogy of our blessed Lord's own teaching? We, I trust, have not so learned Christ. We remember how, in the very earliest days of his ministry, he did not hesitate to bring forward some of the highest doctrines. At the first passover, he assumed a right over his Father's house by cleansing the temple—a declaration of the Divine prerogative of the strongest kind. His discourse with Nicodemus is based upon the doctrine of regeneration—the deepest theological truth. His conversation with the woman of Samaria revealed that God is a spirit—the most abstract metaphysical truth. In declaring to the people of Nazareth that to none of the widows in Israel was Elias sent, "save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow," he taught the doctrine of election, the most mysterious of the Divine purposes. We remember how, some months before the crucifixion, he intimates the sacrifice itself and its object:—"Destroy this temple;" "the Son of man must be lifted up;" "the bread that I give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." And it was his last care, immediately before the ascension, to enter with the eleven into the full explanation of his expiatory sacrifice referring to his former discourses, and interpreting their meaning, that the apostles, and after them in turn their successors, might be competent expounders of this important doctrine.

Neither have we so learned the practice of the apostles. It was not by throwing a veil over the cross of Christ that St. Paul showed his reverence for that high and holy mystery: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." He takes the Galatians to witness that Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth before their eyes, crucified among them. So far is he from shrinking from the theme, as too sacred and awful for speech, that he glories in giving it explicit prominence even in the midst of those who could not receive the truth. "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."

Neither have we so learned the requirements of our church, which expects that out of the mouths of the very babes and sucklings God will perfect praise. The earliest Christian lesson which she bids us teach our children, is that "God the Son hath redeemed us."

Neither have we so learned in the school of experience. The whole history of the Church in every age, tends to prove the utter inefficiency of a ministry which is not faithful in honouring the Saviour by a full exhibition of his grace and love, in pointing to the light which beams from the cross, and in proclaiming openly, "Behold the Lamb of God." The experiment has been often tried. It has been tried upon individuals; it has been tried upon parishes; it has been tried upon whole countries; and many a conscientious pen has been constrained to write the record of its utter failure. Could it be otherwise, when our Master has said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me?" Could it be otherwise, "lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect?"

There is ground, again, for fear, if we are in peril of losing sight of the opinion of Bishop Hall, that the chief ground of all the errors of the Church of Rome, is the overvaluing of tradition; or of the cautious warning of Bishop Jewell, that we may in no wise believe the churches themselves, unless they say such things as are agreeable to the Scriptures; if we derogate from the exclusive supremacy of the Word, as containing all things necessary to salvation, by a phraseology which in effect gives a co-ordinate authority to the interpretation of antiquity, instead of making the Church, with our article, "a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ;" or if, finally, instead of taking Holy Scripture, with Bishop Taylor, "as a full and sufficient rule to Christians . . . because there is no other," we distinguish "two instruments of Christian teaching, Holy Scripture and the Church;" and, after adjusting their respective offices, so as to establish, not an exclusive, but a combined or joint rule of faith, conclude that in the sense in which the phrase "is commonly understood at this day," Scripture, it is plain, is not, on Anglican principles, the rule of faith." What is this, but to imply, in spirit, if not in terms, a double revelation?

There is ground, again, for fear, if, on the one hand, it becomes habitual among us to extenuate and speak in soft language of the deep corruptions of the Church of Rome, dwelling upon her "high gifts and strong claims on our admiration, reverence, love, and gratitude," attributing to her, of all other religious communities, the exclusive possession of that something, to which the age is moving; and characterizing simply as an "event in providence" that papal supremacy, of which Bishop Taylor writes that it "will not be necessary to declare the sentence of the Church of England and Ireland, because it is notorious to all the world; and it is expressly opposed against this

* John, ii. 19; iii. 14; vi. 51 Luke, xxiv. 44, 47.
† 1 Cor. i. 23.

† In truth, there is at this moment a great progress of the religious mind of our church to something deeper and truer than satisfied the last century. . . . The age is moving towards something, and most unhappily the one religious community among us, which has of late years been practically in possession of this something, is the Church of Rome. She alone, amid all the errors and evils of her practical system, has given free scope to the feelings of awe, mystery, reverence, reverence, devotedness, and other feelings, which may be especially called Catholic. . . . Letter to Dr. Jeff. by the author of "Tract for the Times" 200 p. 26.

* Phil. i. 11. † Ezek. xxxvi. 26.
† Psal. li. 10, 11. † 1 Pet. i. 3.
† John i. 12, 13.

* 1 John v. 1. † 1 John iii. 9.
† James i. 18. † 1 Pet. i. 23.
† 1 Cor. iv. 15. † John vii. 45-55.

* Matt. vii. 7. † Cant. i. 3.
† Ver. 14.