

The BEREAN.

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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"I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY."

Job, vii. 16.

I would not live alway: I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way;
The few lurid mornings that dawn on us here,
Are enough for life's woes, full enough for its cheer.

I would not live alway, thus fetter'd by sin,
Temptation without, and corruption within:
E'en the rapture of pardon is mingled with fears,
And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears.

I would not live alway;—no—welcome the tomb,
Since Jesus hath lain there, I dread not its gloom;
There sweet be my rest, till he bid me arise
To hail him in triumph descending the skies.

Who, who would live alway, away from his God;
Away from you heaven, that blissful abode,
Where the rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright
plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns:

Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren transported to greet;
While the anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul!

*From Hymns, just published,
selected and arranged by the
Rev. Charles Bancroft.*

FAMILY PRAYER FOR THURSDAY MORNING.

O THOU Father of mercies and God of all comfort, incline our hearts to love thee, and give us strength to serve thee. Make us truly humble for all our sins; and unfeignedly thankful for all thy mercies.

We have destroyed ourselves, but in thee is our help. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy Name. O be merciful unto us, and deliver us from our sins, for thy Name's sake.

We praise thee for the safety and comfort of the past night, and adore thee for all thy mercies renewed to us this morning. May we cheerfully renew the dedication of ourselves to thee; for thine we are, and thee we ought to serve. Give us grace to love thee truly, to serve thee faithfully, and to depend on thee without wavering.

With prayer and watchfulness may we now enter again on the cares and the duties of life. Preserve us, O Lord, from the evil that is in the world. May we remember thy word, and bring forth the fruits of thy Spirit. Grant us to be pure in heart, and holy in life.

Give thy blessing, O Lord, to all that thy providence may call us to do, and grant us resignation to all that thy wisdom may appoint us to suffer. May we have no will but thine, and no regard to any thing compared with thy glory.

May thy love, O blessed Jesus, reign in our hearts, and put the world under our feet. Whilst we sojourn in the earth, may we daily look forward to heaven as our rest, and be travelling towards it as our home.

We humbly beseech thee, O Father, to have mercy upon all men. Bless the Queen whom thou hast put in authority over us. Bless the country in which we live. Remember with thy most gracious favour all who are near and dear to us. Cause them to know thy love, to rejoice in thy salvation, and to live after thy commandments.

Be with us, we beseech thee, through this day. Let thine arm defend and strengthen us; and let thy Holy Spirit be our guide and comforter in all our ways.

Favourably with mercy hear these our supplications and prayers, and vouchsafe to accept our praises: through Jesus Christ our only Mediator and Redeemer; to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost; be all honour and glory, world without end.

Our Father, &c.

The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace, both now and evermore. Amen.—*From a "Series of Family Prayers for Two Weeks, selected by the Rev. C. Bancroft."*

THE MIND OF THE CHURCH

upon Laying Stumbling-Blocks where before there was none.

If it should be admitted that although images were suffered in churches, yet might idolatry by diligent and sincere preaching of God's word be avoided; it should follow of necessity, that sincere doctrine might always be had and continued as well as images; and so that whosoever, to offence, were erected an image, there also, of reason, a godly and sincere Preacher should and might be continually maintained. For it is reason, the warning as common as the stumbling-block, the remedy as large as is the offence, the medicine as general as the poison; but that is not possible, as both reason and experience teacheth. Wherefore preaching cannot slay idolatry, images being publicly suffered. For an image, which will last many hundred years, may for a little be bought; but a good Preacher cannot without much be continually maintained. Item, if the Prince will suffer it, there will be by and by many, yea, infinite images; but sincere Preachers were, and ever shall be, but a few in respect of the multitude to be taught. For our Saviour Christ saith, The harvest truly is plentiful, but the workmen be but few; which hath been hitherto continually true, and will be to the world's end; and in our time, and here in our country, so true, that every shire should scarcely have one good Preacher; if they were divided.

Now images will continually to the beholder preach their doctrine, that is, the worshipping of images and idolatry; to the which preaching mankind is exceedingly prone, and inclined to give ear, and credit, as experience of all nations and ages, doth too much prove. But a true Preacher, to

stay this mischief, is in very many places scarcely heard once in a whole year, and somewhere not once in seven years, as is evident to be proved. And that evil opinion, which hath been long rooted in men's hearts, cannot suddenly by one sermon be rooted out clean. And as few are inclined to credit sound doctrine; as many, and almost all, be prone to superstition and idolatry. So that herein appeareth not only a difficulty, but also an impossibility of the remedy.

Further, it appeareth not by any story of credit, that true and sincere preaching hath endured in any one place above one hundred years; but it is evident, that images, superstition, and worshipping of images and idolatry, have continued many hundred years. For all writings and experience do testify, that good things do by little and little ever decay, until they be clean banished; and contrary wise, evil things do more and more increase, till they come to a full perfection of wickedness. Neither need we seek examples far off for a proof hereof; our present matter is an example. For preaching of God's word, most sincere in the beginnings, by process of time waxed less and less pure, and after corrupt, and last of all, altogether laid down and left off, and other inventions of men crept in place of it. And on the other part, images among Christian men were first painted, and that in whole stories together, which had some signification in them; afterwards they were embossed, and made of timber, stone, plaster, and metal. And first they were only kept privately in private men's houses; and then after they crept into churches and temples, but first by painting, and after by embossing. And yet were they no where at the first worshipped; but shortly after they began to be worshipped by the ignorant sort of men, as appeareth by the Epistle that Gregory the first of that name, Bishop of Rome, did write to Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles. Of the which two Bishops, Serenus, for idolatry committed to images, brake them, and burned them. Gregory, although he thought it tolerable to let them stand, yet he judged it abominable that they should be worshipped; and thought, as is now alleged, that the worshipping of them might be stayed, by teaching of God's word; according as he exhorteth Serenus to teach the people, and in the same Epistle appeareth. But whether Gregory's opinion or Serenus's judgment were better herein, consider ye, I pray you; for experience by and by confuteth Gregory's opinion. For notwithstanding Gregory's writing, and the preaching of others, images being once publicly set up in temples and churches, simple men and women shortly after fell on heaps to worshipping of them; and at last the learned also were carried away with the public error, as with a violent stream, or flood; and at the second Council Nicene, the Bishops and Clergy decreed that images should be worshipped; and so, by occasion of these stumbling-blocks, not only the unlearned and simple, but the learned and wise; not the people only, but the Bishops; not the sheep, but also the shepherds themselves—who should have been guides in the right way, and lights to shine in darkness—being blinded by the bewitching of images, as the blind guides of the blind, fell both into the pit of damnable idolatry. In the which all the world as it were drowned, continued until our age, by the space of above eight hundred years, unspoken against in a manner. And this success had Gregory's order: which mischief had never come to pass had Bishop Serenus's way been taken, and all idols and images been utterly destroyed and abolished; for no man worshippeth that that is not.

And thus you see, how from having of images privately, it came to public setting of them up in churches and temples, although without harm at the first, as was then of some wise and learned men judged; and from simple having them there, it came at the last to worshipping of them; first by the rude people who specially, as the Scripture teacheth, are in danger of superstition and idolatry, and afterwards by the Bishops, the learned, and by the whole clergy. So that laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sects, and degrees of men, women, and children of whole Christendom—an horrible and most dreadful thing to think—have been at once all drowned in abominable idolatry; of all other vices most detestable of God, and most damnable to man; and that by the space of eight hundred years and more. And to this end is come that beginning of setting up of images in churches; then judged harmless; in experience proved not only harmful, but exitial and pestilent, and to the destruction and subversion of all good religion universally. So that I conclude, as it may be possible in some one city, or little country, to have images set up in temples and churches, and yet idolatry, by earnest and continual preaching of God's true word, and the sincere Gospel of our Saviour Christ, may be kept away for a short time; so it is impossible that images once set up and suffered in temples and churches, any great countries, much less the whole world, can any long time be kept from idolatry. And the godly will respect, not only their own city, country, and time, and the health of men of their age, but be careful for all places and times, and the salvation of men of all ages. At the least, they will not lay such stumbling-blocks and snares for the feet of other countrymen and ages, which experience hath already proved to have been the ruin of the world.

Wherefore I make a general conclusion of all that I have hitherto said; of the stumbling-blocks and poisons of men's souls, by setting up of images, will be many, yea infinite, if they be suffered; and the warnings of the same stumbling-blocks, and remedies for the said poisons, by preaching, but few

as is already declared; if the stumbling-blocks be easy to be laid, the poisons soon provided, and the warnings and remedies but seldom given; and if all men be more ready of themselves to stumble and be offended, than to be warned; all men more ready to drink of the poison than to taste of the remedy—as it is before partly, and shall hereafter more fully be declared—and so, in fine, the poison continually and deeply drunk of many, the remedy seldom and faintly tasted of by a few; how can it be, but that infinite of the weak and infirm shall be needed, infinite by ruin shall break their necks, infinite by deadly venom be poisoned in their souls? And how is the charity of God, or love of our neighbours, in our hearts then, if, when we may remove such dangerous stumbling-blocks, such pestilent poisons, we will not remove them? What shall I say of them, which will lay stumbling-blocks where before there was none, and set snares for the feet, nay, for the souls of weak and simple ones, and work the danger of their everlasting destruction, for whom our Saviour Christ shed his most precious blood? Where better it were that the arts of painting, plastering, carving, graving, and founding, had never been found nor used; than one of them, whose stings in the sight of God are so precious, should by occasion of image or picture perish and be lost.

And thus it is declared, that preaching cannot possibly stay idolatry, if images be set up publicly in temples and churches.—*Book of Homilies; Sermon upon Peril of Idolatry.*

PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL.

The peculiar circumstances in which these are necessarily placed, who are dedicated to the Christian faith in their infancy, and acquire a general knowledge of their religion as their understanding opens; together with the various degrees of advantage or disadvantage possessed by various situations in respect to the correctness of this knowledge; these circumstances arising out of a NATURAL faith impose a corresponding duty upon the preacher, which must be discharged with fidelity, discernment, and discretion.

Christianity, it will be acknowledged, in order to be individually available salvation, must become a personal concern. As Tertullian justly observes, "fuit, non nascitur Christianus." In the first ages, the open assumption of the Christian faith was, for the most part, a matter of long and serious consideration. It commonly took place at a time of life when the converts could both understand and ratify the covenant which reconciled them to God, and engaged them for the future to obey a new law, and put off the old man with its deeds. They underwent, as catechumens, a long and strict probation. When they were convinced of the truth of the Christian doctrine, and had pledged themselves to the utmost of their power to live accordingly, they were directed to perform a solemn exercise of prayer and fasting for the forgiveness of past sins; and then, and not till then, they received baptism, and were pronounced regenerate. Even in the third century, Origen acquaints us that the Christians were accustomed carefully to examine into the morals and dispositions of those who offered themselves; and admitted none, till they had given some evidences of a progress in virtue. So serious was the obligation considered, and so strict the discipline preserved, that many who were persuaded of the truth of the Gospel, delayed the profession of it by baptism, as in this age men procrastinate repentance, because they could not prevail on themselves to resign those sinful habits, which they were well aware must be resigned by Christians.

In the case of infant baptism, there are evidently no similar means of ascertaining the actual disposition. The benefit received is strictly gratuitous, or "of free grace." It is promised, however, to faith and obedience, presupposed in the recipient, and pledged in his name by the sponsors; whence it follows that the blessing attached to the sacrament must fail, if the conditions fail in those who are capable of performing them; and that the faith and obedience must become actual and personal, in those who arrive at a mature age. It has not altered the nature of Christianity, that its external privileges are become national. Whoever, therefore, professes the hope of the Gospel, must individually embrace the doctrine of the Gospel; must consent, as sincerely as the earliest converts, to refer whatever he does in word or deed to the glory of God; with the primitive humility of the Apostles, must renounce all confidence in his own strength, and must look for salvation through Christ's death with as much personal gratitude as if Christ had suffered for him alone. Though in many cases it may be impossible, as was formerly acknowledged; for those who have been placed in covenant with God by baptism, to state at what time and by what process the truths of the Gospel became an active principle in the mind, still it is undeniable that in all who attain the age of reason they must become so, or the covenant is made void; and it is a definite and intelligible question whether they have actually taken this oath or no.—How the tree was nourished and irrigated, and enabled to sustain the inclement seasons which opposed its early growth and strength, we may in vain inquire; but whether it bears fruit or not, and whether that fruit gives evidence of a sound stock, any one may examine either as to himself or others. Is the heart possessed of a sincere conviction of its own sinfulness and need of a Saviour; does it manifest its dependence on the Holy Spirit by an habitual intercourse with God through prayer; does it feel a practical sense of the great business of

this life as a probation and preparation for eternity? These are infallible characters of faith; and though they will be found in different degrees in different individuals, no one should be satisfied with himself, and no one should suffer his congregation to be satisfied, till he can trace these characters in the heart.

But if such a frame of mind is indispensable to a Christian's reasonable hope, it is evident that a preacher can in no wise take it for granted; that it exists in his hearers as the necessary and gratuitous consequence of baptism; but must require of all who have the privilege of baptism, that they strive to attain it; that being regenerate in condition, they be also renewed in nature; and constantly examine themselves whether they have this proof within them, that they are born of the Spirit as well as of water, and can make the "answer of a good conscience towards God."

In a state of society like that in which our lot has fallen, it is peculiarly necessary to be instant and urgent in enforcing at all seasons this individual appropriation of the truths of the Gospel. In proportion as a community advances in opulence, the more numerous are the temptations to evil of every kind with which it abounds: pride and luxury spread a thousand snares; and as the labour becomes gradually heavier which is required to retain each individual in his own sphere, or to lift him above it, worldly cares coincide with the natural disinclination to spiritual things, and alienate the mind from all interests beyond those of the present time. Very many, therefore, even of those who do not throw off all external professions of religious obligation, content themselves with certain undefined ideas of a Mediator and a mitigated law, and with the performance of those stated ordinances which one age hands down, not without gradual abridgment and relaxation, to another.

I am aware it is too common to throw out disparaging insinuations against the forms of religion. If there is any weight in precept, or any authority in experience, they are absolutely essential. But let it ever be remembered that they are the means, and not the end. Public prayer and public services are not religion, but the cultivation of religion; the outward aids by which it has been appointed that piety should be cherished, recruited, and confirmed, and the Christian be enabled to approve himself to God in that habitual subjection of his affections to the divine command which is the sure evidence and genuine fruit of faith.

While nature is corrupt, and this world a scene of probation, there will always be a tendency to substitute the external profession for the actual obligations of Christianity. It is much easier to comply with certain ordinances, than to purify the heart, to control a passion, or conquer a guilty habit. In the judgment of charity, attention to the outward duties of religion is a presumptive evidence of real faith; just as the common acquaintance takes the soundness of constitutional health for granted, where no positive symptoms of disease appear. But it is the physician's business to inquire further: not to be so easily satisfied; and to assure himself not only in a negative way that all is apparently right, but positively that nothing is wrong.—*The Right Rev. J. B. Sumner, D. D., Lord Bishop of Chester, on Apostolical Preaching.*

THE CLERGYMAN'S POSITION,

WHILE INTERPRETING THE XXXIX ARTICLES IN A NON-NATURAL SENSE.

From An humble but earnest address to the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, on the tolerating among our Ministry of the Doctrines of the Church of Rome. By John Henry Hopkins, D. D., Bishop of the Diocese of Vermont.

Now, then, how is he to discharge his office as a commissioned, ordained, and authorized instructor? If he preaches according to Rome, he is false to the Church. If he preaches according to the Church, he is false to his conscience, for his opinion is, that Rome is right and the Church is wrong. If he undertakes to reconcile them by putting a non-natural interpretation on the Articles, which he knows the Church never intended, he is false to all the rules of human confidence, false to the teaching of his theological instructors, false to the laws of language, false to the common sense and reason of mankind. And if, to avoid all these difficulties, he shuns every topic of instruction which could involve the points in controversy, and reduces his teaching to a circle which might be trodden in the same manner by either a Romish priest or a Protestant clergyman, he is false to that Saviour who is "the way, the truth, and the life;" false to the example of St. Paul, who "shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God;" and "kept back nothing that was profitable;" false to the admonition of St. Jude, that we should "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and false to that solemn vow which binds him to proclaim and defend the whole doctrine of his own Church, and not a part of it only.

With a mind so warped from its allegiance, and yet fully aware that a frank and candid statement of his Trentine opinions would utterly alienate his brethren and disgust his flock, such a man would be constantly tempted to a course of prevarication. He would feel his way, calculate how much he might venture, draw back a little when he had found that he had gone too far, advance again as soon as he dared, and infuse his Roman doctrines just as fast and as openly as he thought politic; hoping to find himself strong enough by-and-by to throw off the mask, and boldly avow his darling project of unity with Rome, the loss of which he gently insinuates, from

time to time, to be a mournful dispensation. And meanwhile he would naturally indulge his predilections by gazing on the phantom of Catholicity, and exaggerating the efficacy of sacramental grace, and magnifying the authority of councils, and recommending the lives of the Roman saints; and speaking contemptuously of the character and work of the Reformers, and making an idol of the Church of the Middle Ages, and trying to revive the exploded custom of prayers for the dead, and enlarging the importance of tradition, and bringing the external forms of worship as near as possible to the Roman standard. In all this, his views of expediency would be the only counteracting influence against the international force of his opinions; for the true and dutiful attachment once felt for the doctrine of his own Church would be no longer his ruling principle of action. And hence his own soul would become more and more infected with the poison of Romanism. Reserve and mystification would grow into a habit. Candor and frankness would be abjured. Preaching and conversation would be less and less marked by the honest ardor of sincerity. The warm and cordial confidence of those around him would be exchanged for the chilling atmosphere of doubt and suspicion. No blessing from heaven could cheer his ministerial course. And, after years spent in this apostasy of the heart, without being able to make any decisive impression upon the Church which he had been vainly attempting to unpractically, he would find himself compelled to go where his opinions had gone before, and exhibit in the sight of man, the treachery which had long been displayed in the sight of God.

THE INSTRUMENT, IN GOD'S HAND, FOR THE REVIVAL OF TRUE RELIGION AT GENEVA.

From "Lectures on Foreign Churches" by the Rev. Dr. MacFarlan, Greenock.

Before adverting to another mournful proof of the rejection of pure Christianity by the professors and pastors of Geneva, I am called to bear a willing tribute to the memory of a countryman of our own, not long deceased, to whom, as one of the most eminent instruments under God of the late revival in Geneva, the Christian men of that city and canton owe a debt of gratitude which they have not been slow to acknowledge. The person to whom I refer is Mr. Robert Haldane. From the time when he was himself awakened, he felt a strong desire to impart the knowledge of the truth to others in his own and in foreign countries. Prevented by the timid and now happily altered policy of Britain, from going to India with that policy in view, he directed his attention to the Continent. He went thither: about thirty years ago, chiefly—I believe we may say entirely—with the intention, if God should bless his labours, of reviving Protestantism and winning souls to Christ. As the best mode of accomplishing that end, he made it his endeavour, wheresoever he travelled in France and Switzerland, to gain the acquaintance, and influence the minds, of the so-called Protestant pastors. For some time he met with little success; but, coming to Geneva, he was unexpectedly encouraged to remain there, as he himself states, by a visit from a young man, a student in divinity, who called in place of M. Moulinié, one of the pastors in Geneva, to conduct Mr. and Mrs. Haldane to see a model of the mountains, a little way out of town. With him Mr. H. immediately entered into conversation on the subject of religion, on which he found him willing to receive information. The student returned with him to the inn, and remained till late at night. He came back next morning with another student, equally ignorant with himself of the Bible and its precious truths. These two brought six others in the same state of mind, with whom Mr. H. had many and long conversations. Their visits became so frequent that it was at length arranged that they should meet with him at a fixed hour, three times a week, with a view to conversation. Mr. Haldane took the Epistle to the Romans as his text, and continued to expound that portion of Scripture during the whole of the winter of 1816-17, and until the termination of the studies in the following summer, during which period almost all the students in theology regularly attended. Besides these, some who did not wish to appear with the students came at different hours; and several of the inhabitants of Geneva, unconnected with the schools of learning, and of both sexes, occasionally visited him in the afternoon to receive instruction respecting the Gospel.

The result of these truly Christian and beneficent efforts, was, that out of eighteen students who attended, sixteen were truly converted. Several of them have entered into their Master's joy; the remainder, dispersed in different parts of the Continent as pastors of congregations, are preaching with fidelity and ardour the uncorrupted Gospel of Christ; and two of them, Dr. Merle d'Aubigné, the well-known author of the History of the Reformation, and Dr. Gausson, ex-pastor of Satigny, and author of a recently published work on Inspiration, are professors in the new Theological College at Geneva. Besides these blessed fruits of Mr. Haldane's self-denied and devoted efforts, a very considerable impression was made on the other inhabitants of Geneva; so great, as truly to amount to a revival of spiritual religion. In 1827, a venerable Christian layman, now deceased, referring to the happy change thus produced, told the author of this lecture, that if Mr. Haldane were then to revisit Geneva, he would not know it for the same place.

ELECTION.—Though the mariner sees not the pole star, yet the needle of the compass that points to it, tells him which way he sail.

* Justin Apol. i. 79.
† Origen, contr. Cels. lib. 50.