

ST. PAUL'S DEVOTION TO CHRIST.

BY REV. JOHN WATSON, D. D.

Christianity is distinguished from every other religion by the relation between the Christian and Christ, and the supreme illustration of this beautiful devotion is St. Paul. It is a historical fact that he was once the most convinced and most determined foe of the new faith—the noblest of inquisitors. It is also a historical fact that he became the most self-sacrificing and triumphant missionary of the faith, who rested not till he had planted the cross on the seven hills; but it is only his epistles which can show the hold which Christ had taken of St. Paul, the utter surrender of the once unbeliever to his Lord. From the first letter to the last the theme is Christ, so that everything else is a commentary on this name—from which he starts, to which he returns, by which he argues, through which he appeals, upon which he is ever fighting, unto which he is ever rising, which he defends, which he caresses, which he hides in his heart. In one brief hour his whole former world seems to have vanished like a dream, and a new world to have come into existence whose centre was Christ. As of one man it may be said, for him to live is art; of another, letters; of a third, commerce; so it might have been said of Saul of Tarsus, for him to live was Judaism; and then he said at last for himself, "For me to live is Christ."

1. St. Paul's devotion was, first of all, *intellectual*, and had Christ not commanded the respect of the apostle's reason, then not only would the Church have lost the epistles, but Christ would never have held the apostle. It is not to be supposed for one moment that what such a man as St. Paul demanded in the Messiah was simply some one to save his soul. He did not pretend to be indifferent to deliverance from sin, or perfection in holiness; but he looked beyond himself, and was concerned about the world, of which he was a part. How did this world come into being? What of the race to which he belonged? Was there any fixed end to which creation moved? Was there any mind in things at all—any love, any hope? No one can be religious without asking such questions; none ought to be satisfied with a Saviour who does not answer them. It was because Christ by His coming, His life, His death, His resurrection—most of all by His Person—threw a flood of light on this pressing problem that St. Paul rested his eager, subtle, questioning mind on Him. Christ, as we can see in his letters, was the key of the universe to St. Paul—the standard of thought by which he solved all riddles, tried all difficulties, lifted all veils. The irresistible purposes of God were all formed, carried out, and completed in Christ. The human race stood in idea, complete in Christ. The lower creation was embraced in the same Christ. The crown of all men and things was Christ, for whom they existed, to whom they tended. With Christ before him, history and humanity became intelligible to this thinker; and so Christ became the principle by which St. Paul argued, speculated, explained, and was assured.

2. St. Paul's devotion was also *ethical*, for Christ had given rest to his conscience. No man could ever have had a more sensitive or delicate moral nature than the Apostle of the Gentiles. No man could ever have suffered more under Pharisaism. On the one hand he would realize beyond other men the searching and imperious requirements of the Divine Laws, and on the other, few men lived who had a keener sense of his own imperfection. As the spiritual was everything to him, the life of St. Paul must have been an unceasing torture till he met Christ. He was a debtor who could never pay, he was a sinner who could never be justified, yet his was the very soul which longed for righteousness and freedom. He obtained that for which he had longed, of which he had despaired, in Christ. When his eyes were cleansed from national prejudice and theological blindness, St. Paul saw in this Jesus of Nazareth a man of his own flesh and blood, who had lived with God as a Son with a Father in obedience and peace, and he came to understand that he could share this ideal life. By an act of faith he passed out of his legal bondage into the liberty of the sons of God. He ceased from his dreary life of rules and rites and began the life of the Spirit. His attitude to Christ was not, therefore, one only of gratitude to a teacher who had led him out of a false conception of religion into one that was true, but of absorption in a Head from whom he derived spiritual life itself. In Christ he stood, in Christ he worked, in Christ he rejoiced. Free from his former slavery he became the slave of Christ

3. St. Paul's devotion was also *personal*, and a matter of the heart. He believed with all his strength that Christ had thought of him, separated him from other men, loved him. In St. Paul's experience were realized those visions of the Lord which saints of the intense order have desired, which certain are said to have enjoyed. Whether he had ever seen the Lord in former days is not known for certain and does not matter, since the apostle's thoughts did not go back to Galilee, but were lifted to the heavenly places. It was the spiritual Christ whom he imagined and adored; and what God had been to Israel, this Christ became to him; and as Israel, had treasured God, he had dealt with Christ. Against this long-suffering and patient One he had rebelled; from Him he had wandered in the ways of his pride and vanity. It was Christ whom he had condemned to death in St. Stephen, and whose stoning he had approved. It was his Lord whom he had hunted and hailed to prison. Ah! how the figure of the one Body and its members would affect his soul as he remembered in after days the persecution of those unoffending, trembling Christians. When he had felt a sudden compunction at his ignoble work and desired to refuse it, it was Christ's hand already on his heart. While he was in his sins, Christ had laid down His life for him; while he was a persecutor and injurious, Christ was guiding his life to high issues. His conversion lit up his past with love, and consecrated his future to a unique friendship. Wherever St. Paul went now he was the bond-slave of Christ, who "loved him, and gave Himself" for this Pharisee: whatever he endured was welcome for Christ's sake. His labours were his offering to Christ; his stripes were Jesus' marks whereof he boasted. It was an honour to suffer for Christ; it was his life to be crucified with Christ; the Cross of Christ was his glory. His desire was to pour out his life as a drink offering, his hope was that one day Christ would give him the crown. Among all friendships the mystical bond between the saint and his Saviour is the most spiritual and effectual, and can be seen at its height in St. Paul; for St. John had seen the Master face to face, but this man only in an ecstasy. One has to admit that it is rare, since, to most persons, Christ is rather a Divine Teacher or an official Saviour than a passionate Lover. One also fears that in modern days this relation to Christ, which touched with gentle beauty the Temple of George Herbert, and redeemed the occasional coarseness of Rutherford's letters, has given place to colder moods. It amazes one, and fills his heart with wistful regret, to read this ancient love correspondence, wherein one was the Son of God and the other the Chief of Sinners. If there be romance anywhere, it ought to be in religion; and if any religion be romantic, it is Christianity. The chief loss in the personal religion of our day is the cooling of this passion for Christ as a living Person, who is ever conscious of us, of whom the Christian is ever thinking; and our greatest gain would be the rekindling of this holy fire on the altar of our cold, cheerless hearts.

—*The Monthly Messenger.*

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA.

II.—INNER LIFE.

BY DR. A. J. CAMPBELL.

In Jubilee issue of the Southern Cross.

We, Scotchmen, think that we have reasons of our own for our affection for the Queen. There is first, the fondness which she has for the land of our fathers, the "Land of the mountain and the flood"; and there is the higher love she has for Him who is her Lord and ours, which led her, Queen and Empress though she be, and Head of a Sister Church, to sit down, clothed with humility, among her tenants and servants at the Scotch communion service, of which she wrote: "It was most touching and beautiful. It would be impossible to say how deeply we were impressed by the grand simplicity of the service."

This one thing, further, I would like to say, that so far from the loyalty of our Victorian people dying out, as our old colonists die off, it seems to be growing stronger every day. For every day it is becoming clearer, to us that God has put Great Britain in the van of the nations, that she may stand up for freedom, and truth, and righteousness, and that now, more than ever, she is carrying on a beneficent, civilizing, and Christianizing work among the dark