

The Berean.

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

No. 37.]

QUEBEC, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1844.

[Vol. I.]

RESIGNATION.

My God, my Father, while I stray
Far from my home, on life's rough way,
O teach me from my heart to say,
Thy will, O God, be done.

If thou should'st call me to resign
What most I prize—it ne'er was mine,
I only yield thee what was thine;
Thy will, O God, be done.

Even if again I ne'er should see
The friend more dear than life to me,
Ere long we both shall be with thee;
Thy will, O God, be done.

Should pining sickness waste away
My life in premature decay,
My Father, still I strive to say,
Thy will, O God, be done.

If but my fainting heart be blest
With thy sweet spirit for its guest,
My God, to thee I'll leave the rest,
Thy will, O God, be done.

Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with thine and take away
All that now makes it hard to say
Thy will, O God, be done.

And when on earth I breathe no more
The prayer oft mixed with tears before,
I'll sing upon a happier shore
Thy will, O God, be done.

[Many of our readers in our immediate vicinity are acquainted with a piece of poetry, mainly the same as the above, from a former publication of the Editor's; we insert it on the present occasion for wider circulation, in the shape in which we have recently met with it in an American publication, adding a note from the *Gospel Messenger*, which will give it increased interest. The note says, the lines are "from a memoir of Miss Alexander, the daughter of the present Bishop of Jerusalem. They were copied, during the last winter, by a beloved friend while at the distant south for his health, and sent with his likeness to his wife in the north. They are suited to the condition of many hearts in every climate, and no Christian can fail to feel their force in his hours of sorrow and privation."]

THE TRUE STANDARD.

Every Christian should be aware that there is in our natures a pride which strongly inclines us to condemn and avoid that which is held or practised by those we dislike, or consider our rivals or opponents. We of the Episcopal Church have thought, and I fear not wholly without reason, that some usages which are profitable to edification, and conformable to the Scriptures, have, by some Christians, been rejected and opposed because they are by us practised: such, for instance, as using the Lord's Prayer, kneeling in our devotions, and reading the Scriptures in public; and so far as the omissions have been from this cause, they cannot be too much condemned. But in us, who have seen and said so much of this evil, such pride would be still more sinful. If we censure what the Scriptures do not condemn, and experience has proved to be useful, because it is practised by those whom we oppose, or dislike, or wish to put down; out of our own mouth shall we be condemned.

From a like corruption of our nature we are inclined to make ourselves—our own actions, and feelings, and practice, the standard of orthodoxy and excellence. To worldly people, and to lukewarm Christians, much ardour and deep engagedness in religion is enthusiasm; and any departure from that formal routine of religious service in which they walk is branded as irregularity. We have also a natural propensity to formalism, we adhere strongly to what has become habitual: and this leads us to judge of religion too much from its exterior; to be contented with a habitual round of external rights, and to censure any deviation from our beaten track. The dislike which some (we say not all) have to Prayer Meetings, seems to proceed chiefly from this cause. No Christians are less likely than Episcopalians to advocate, or to sanction needless change or innovation. In every thing essential they endeavour to search for the old paths, and to walk in them. But still the Church allows, what the Scriptures indeed require, that we so far conform to times and seasons as to refrain from whatever will injure the cause of truth; and to do that which will best promote the Redeemer's kingdom. Changes in society and manners; improvements in literature and the arts, and revolutions in states and kingdoms, may render old usages inexpedient, and new ones profitable. It is not yet forty years since very considerable alterations were made in our Prayer Book; and though the changes were then strongly opposed by many, who viewed them as the ruin of our Church, no one now doubts but the alterations were wise, and have been very useful. Hymns and offices have since that time been added; and further alterations are by our General Convention proposed. And some of the offices which the Prayer Book contains are almost fallen into disuse—as the offices for Visiting the Sick; for the Churching of Women, and a part of that for Private Baptism. And some new usages, called for by the exigence, and already adopted by the wisdom of the present age, have been much blessed, and very useful: such as Bible Associations; Tract Societies; Bible Classes; Sunday Schools. And to the number (in the opinion of thousands of pious Christians) may justly be added Meetings for Social Prayer and Religious Conference.

Another error to which we are naturally prone, and which in every age has been very injurious to true religion, is neglecting

weightier matters, through attention to things of minor importance. When we consider what wickedness and infidelity every where prevail; what doctrines subversive of the most essential principles of Christ's religion, and making his cross of no effect, proudly lift their head, and boast of daily success; when the love of so many is cold; and when self-righteousness and self-will, and contention and love of the world so much predominate among those who profess to be the disciples of the holy and humble Jesus, we might expect that the gospel preacher would find sins and errors against which to raise his warning voice, and to thunder out his denunciations, more detestable and more alarming, than revivals of religion and meetings for social prayer. It is also worthy of some consideration that, so far as on the one hand these exercises meet with great opposition from worldly people; and on the other there are great efforts of the adversary to render them instrumental of evil, they have evidence of being agreeable to God's will: for such opposition, and such abuse will in every age be made to frustrate the effects of gospel truth. And it is worthy the serious inquiry of us all, whether we ought not to oppose the evil only, and let the good remain. The evil ought fairly to be exposed, and decidedly condemned: but truth forbids that we should either magnify the evil or conceal the good; and charity forbids that we should ascribe the conduct of men to evil, when it may as fairly be ascribed to good intentions. Truth also requires us to admit, and endeavour to state that there are facts, of more weight than a thousand opinions, which show that the blessing of God is with those who favour such meetings and revivals. They generally hold to the most distinguishing articles of the Christian faith: their Churches, and their members increase, and are rapidly multiplied; they evince great piety and devotion to God; and the most disinterested zeal for the propagation of the Gospel. Freely do they give their money, and devote their lives to the service of Christ. They do not, with a narrow, unchristian policy, limit their bounty, nor confine their zeal to their own parish, or state, or country: they know and feel that all souls are equally precious; that it is the will of our Divine Master that his Gospel should be preached to every creature; that the knowledge of his truth should be extended more and more among the nations of the earth, till all the ends of the world have seen the salvation of our God. Those, who are thus devoted to the honour of God, and the best good of mankind; who use all means and efforts in their power to build up the Redeemer's Kingdom, God does bless, and will bless, though the world should oppose them; and though in some points they are, as we believe, mistaken and erroneous. The efforts of those still more sound in faith, and apostolic in discipline, would, we may believe, be still more blessed and prospered. Had we the zeal and devotedness of some other denominations, the Episcopal Church, we doubt not, would soon rise in numbers, above every other sect. It is to be wished that we were more and better disposed, not only to imitate their pious zeal and labour of love; but also to bless God for the good they do. If St. Paul rejoiced in the good done even by those who preached with evil intention, will we rejoice and praise God that thousands, and tens of thousands, are yearly awakened to righteousness, and that the everlasting Gospel is spread to the remotest regions, by those who are evidently actuated by the best motives, and hold in common with us the grand essentials of the Christian faith. Dare we affirm that means and efforts which produce such fruits, are only from human wickedness and error; or from the instigation of the devil? Suppose they are in some things erroneous, how shall we evince to the world, or to our own conscience, that we have a better faith, but by bringing forth more and better fruits? A Christian cannot be too cautious how he judges another man's servant, violates the rule of charity, and is found fighting against God.

There is still another and great evil, which, from the depravity of our nature, easily besets us, which is exalting above the due limits of their authority, the commandments of men. The Jews in our Saviour's time had fallen into the same error. By Christians generally, in the dark ages, and by very many at the present day, the rites and ordinances which rest only on the authority, or usages of the Church, and on human tradition, are apparently as highly esteemed, and they are certainly contented for with more interest and zeal than the precepts of the Bible, and the weightier matters of morality and religion. What God has ordained is ever to be observed, and steadfastly from age to age maintained without change or innovation. But the same cannot with truth be said of the commandments of men. The ordinances of the Church, or what is done by human authority, should ever be accommodated to the existing state of society, and to the spiritual wants of mankind. What in religion is suited to all ages of the world, and to all sorts and conditions of men, the Lord has himself appointed: other things are left to be regulated and varied, as the world changes, and circumstances require. What the rulers of the Church direct, if not contrary to the word of God, (as was the case before the Reformation) is to be conscientiously regarded. And where the Church does not interfere, nor prescribe rules of conduct, the Bishop in his diocese, the pastor in his parish, and individual Christians, in their respective ranks and offices and stations, are left to act according to their wisdom and discretion. And this liberty, as many believe, they rightly use in the case of meetings for prayer and religious conversation.

But as there are some who by extending the precepts of the Bible beyond the inten-

tion of the Divine law, become "overmuch righteous;" so by a like extension of ecclesiastical authority we may be overmuch Churchmen: and that some among us should be overmuch Episcopal, is at least very natural. Should our Convention prescribe rules respecting social prayer, Episcopalians would feel themselves bound to observe them; but not to think them of equal authority with the Canon of Scripture. It is of vast importance to the purity of religion, and the unity of the Church, that Christians carefully distinguish between what is of Divine, and what but of human authority. This is the foundation of Protestantism; or, in other words, of true Christianity; that the Bible is our creed and only rule of faith and practice: "that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." And wisely does the Church lay her ministers under the most solemn obligation, "to teach nothing as necessary to salvation, but that which they shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures." The cry of "The Temple of the Lord," or "The Church: The Church" has been for many ages continued: but every Christian, whose heart, by a sound and saving faith, has been renewed, knows that the Church cannot be in peril while her children adhere to this her sure foundation. And though many may set themselves forward as infallible interpreters of God's word, Christians, still more now than when taught by inspired Apostles, should, like the wise Bereans, search the Scriptures, and for themselves ascertain what is truly written. Every ordinance of man is for the Lord's sake to be respected; but no human authority—not that of the Church, may be set in competition with the sure word of God.—*The Right Rev. A. F. Griswold, D. D., Bishop of the Eastern Diocese.*

THE DEATH OF A LEADER A CALL TO ACTIVITY.

From a Sermon preached by the Rev. E. Bickertell, Rector of Watton, at St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, on the Sunday after the funeral of the Rev. Josiah Pratt, Vicar of the said parish.

My chief object in choosing my text (Joshua i. 1, 2), was to take occasion from this providence to quicken you, and, if it might be, all the large circle of the Churches of Christ in all lands, which revered the character of our departed friend, and have long looked up to him as the surviving father of the revived work of Missions in the English Church—to quicken all to great and increased exertions in promoting His Kingdom in the world. We have heard what one honoured individual was privileged to see accomplished, and in part by his own labours, and in his own life-time. When he began his labours, he had far more difficulties to encounter, than any we can have. The ground was unbroken-up, the agents unknown and unprepared; the whole materials of the war had to be gathered. But he and those who laboured with him persevered; and now, behold what God has wrought!

It was the same with the nation of Israel. Under Moses they had been delivered from Egypt, they had passed through the Red Sea and the wilderness, they had overcome Amalek and Sihon and Og, and possessed their land, and were brought near to Jordan, when Moses was called to his reward. Then, at this precise time, when they had lost their proved leader, they were to advance against the mighty nations of Canaan, with renewed zeal and full assurance of success. Such, I conceive, is the voice of Providence to the British Churches at this time. Not more assuredly was Canaan given to Israel, than the heathen are given to Christ "for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession." Now I would take occasion from the loss of so wise, so experienced, so revered a leader as our departed friend has been, to say to the Israel of God in our day, "Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it."

I was struck, when I visited our departed friend, and saw him for the last time, on the 23d of September, with the earnestness with which, in a voice almost inarticulate from the influence of that attack, which at length issued in his death, he spoke of the new feeling which he had of the duty of preaching Christ more earnestly, and labouring far more zealously than he had ever done for Him. Oh! could he now return from the heavenly mansions, how would he return? With every feeling deepened, with every exhortation full of power, to call British Christians to use their new advantages for the Lord.

God has multiplied the means. He has opened the door to all lands. Steam vessels and railways are bringing all parts of the earth close to each other. The nations are disquieted and agitated, seeking after better things. "Many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increased." Mahomet is compelled to yield up the power of persecution over those who forsake Islamism. The political power of the Pope is tottering at its very centre; and the Papal Kingdoms, in spite of his Bull, are more opening to the Word of God. The savage chiefs of African Kingdoms are welcoming the Missionary. The Gospel is proclaimed in India; the isles are receiving the law; and China is at last opened to the Word of salvation. The British empire, with its colonies, comprehends a hundred millions of subjects, of whom thirty are Mahomedans, and seventy idolaters. To all these the Gospel may be preached. Our possessions skirt all the four quarters of the globe; and each may be a centre of life and blessing. Oh! what might Britain do, if

Britain had the heart! What might the Protestant Churches do, if we were really united, and devoted to the Lord!

Look at what British proprietors, and merchants, and men of commerce do for gain. Let a new railway be projected from the metropolis to York, and five millions of money be wanted for it; and it is all ready at the appointed day. Oh! for more faith in the Word of Christ.

Much has the "little flock" in the midst of England already accomplished; but now is a critical time, for far higher hopes and more united and combined effort. All that has been doing in the last half century, is but a preparation for a far greater work, yet to take place, that is now before us. The vials have been pouring out on Papal and apostate Kingdoms, to prepare the way of the Lord; and all who have "discerned the signs of the times," are assured, that we are on the verge of greater events, than any that have yet taken place, that will affect the whole earth, and introduce the millennial and heavenly kingdom of Christ.

It is well, then, to look at what remains to be done. And truly we have but just come to the borders of the promised land; some smaller nations may have been subdued, but the mighty Kingdoms of Canaan remain in their strength. True it is, that 26,000,000 copies of the Scriptures have been distributed; but scarcely a single million of these are among the 600,000,000 of the heathen. And so it is with Missions. The Protestant Churches may number their converts by thousands, tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands; Satan numbers his followers by millions, tens of millions, and hundreds of millions; the followers of the Papal apostasy a hundred and thirty of the Mahomedan a hundred, and of the various forms of open idolatry nearly six hundred. The Churches of the Reformation also have sunk largely into infidelity. Such is the immense field before us; such is the mighty work yet to be done. We might well despair, had we not God and His sure Word on our side.

I mention what Britain might do, if Britain had the heart; or the Protestant Churches in Britain do, if united. But, as a nation, Britain has refused to do the Lord's work; and the Lord does not ordinarily work by national efforts of the mightiest countries. By the diminished three hundred of Gideon, he destroyed the vast armies of Midian. Well did Jonathan understand this principle, when he said, "There is no restraint with the Lord, to save by many or by few." Well did the twelve apostles realize it, when they set out on their heavenly mission, to preach the Gospel through the world. Well did our dear brother understand it, when he with his brethren united in forming the Bible and Missionary Societies. And let us understand it; and know and feel, that "God is with us of a truth." Amid all their weakness and infirmities, true believers are "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world." Small as the flock of Christ may be, the Lord has given them the exhortation and assurance—"Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." I fear, the truth requires us to testify, that it becomes less and less likely, that our beloved country, as a country, will ever take that missionary standing, to which the calls of God's providence have been so clear and so urgent. The nation diminishes the grant for the maintenance of the preaching of the Protestant and evangelical principles of the Church of England in our colonies. God has honoured His faithful people here in beginning the work; His faithful people in other lands now partake, blessed be God, in our labours. The converted heathen themselves carry it forward. And thus our nation, as a nation, must be humbled for its unfaithfulness, and wasted opportunities and advantages; while His true Church will give glory to Him for the grace which He has bestowed, and will rise in faith and love to yet larger and fuller blessedness among the nations.

Whoever, in the progress of the triumph, might join Gideon, it was still to the little army, "faint, yet pursuing," that endured to the end, that the final victory was given. Let us, then, my brethren, whoever may abandon us in the long conflict with the powers of darkness, still pursue and follow up our holy warfare to the end; and we shall share the final and everlasting triumph.

In what way it will please Him, "to whom all power in heaven and earth is given," to interpose for His people and aid them, we can yet but faintly discern. We know, that the present dispensation is to gather an election of the nations. We know that when the angel flies in the midst of heaven, "having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth," he says with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come." We know, that the man of sin and the lawless one "the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming." All the preparations for those judgments seem gathering thick around. The deepening apostasy of the Roman, the Greek, the Eastern, and the Reformed Churches, show on every side how fearfully Gentile Christendom has departed from the faith "as it is in Jesus." But God has concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all. I have stated this, that you may see, however multiplied the difficulties may yet be before us, God has foreseen the whole, and has made provision, in the covenant of His grace, for the full ultimate redemption of our world; and through all its changes we may finally, and according to His promise, confidently look for that "new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Every thing, then, my brethren, now calls Christians to tread firmly, and with enlarged hearts, in those steps, which our revered

friend, following the confessors of the truth in every age, has marked out for us. Let us be "followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Never forget, that "he that winneth souls is wise." To "save a soul from death," to bring a soul to Christ and glory—oh! this is worth living for, and labouring for, and dying for. It is the highest happiness to ourselves; it diffuses the highest happiness on earth; it makes us the largest blessing to our fellow men; it is preparing for us the brightest crown of glory in the world to come. In all labours to advance the kingdom of Christ ultimate success is certain. "I have sworn by Myself," says the Lord of all, "the Word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto Me every knee shall bow."

The issue of this is glory unspeakable. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." The end of this is joy unutterable. What will it be, what must it be, when the Lord returns in His glory, to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" Then we shall meet our departed friends, and be gathered with them for ever in the presence of the Lord. True it is, the happy spirit of your revered minister, separated from the body, is now with God; He has "departed, and is with Christ," which is "far better" than the highest joys of the most devoted service; it is pleasant to think of his having already there met many an African, many a Hindoo, many a New Zealander, many a North American, to whom the missionaries he sent forth were blessed. But there is a still higher glory reserved; "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." The day of the resurrection of the just and the return of our Lord, is the day of the full gathering together of His elect, and of their completed glory; as the apostle intimates when he says—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also which love His appearing." Not till that day will all the elect be completed; not till that day can it be known, what was the widely diffused effect of the labours of the faithful servant of Christ; not till that day will "our vile bodies be changed, and fashioned like His glorious body;" not till that day will "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Oh! the exulting and enrapturing joys, prepared for all, who have been honoured instruments in "turning many to righteousness!" How the apostle speaks of it! "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy."

I call you, then, in conclusion, my brethren, "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour," to "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." God has honoured the ministry of our departed friend among you. You have taken your part in labours to increase and advance His kingdom. "This I pray, then, that your love may abound yet more and more." Expect great things; not from man, but from God. Attempt great things; not in your own strength, but in the name of the Lord. Our religious Societies were all founded in evangelical faith and evangelical love, and in these principles alone will attain their full triumphs. Little did our departed friend think, in his early days, when he truly turned to God, what he should live to see God accomplish by him. My brethren, let us have large thoughts of what God is able to do by us.

Now unto Him, that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."

THE THOUGHTLESS CHRISTIAN.

Besides the state of him who wilfully offends against the dictates of his own conscience, there is another state which is perhaps further from God. I mean a state of habitual alienation from God—a state of carelessness with regard to God and every thing pertaining to him—a state of deadness with regard to religion, which in Scripture is forcibly described as the natural state of man. Here then the individual is afar off from God, without being conscious of it; he imagines himself safe, because others in equal danger, are apparently equally indifferent. Some zealous Christians would compare the condition of such a person to that of an unconverted heathen, though if properly considered, it would appear to be infinitely worse. The thoughtless Englishman has been admitted, at least outwardly, into covenant with God. He knows this, and cannot help being aware that they who are best able to judge on such a question, esteem this a very great privilege. He has possessed, for every one in England does possess it, the outward means of learning the nature of that religion in which he, together with his fellow-countrymen, professes to believe; and he has wilfully neglected to make use of these means. He knows that Christ Jesus is preached as the author of salvation, and he has never sought to learn what faith in Christ is—to know what Christianity is, which he so thoughtlessly rejects. Can any one in his senses compare the state of this man with that of the idolatrous inhabitant of central India, who has never heard of the name of the Saviour of the world? The comparison must appear absurd. The thoughtless Christian must be infinitely worse