

### "Nothing Better"

A lady once said to the great Lord Chesterfield, "Sire, I believe that the Parliament of England is composed of 500 or 600 of the best-informed men in England." "They are certainly supposed to be so," replied Lord Chesterfield. "Then," said the lady, "what is the reason why they believe such an absurdity as the Christian religion?" Lord Chesterfield turned with dignity to the foolish questioner, and said, "Madam, I believe it is because they cannot find anything better to take its place." It is the Old Sword—"none like it"—and men will seek vainly for a religion more elevating and pure and lovely. Carry out Christ's ideals, and what a world we should have of loving-kindness and goodness! The mistake is that while some men write and speak of Christianity being "played out," it has really never been "played in."

### "The Second Mile"

A preacher has just taken as his subject what he calls "the Second Mile," which is described as "a plea for the highest type of Christian living." The reference is, of course, to the Sermon on the Mount, and, taking his stand on the truth of the new birth, the preacher pressed home argument after argument for "the second mile" type of living. Here is the suggestive point made:—

The first mile was the Law; the second Grace. The first mile was "I have to"; the second, "I want to." The first mile was a bit of influence; the second, an unanswerable argument. The second mile is the spirit and practice of Jesus.

Nothing could well be more apt in regard to essential Christian living, for the Lord's question should be asked again and again, "What do ye more than others?"

### Life's True Measurement

The story is told of a young widow who became greatly concerned when the administrator of her deceased husband's estate informed her that his wealth had been greatly over-estimated, that they had been living in a style far too lavish, and that she could not expect an income of more than \$3,000.00 a year. But to ease her feelings he said he understood that the lady's mother would make her home with the daughter and that she had a good income. The widow thereupon replied that her mother had only \$5,000.00 a year, and that of this only \$2,000.00 could be put into household expenses. The result would be that they would not be able to keep half the servants, or more than one automobile, and the lady added, "I might as well be dead as to have to pinch along in such a way." We doubtless smile at the absurd hardship of two women trying to "pinch along" on \$5,000.00 a year, but we are so accustomed to measure life by the dollar that our distress would be equally serious if our income were suddenly cut down by one-half, no matter how small it is. The most important thing in life is to have a true measurement, and to test things in a proper way and with a genuine value.

### The Warmth of Love

The story is told of the late Henry Ward Beecher, who, leaving his Church in Brooklyn one bitterly cold night, saw two small boys selling, or trying to sell, newspapers. He gave them some money and spoke to them kindly, saying, "Poor little chaps, are you not very cold?" One of the lads, in his thin clothes, shivering from the cold, answered, "Yes, sir, we was cold—till you passed by." It was his great, loving heart which warmed them as much as his gift. What a fine testimony if others were cheered and helped as we "passed by!"

### The Book of Certainties

This is an age in which certitude is demanded, and in connection with religion people are particularly desirous of being able to say, "I know." It is, therefore, interesting to observe that in the Old Testament these words occur, "That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth" (Prov. 22:21); and in the New Testament, "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:4). It is the special value of the Bible to provide this assurance. "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven" (Psa. 119:89), and the entire book is written for the purpose of providing that guarantee which the soul requires (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Whenever the Word of God is questioned there can be little doubt, as to the result, while, on the other hand, when God's Word is humbly and reverently accepted and experienced it provides its own blessed assurance by giving an experience of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, Friend, and Lord. It was this that made the Apostle Paul, and still makes every believer able to say, "I know Whom I have believed."

### Christ's Three Appearings

The greatest events that have ever taken place are the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. No salvation can come to man save as the direct results thereof. Heaven would be without the multitude that no man can number, and could never resound with the mighty anthem of the redeemed, were it not for what Christ accomplished when He died for sinners. Christ's first appearing was in view of His Death on the Cross. It is said to have taken place "in the end of the world," or, more properly, "in the consummation of the ages" (Heb. 9:26). Man had been tested in various ways. Age succeeded age till the hour for the final testing arrived when the Son of God came into the world. Then "in the consummation of the ages" God declared Himself, full of pity and patience, a God of infinite resource and power. The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, man's crowning act of wickedness, was thus turned into an occasion for the unfolding of God's love. The work done by the Holy Sufferer on the Cross satisfied the claims of Divine righteousness, and enabled God to freely forgive sinners.

Christ's second appearing—in the presence of God for believers—is consequent on the first (Heb. 9:24). If His work upon the Cross had failed in the slightest degree, He could not have been our representative in the presence of God. But because of the success of His work on the Cross, He represents each believer on high. This is the truth of the Ascension and needs constant emphasis. Now, representation implies maintenance of relationship. An ambassador at a foreign court both represents his sovereign, and also maintains relations between the countries. When relations are no longer maintained representation ceases. When war is to be declared the ambassador is recalled. What peace it gives to the believer's heart to think of having such a Representative at the court of the Majesty on high! Christ is appearing in the presence of God for us. Are we beset with infirmities? Are we filled with forebodings? Let us remember our great High Priest, ever ready to sympathize, to succour, and to save. Have we committed sin? He is our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous. He is righteously our Advocate, because He has settled once and for ever the question of our sins. It is on the basis of His first appearing that He maintains us in union with God. Nothing can break down His representation,

nor upset His maintenance of relations. His service in this connection is in view of our communion, when broken by sin. He exercises His advocacy that we may be brought to judge and confess our sin in the light of His grace, and of the Cross, where it was put away. Thus the communion that befits the relationship in which we stand is restored. Even the sin of a true believer cannot break down the representation of Christ on high on his behalf. For if ever this representation broke down, it would be equal to saying that the work on the Cross had failed. If His representation depended in ever so small a measure on our conduct, it would immediately cease, for our conduct is far from perfect. How assuring it is to turn away from self to Christ! His work is perfect, and, therefore, His representation abides for all His people.

Christ's third appearing will be at His coming in glory. We are in this world as strangers and pilgrims. Generations of the Lord's people have fallen asleep since St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:13-18). But the bodies of all the saints in the graves are still precious to the Lord. They have been redeemed by Him in virtue of His work on the Cross, and the hour draws near when He will complete their salvation by raising them and giving them a fashion like His own. We, too, who are alive and remain till the Lord's coming shall have our bodies of humiliation changed like unto His body of glory, and we shall be caught up, with the raised saints, to be for ever with the Lord. In Hebrews 9:28 we read, "He shall appear the second time without sin," that is, apart from the question of sin. The reason why He does not raise the question of sin at His second coming, is because He settled it at His first. To raise this question again would mean certain doom for us, for Christ will suffer and die no more. Moreover, His coming again for His saints emphasizes the full value of the work done at His first appearing. So fully has He settled the question of sin for the believer at the Cross that it can never be reopened. So completely has every requirement been met that at any moment the believer may be translated from a scene of infirmity and sorrow, delivered from a body of humiliation, into a realm of perfection and glory. Our acceptance in Christ is complete. Righteousness forbids that sin should ever be imputed in the smallest degree.

The sense of all this, the knowledge of our standing in grace, will necessarily work in us carefulness of walk, and beget in us a deep desire to be pleasing in our ways to Him who, by His Death, has made us for ever fit for God's presence, and will one day transfer us there "in the twinkling of an eye." The knowledge of what His first appearing has effected, and His second appearing is maintaining, will enable us, without a particle of distrust or fear, to wait for His future appearing. The three appearings may be said to remind us of a telescope. One follows the other, and all are mutually dependent on each other, as each part of a telescope draws out and is dependent on each other part. The Incarnation and Death lead on to the Ascension, and this, in turn, points to the Coming. Thus Ascensiontide is midway between the coming in grace and the coming in glory, and the more we realize what the Ascension means, the more fully we shall understand and appreciate the power of Bethlehem and Calvary, and the more keenly we shall anticipate and exult in the "glorious appearing" in the future. It is a serious loss that the Ascension does not obtain the attention given to Easter and Whitsunday, and this makes it all the more necessary for us to remember the call to "lift up our hearts" in order that we may be occupied with Him Who once died, and Who is now alive for ever, and is one day coming again.