

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### WHY ARE YOU A PRESBYTERIAN?—III.

BY REV. J. LAING, DUNDAS.

We may reply, "I am a Presbyterian, because I believe the doctrine, government and worship of that Church is more fully in accordance with the teachings of Scripture than that professed and practised by any other Church," and first as to doctrine :

1. We find in Scripture that *salvation is of grace*. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy hath He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. By grace are ye saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." The system of doctrine which has been constructed in view of the above and innumerable other passages of like import, and which asserts the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace has been held in a more or less fully developed form by all reformed Churches. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church of America is perhaps the only Church bearing the name of Presbyterian that does not hold it. The system has been sometimes known as Pauline. Its opponents in some cases have, with transparent candour, admitted that the system is fairly deducible from the Pauline Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians, but has asserted that Paul in this added to, nay, even corrupted, the Gospel as taught by Jesus, and as revealed in the gospel. In post-apostolic times this system of doctrine was known as Augustinian, having been very fully expounded by Augustine in his controversy, during the beginning of the fifth century, with Pelagius and his followers. Since the Reformation it has generally been known as Calvinism, having been fully developed by the Genevan Reformer in his Institutes. It has been more maturely stated since that time by the Synod of Dort and the Assembly of Westminster divines, and is not held by all the Churches represented at the Council of the Presbyterian Alliance. The chief points of the system are : the sovereignty of God ; the total depravity and spiritual inability of the natural man ; the efficacy of saving grace ; the substitutionary and expiatory character of the sacrifice of Christ, the final perseverance of saints, and the never-ending misery of the impenitent. Some difference of opinion regarding minor points, which are rather deductions or inferences from Scripture statements than doctrines, may be found among Presbyterians ; but the general agreement and harmony of sentiment which obtains among all reformed Churches on these points is undeniable.

On these doctrines of grace the Presbyterian Church has been in accord for the most part with the conformist Churches, both Congregational and Baptist, in Britain and America. In no essential point is there a difference, although a professed assent is not required to the same extent as with us. The Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church of America are also Calvinistic, so far as their articles can be depended upon as an exposition of the doctrines held by them ; but a large portion both of the clergy and membership have for other reasons shewn persistent hostility to the system.

The holding of this system distinguishes the Presbyterian Church from the Lutheran and Arminian communions. Under the latter name are included all the Methodist Churches. These profess to be unable to reconcile the sovereignty of God with the free agency of man, and to think that the doctrines of fore-ordination and unconditional election necessarily imply that God is the author of sin, and destroy human responsibility. They therefore prefer to regard the atonement as intended to make salvation possible for all men, and assert that sufficient grace is vouchsafed to all, so that the acceptance or rejection of Christ, and consequent salvation, depend wholly on the sinner's choice and not on God's unmerited grace.

Presbyterians, however, find in Scripture such unequivocal statements as, "No man can come unto Me except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw him. I lay down My life for the sheep. Thou hast given Him (the Son) power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. I pray for them ; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me ; for they are Thine.

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," etc. Finding the doctrines referred to thus clearly stated, we bow with humility to God's Word, and even although we are unable to clear up the mystery or to understand the reasons of God's eternal purpose of grace and unconditional choice we receive that sovereign purpose as God's truth, and adoringly exclaim with Christ Himself, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

2. The doctrine of imputation is intimately connected with the doctrines of grace, and has always distinguished the Presbyterian system. The Scripture teaches that Adam, the first man, was the covenant head for all his posterity, and their representative, so that "they sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression." "In Adam all died, and death passed upon all men" (even upon infants who have not actually sinned), "for that all have sinned." Thus the guilt of Adam's sin was imputed, and the whole world became guilty before God. All men are thus by nature depraved, indisposed to all good, dead in trespasses and sins, and unable to save themselves. But a new covenant was made—the covenant of grace—according to which God's own Son in our own nature, "the Lord from heaven," is the second Adam or Covenant Head. "As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Thus again there is imputation. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and received by faith alone, so that "there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," and righteousness "shall be imputed to us also if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."

#### ADDRESS

AT THE MEETING OF THE WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY, AT PETERBORO', 17TH MARCH, 1881, BY MRS. DR. BURNS, TORONTO.

DEAR FRIENDS,—The annual meetings of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society have now become an institution of our Church. They are unmistakable marks of our own progress, and most favourable vantage ground for taking an enlarged view of the world-wide mission fields, "now whitening to the harvest." I believe that, next to prayer, nothing can be more helpful to the deepening of our mutual interests, and the promoting of our united strength as a Christian society, than these conferences. Such an occasion has brought us happily together now, and we trust that our visit to Peterboro' and your return visit to Toronto will prove a great source of blessing.

This is a precious opportunity for holding friendly intercourse, conferring together, exchanging thoughts, making suggestions, stating difficulties, comparing means and results. In short, we know how much is gained by meeting face to face, for says the wise man (Prov. xxvii. 17), "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." We are not seeking so much to be "sharpened" as to be warmed and encouraged ; as in Parliament, deputies are concerned not only with the particular interests of one district, but with the welfare of the whole country, so with the servants of Christ, they are identified not with one congregation only, but with the whole kingdom of God. One leader, one army, one enemy, one aim. How delightful to breathe in the pure atmosphere of the Gospel ! The Lord has been blessing your Church and our Church, and many Churches. We have come down to enjoy the refreshing influences of such a season. This is one of the favoured places round about the hill of God, which is Zion, the stronghold of missionary power, and the headquarters for missionary enterprise. We come to Zion for strength, and from Zion we get the blessing. The vital energy of a revived Church must find scope in missionary work, and we believe that now if ever you are prepared to give a very cordial response to any appeal to your efforts, to your funds, or to your prayers. You have a sure Bible warrant, "Goye into all the world," and this command is binding on every Christian, whether in a private or official capacity. Let us ever bear in mind that if we are walking worthy of our high vocation, we are consecrated to the services of God. The honoured name *Christian* is

derived from the official name of Christ, *Anointed*; the Lord Christ means *power* as well as office. I must give you the benefit of an extract from the volume of a recent able writer on missions, who says : "Interest in the work of missions, and the understanding of it, depend entirely on a personal faith in the Gospel to overcome the world, on a belief of the promises of Scripture, on a love to the Saviour of sinners, and on gratitude for grace already vouchsafed to ourselves. It is not the world, but true believers who must carry on missions ; and he, who would aid missionaries in their labour of love, and assist in furthering it, must, by an inward life of faith, become one of themselves. If that be omitted, we are without the never-failing spring." When the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings, What is the result ? "They shall go forth," spread out from selfishness, look around, "for the earth is the Lord's ; all souls are His." Some Christians are as flowers, beautiful and fragrant, but slender and weak. Others must be strong and useful, "serving their generation," honouring God and aiding man.

The missionary cause is life-work with some, let it be heart-work with all. When Christians are healthful, and soul-prospering, they seek and enjoy spiritual liberty to do the Lord's work ; as they grow, they increase in knowledge, grace and strength ; their arm becomes nerved for the Lord's service, and their feet are prepared to run the King's errands. When the chains of spiritual bondage or indifference fall off, it is not for the hands to be idle or the feet to be stationary. No ! The angel who was sent to deliver Peter told him to "rise quickly." The apostle's personal safety being now secure, might a little self-indulgence not be excusable ? No ! "Arise quickly." The opportunity may be lost ! It was not with the liberated apostle as with the child prophet who was bid to "lie down again." No ; "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him." With the command, to "arise," go forth and do it quickly, there was by the same voice a salutary check put upon the apostle's wonted impetuosity and rashness ; he might have rushed out unbidden, and then in his own weakness, would he not have failed ? Prepare for work, "gird thyself ;" prepare for going forth, "bind on thy sandals ;" prepare for obedient service, "cast thy garment about thee and follow me." Like his own healed cripple, would he not now walk and leap and praise God ? fulfilling the words of the great prophet, "Ye shall not go out with haste or by flight, for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward."

"Just as he touched the martyr's palm  
He turns him to his task below."

Missions have been well defined to be "the embodied courage of the Church, the touch-stone of her faith and her unchanging hope, the world-subduing Christianity of deed." "The present," says Professor Christlieb, in his Universal Survey of Missions, "is, thank God, a century of world-wide missions, such as have never been. More than all preceding generations, can we take up the psalm, "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." "I have," said the Rev. Mr. Parkhurst, after having made a journey round the world, "nowhere seen a new heaven temple, all old and dilapidated." Is not this cheering news for us, friends ? "The idols shall be abolished." The missionary map of to-day is much larger than that of fifty years ago ; and yet, in proportion to the immense magnitude of the work, how weak our aggressive force ; how small the number of our salvation army ! "But it is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," saith the Lord. A living, earnest, spiritual Church is beyond the chilling influence of indifference and unbelief. The smallest congregation now that has life in it, proves its health and strength by stepping into the arena of missions. A non-missionary Church proves that the hand of death is upon it. What a splendid organization results from a revived Church ! The voluntary consecration of men and women, old and young, to the greatest of all enterprises, that of bringing the world to Christ. Our "common salvation" is not stinted, not bounded by country, by clime, by age, by rank. No ! it is "common salvation," let us think of that Bible language ; yes, it is common ; but let us not forget, dear friends, that it is also *personal* salvation, and as soon as it is personal, shall we not seek to make it common ?

If there has been lukewarmness in the past, if Christian responsibilities have not been realized, now,