

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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[VOL. I.]

DEPENDENT UPON JESUS.

Thou who didst for Peter's faith
Kindly condescend to pray;
Thou whose loving kindness hath
Kept me to the present day:
Kind Conductor! still direct my dubious way.

When thy statutes I forsake,
When my graces dimly shine;
When my covenant I break,
Jesus, then remember thine:
Check my wand'rings, by a look of love divine.

When the vale of death appears,
Faint and cold this mortal clay;
Kind Forerunner, soothe my fears,
Light me through the darkness way;
Break the shadows, usher in eternal day.

And when mighty trumpets blown
Shall the judgment's dawn proclaim;
From the central burning throne,
Mid creation's final flame,
With the ransomed, Judge and Saviour! own
my name.

GILBERT.

THE DIVINE TEACHING WHICH GOD HAS PROMISED.

From Bickersteth's Christian Student.

CONCLUDED.

The promises of this teaching belong to all the children of God. Isa. liv. 13. Acts ii. 39.—They are not confined to holy prophets and apostles; they are not confined to the time of miracles and the first ages of the church; they belong to all ages, and are a part of the new covenant, (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.) belonging to the church from the first outpouring on the day of Pentecost, to the final consummation of all things. John xiv. 16. Wherever any one comes to Jesus Christ, and relies on him, and thus lays hold of the new covenant, there is this divine teaching. The most ungifted and unlearned, the most guilty, the most polluted, may apply for, and, if they ask in the name of Jesus, shall receive, this teaching, and be enlightened and instructed.

How delightful, then, that most encouraging declaration, *If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* You can make out no reason why you should not go to the Saviour for this gift. All your unworthiness, your corruptions, your hard heart, your backslidings, do but show your need of this resource. Just such sinners He came to save.

Let us then cast away all pride, and renounce all self-sufficiency. Let us remember His promises. *Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way; the meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.* Let us urge the earnest prayer, *Show me thy way, O Lord; teach me thy paths, lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; and we shall ourselves be living witnesses of the fulfilment of his declaration to his church, all thy children shall be taught of me.*

And if we are seeking and have received this divine gift, let us ever remember the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The Holy Spirit imparts His gifts, not for our self-exaltation, vain glory, or self-aggrandisement, but for the salvation of our souls, for the edification of all around us, and the general good of our fellow-creatures. *Just as God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it pleases him—that the members should have the same care one for another; so the Holy Spirit divides His gifts to each individual believer, for the general good of the whole church.*

If divine teaching is so necessary, PRAYER IS THE GREAT PREREQUISITE IN ALL OUR STUDIES. We need to have this urgently enforced, as we suffer the greatest loss in our everlasting concerns by reading without prayer. We read much, we pray little. The best proficients have been those who have prayed most. Dr. Doddridge used frequently to observe, that he never advanced well in human learning without prayer, and that he always made the most proficiency in his studies when he prayed with the greatest frequency and fervour. Lord Bacon's requirements were preceded by prayer (see his prayer, chap. x.) Milton's Paradise Lost was not written without prayer. His thoughts on planning it were these: "This is not to be attained but by devout prayer to the eternal Spirit, that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation and insight into all seemingly and generous acts and affairs; till which in some measure he compassed, I refuse to sustain this expectation." Dr. Johnson infers, "From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the Paradise Lost." In addition to these examples, we have the highest authority, the infallible testimony of inspired writers. How earnest are David's prayers for divine teaching, through the 119th Psalm. How distinctly the apostle adds prayer to meditation, when he prays for Timothy, *Consider these things, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.*

In fact all our knowledge of every kind should be made the subject of prayer, both as to its attainment and its application, or we have no security that it will not be perverted rather than improved, and draw the heart from God rather than draw it near to Him; be used against him rather than for him; and puff up with pride rather than humble us in the deeper discovery of our ignorance. But knowledge which is preceded by prayer for its acquisition and right application, will be a

real blessing to ourselves and to others, will not deaden but promote spiritual affections.

PRAYER FOR DIVINE TEACHING.

Father of Lights, and God of all grace! Thou hast promised that Thou wilt give wisdom to them that ask Thee. Feeling my own ignorance, I now ask of Thee to impart out of the fulness of Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom, the gift of heavenly wisdom.

I live in a world full of error and full of sin; and to whom can I look with any certainty but unto thee, O Lord. Enlighten my understanding, purify my affections, and guard me from error. Let not the wicked delude me, and let not the mistakes even of the righteous lead me astray. I am as fallible and liable to error as others, leave me not therefore to myself, but enable me to adhere to Thy word, and give me the abundance of thy Spirit to guide me into all truth and make me wise unto salvation, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

A PRAYER made and used by the Lord Chancellor Bacon, with which the Christian student may occasionally excite or refresh his own, and the devotion of others:

O Eternal God, and most merciful Father in Christ Jesus, in whom Thou hast made a covenant of grace and mercy with all those that come to Thee in Him: in His name and mediation we humbly prostrate ourselves before the Throne of Thy mercy, acknowledging that by the breach of all Thy holy laws and commandments, we have become wild olive branches—strangers to thy covenant of grace; we have defaced in ourselves Thy sacred image imprinted in us by creation: we have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and are no more worthy to be called Thy children. O admit us into the place even of hired servants. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, for Thy dear Son Jesus Christ's sake, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life: in Him, O Lord, we appeal from Thy justice to Thy mercy, beseeching Thee that in His name, and for His sake only, Thou wilt be graciously pleased freely to pardon and forgive all our sins and disobedience, whether in thought, word, or deed, committed against Thy Divine Majesty, and for His precious blood-shedding, death and perfect obedience, free us from the guilt, the stain, the punishment, and dominion of all our sins, and clothe us with His perfect righteousness.

Turn our hearts, O Lord, and we shall be turned; convert us, and we shall be converted. Illuminate the eyes of our minds and understandings with the bright beams of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may daily grow in the saving knowledge of the heavenly mysteries of our redemption; sanctify our wills and affections by the same Spirit, the fountain of all grace and goodness; reduce them to the obedience of Thy most holy will; in the practice of all piety toward Thee, and charity towards all men. Influence our hearts with Thy love; cast forth of them what displeases Thee; all infidelity, hardness of heart, profaneness, hypocrisy, contempt of Thy holy word and ordinances; all uncleanness, and whatsoever advances itself in opposition to Thy holy will. And grant, that henceforth through Thy grace, we may be enabled to lead a godly, holy, sober, and Christian life, in true sincerity and uprightness of heart before Thee. To this end, plant Thy holy fear in our hearts; grant that it may never depart from before our eyes; but continually guide our feet in Thy paths. Increase our weak faith, that it may bring forth the fruit of unfeigned repentance. By the power of the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, may we daily die unto sin; and by the power of His resurrection be daily quickened and raised up to newness of life; may we be truly born anew, and be effectually made partakers of the first resurrection, so that the second death may never have dominion over us.

Teach us, O Lord, so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Make us ever mindful of our last end, and continually to exercise the knowledge of grace in our hearts; that, finally, we may be translated hence to that kingdom of glory prepared for all those that love and that trust in Thee; there and ever let Thy holy angels pitch their tents around us, and guard and defend us from the malice of Satan, and from all perils both of the soul and body.

Pardon all our unthankfulness; make us daily more and more thankful for all Thy mercies and benefits poured down upon us. Let these our humble prayers ascend to the throne of grace, and be granted, not only for these mercies, but for whatsoever else Thy wisdom knows needful for us, and for all those that are in need, misery, and distress, whom Thou, O Lord, hast afflicted in mind, body, or estate. Grant them patience and perseverance in the end, and to the end. And this, O Lord, not for any merits of ours, but for the merits of Thy Son, and our Almighty Saviour Christ Jesus, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all glory for ever. Amen.—Selected by an Absent Friend.

MORAL REQUISITES FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE THINGS.

Divine things are not objects merely for the understandings or for the speculative intellect. "Do the will of my Father, and ye shall know of the doctrine." "Ye must become as little children, if ye would enter into the Kingdom of heaven," says the Founder of Christianity. This may sound like mysticism to many a mind; but what if it be true, in spite of the name? What if Christianity, like many other subjects, and with equal right, require experimental conditions for the apprehension of its truth and evidence? What if, like many other subjects, and with equal right, knowledge and

insight be conditioned by the moral and practical state of the percipient? What if Christianity be a remedy for a diseased spiritual state, which must be taken before its efficacy can be truly seen and known?

For ourselves, we believe that a practical trial of Christianity is indispensable to all satisfying insight of its nature. The precepts of Christ, which we have just cited, direct us to the first and most essential condition of successful inquiry after divine truth. Along with study and reflection, there must be singleness of heart, child-like humility, earnest prayer, and purity of life. These practical conditions of divine knowledge are not only explicitly stated in the sacred word, but they may be seen from reflection both on the nature of the human mind, and of spiritual truth itself.

We shall enter into no discussion concerning the authority of revelation, as the only possible source of the knowledge of divine things. This point we assume, and to such as wish us take it for granted we speak. We assume at the outset, that the sacred Scriptures are the fountain of divine truth, the authoritative standard of religious faith. In an age distinguished for the abandonment of old opinions, we still hold to this; as a ground abundantly established. At a period rendered quite remarkable, and it is said, illustrious, by the emancipation of men's minds from the slavery of old notions, we freely confess ourselves to be so antiquated, as to be held in willing subjection to the grand Protestant maxim on this subject.

Our proper attitude is that of humble inquirers into what the Scriptures teach. The office of reason is that of interpretation; the pertinent question in every case is—What did the Scriptures design to say? In the determination of this question, reason has indeed its office; the universal and necessary principles of the speculative and practical intellect have a negative validity; and it is already presumed, in receiving the Scriptures as an authoritative divine revelation, that they contain nothing contradictory to the necessary laws of our intellectual and moral nature. Under this condition, the problem of interpretation is, to ascertain, not what meaning the language of Scripture might be forced to bear, but simply what the sacred writers themselves thought and meant to assert.

But in this investigation of the Scriptures, as the source of divine truth, the moral conditions to which we have referred must be fulfilled. There must be a humble and obedient disposition of heart. There must be an honest submission of the whole man to the will of God, as holy; otherwise there will be a perpetual tendency to make the agreeable the criterion of the true, and thus to mutilate the Scriptures by forcing their meaning, or by arbitrary selection and rejection.—The Rev. Wm. Whewell, D. D., Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

RELICS.

One of the earliest corruptions grew out of the reverence which was paid to the memory of departed Saints. Hence there arose a train of error and fraud which ended in the grossest creature-worship. Yet in its origin, this was natural and salutary. He whose heart is not excited upon the spot which a martyr has sanctified by his sufferings, or at the grave of one who has largely benefitted mankind, must be more inferior to the multitude in his moral, than he can possibly be raised above them in his intellectual nature. In other cases, the sentiment is acknowledged, and even affected when it is not felt: wherefore then should we hesitate at avowing it where a religious feeling is concerned? Could the Holy Land be swept clean of its mummeries and superstitions, the thoughts and emotions to be experienced there would be worth a pilgrimage. But it is the condition of humanity, that the best things are those which should most easily be abused. The prayer which was preferred with increased fervency at a martyr's grave, was at length addressed to the martyr himself; virtue was imputed to the remains of his body, the rags of his apparel, even to the instruments of his suffering; relics were required as an essential part of the church furniture; it was decreed that no Church should be erected unless some treasures of this kind were deposited within the altar, and so secured there, that they could not be taken out without destroying it: it was made a part of the service to pray through the merits of the Saint whose relics were there deposited, and the Priest, when he came to this passage, was enjoined to kiss the altar.

There is unquestionably a natural tendency in the human mind toward this form of superstition. It prevailed among the Greeks and Romans, though in a less degree; it is found among the Eastern nations; and the Mahomedans, though they condemned and despised it at first, gradually fell into it themselves. But no where has it been carried to so great a length as in the Roman Church. The Clergy, presuming upon the boundless credulity of mankind, profited by it in those ages with the utmost hardihood of fraud, and with a success at which they themselves must sometimes have been astonished. For it is not more certain that these relics in most cases were fictitious, than that in many instances cures, which both to priest and patient must have appeared plainly miraculous, were wrought by faith in them. Sometimes, also, accident accredited this kind of superstition. If a corpse was found which, owing to the nature of the soil wherein it was laid, or to any other natural cause, had not undergone decomposition, but retained in some degree the semblance of life, this was supposed to be an indication of sanctity; confirming, by the incorruption of the saint, the important and consolatory truth of the resurrection of the body. In these cases no deceit is to be

suspected. Perhaps too the opinion that the relics of the holy dead were distinguished by a peculiar fragrance, may have arisen from embalmed bodies; at first, it might honestly have obtained among the Clergy; but when they saw how willingly it was received by the people, whenever a new mine of relics was opened, it was easy to take care that the odour of sanctity should not be wanting.

At one time, relics or entire bodies used to be carried about the country and exhibited to the credulous multitude; but this gainful practice gave occasion to such scandalous impostures that it was at length suppressed. What was still encouraged is sufficiently disgraceful to the Romanists. The bodies of their Saints are even now exposed in their churches; some dried and shrivelled, others reduced to a skeleton, clothed either in religious habits, or in the most gorgeous garments—a spectacle as ghastly as the superstition itself is degrading. The poor fragments of mortality, a skull, a bone, or the fragment of a bone, a tooth, or a tongue, were either mounted or set, according to the size, in gold and silver, deposited in costliest shrines of the finest workmanship, and enriched with the most precious gems. Churches soon began to vie with each other in the number and variety of their imaginary treasures, which were sources of real wealth to their possessors. The instruments of our Lord's crucifixion were shown, (the spear and the cross having, so it was pretended, been miraculously discovered), the clothes wherein he was wrapped in infancy, the manger in which he was laid, the vessels in which he converted water into wine at the marriage feast, the bread which he brake at the last supper, his vesture for which the soldiers cast lots. Such was the impudence of Romish fraud, that portions were produced of the burning bush, of the manna which fell in the wilderness, of Moses's rod, and Sampson's honeycomb, of Tobit's fish, of the blessed Virgin's milk, and of our Saviour's blood! Enormous prices were paid by sovereigns for such relics; it was deemed excusable, not to covet merely, but to steal them; and if the thieves were sometimes miraculously punished, they were quite as often enabled to effect the pious robbery, and bring the prize in triumph to the church for which it was designed. In the rivalry of deceit which the desire of gain occasioned, it often happened that the head of the same Saint was shown in several places, each church insisting that its own was genuine, and all appealing to miracles as the test. Sometimes the dispute was accommodated in a more satisfactory manner, by asserting a miraculous multiplication, and three whole bodies of one person were shown; the dead Saint having tripled himself, to terminate a dispute between three churches, at his funeral.—Southey's Book of the Church.

THE SACRED OIL.

In the temple of old, there was a reservoir of oil, which was conveyed through pipes to the lamps, to keep them always burning. So is the grace of God conveyed by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of all believers, from the fulness of Christ. In Christ all fulness dwells; unfathomable fulness which never can be exhausted. "And of his fulness we receive grace for grace;" that is, every believer receives some measure of every grace that is in Christ, so that they resemble their Saviour, as the impression on the wax resembles the seal: some measure of every grace according to their faith. So this spirit of holiness and grace, communicated from the heavenly vine to the branches; from the living head to the living members, forms, strengthens, and perpetuates, the principal bond of union between Christ and every true believer. The bond on man's part is Faith in Christ. The very essence of divine faith, is to know Christ, and him crucified. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."—From the Fountain of Life, or the Union between Christ and Believers. By the Rev. T. Jones, of Creaton.

CHANGE OF OCCUPATION WITHOUT CHANGE OF HEART.

The parents of De Rancé had filled the highest offices under government, and he was himself the god-son of the Cardinal Richelieu. Endowed by nature with great power and acuteness of feeling, with a mind vigorous, comprehensive, and energetic, he became early the pride of the universities where he gained his education. These striking traits of mind were enhanced by a noble form, extreme grace and beauty of person, courtly manners, brilliant wit, and fascinating powers of conversation; while endowed with abundant wealth, not merely by family inheritance, but by princely ecclesiastical revenues, and high in court favour, he seemed to have realized in one perfect lot all the most splendid dreams of romance.

De Rancé, in common with many of the high clergy of his time, was atheistic in principle, and reckless and abandoned in conduct. Ambition was the only serious business of his life, and gaming and every species of profligate excess, its amusements. Several circumstances together combined to turn this strong character into a religious channel. De Rancé was a lover of the celebrated Dutchess to Montbazon, one of those all-powerful beauties, whose enchantments wrought such wonders in the society of those times. During an absence of De Rancé in the country, this lady was suddenly attacked by the small pox, and died. Returning to Paris, De Rancé sought her house, and knocked in

vain for admission. Surprised at this reception, he found his way up a private passage to the door of her apartment, where again he repeatedly knocked for admission. All was silent, and De Rancé at length opened the door; but was frozen with horror at the sight that there presented itself. In the centre of the room stood a leaden coffin, where lay the lifeless form of her he sought; the head severed from the body and lying at the foot of the coffin, the whole partially concealed by a pall which had been hastily thrown over it. The coffin had proved too short, and in the horror of infection, this expedient had been resorted to, to hasten the completion of the ceremony. Nothing could more completely show the utter heartlessness, the want of all sentiment and feeling in a people devoid of religion, than this closing scene of one of the proudest beauties of France. She had moved amid the acclamations of society, adored with even heathenish deference, and beheld at her feet the noblest and bravest of France; but when the hand of disease and death touched her, there was not one found—not even one lowly heart among her servants and attendants, to protect her lifeless form from sacrilege.

De Rancé, though unprincipled, was not, it seems, heartless; and his horror and despair bordered on phrenzy. A belief in a world to come, which he had never been able entirely to subdue, was overwhelmingly revived by this awful fate of one whom he had tempted to sin. In his agony, he uttered an exclamation, which, alas! more than one may have had occasion to utter over a friend for ever departed—"She once sought God, and I misled her." Shortly after this incident, the death of his political patron, the Duke of Orleans, laid the same heavy hand on his ambition, which already had been laid upon his unhalloved love. With a mind of such burning passion and fierce determination, there was no middle course; he distributed his fortune to the poor, threw up his ecclesiastical preferments, and turning his back on the splendors of the most brilliant court of Europe, retired to the Abbey of La Trappe, in Normandy, to spend his life in penances, and austerities as fearful as had been his sins. Never was a place more fitted to be a congenial abode of a gloomy and remorseful spirit than this. The Abbey was situated in the midst of dreary and unbroken forests, which stretched around it for leagues in succession, without inhabitants or signs of life. The eminence where it stood was surrounded on all sides by a deep valley, almost impervious to the rays of the sun. Eleven dark and stagnant lakes, interspersed through this valley, were united together in a double moat around the convent, and might seem like the dark rivers of the ancient fable, forever separating the land of shades from the world of living men. A death-like and dreary stillness brooded over this desolate place, only broken by the sepulchral tones of the convent bell, which came on the ear like echoes from another world.

At the time that De Rancé threw himself into this institution, the monks who inhabited it had become men of the most abandoned and ferocious character; and from the frequency of robbery and assassinations perpetrated by them, were commonly known by the designation of the Banditti of La Trappe. Repeated attempts were made to assassinate De Rancé; but the energy of his mind, and the vehemence of an eloquence inspired by remorse, and by all the deep-felt terrors of the world to come, prevailed even over these hardened and brutal men, and the convent was at last brought to a state of subjection and severe discipline, unparalleled even in the annals of Catholic austerities—a discipline so rigid and death-like, as well to earn for it the designation it afterwards received, of "The tomb of La Trappe." Conversation of all kinds was strictly forbidden, and an unbroken silence reigned through the whole monastery, excepting for one hour on Sunday morning, when a convocation was held on religious subjects. All knowledge of the proceedings of the outer world was excluded, and the study of books forbidden. Prayer, the silent performance of the multiplied forms of Catholicism, and the culture of the grounds, were the only occupations allowed. The common hall, where the inmates assembled, was hung with pictures of the most terrible description. All the mysteries of death, all the revolting secrets of the grave were there exhibited—the corpse, the skeleton, the soul, agonized in purgatory, or writhing in the flames of hell—all, in short, that could inspire dread and terror was constantly before the eyes. The furniture of each cell consisted of a bed composed of knotted straw rope, a rug, a few books of devotion, and a human skull. The clothing of the inmates was of heavy woollen stuff, never taken off or changed, night or day, summer and winter, and their food of the coarsest and most uninviting description. In short, there was a systematic arrangement to exclude every possible comfort, and to unite everything in life that was hard and disagreeable; and any desire to secure ease, or to avoid inconvenience of any sort, was strongly reprobated as contrary to the design of the institution. During the severest weather in winter, no monk was allowed to warm himself at a fire, and De Rancé once turned away a novice from the institution, because in weeding the convent garden, he put aside the nettles that wounded his fingers. Sickness, like every other evil, was to be endured in silence, and when the last struggle approached, he was laid on a bed of ashes on the floor of his cell, there to expire.

Every person who entered this Tomb of La Trappe, was supposed to die to his former self, and to the memory of all his former life. He renounced his worldly name, and received a conventual designation; and none

* Dugdale 1, 225. This was shown at Exeter, with a piece of the manger in which the infant Saviour was laid, and a piece of the table at which the last supper was eaten.