

Choice Selections from the Works of the Rev. Andrew Murray.

I. WHY DO YOU NOT BELIEVE?

We have been asked by the Review to follow up the recent visit of that eminent South African divine the Rev. Andrew Murray by a series of papers composed of selections from his works. It is with great pleasure we have accepted the task, although the wealth of material at our disposal makes the matter of selection somewhat embarrassing. It is our earnest conviction that the books of this truly spiritual man are making a deeper and more lasting impression on Christian thought and life to-day than those of any other writer; if therefore this series of papers succeeds in awakening an increased interest on the part of our readers on his writings and the great truths of which he treats we will feel that a real work has been done for the cause of Christ and His Church. The selections for this paper are all chosen from a little book entitled "Why do you not believe?" which was one of the earliest efforts of his pen. It forms an admirable starting point from which to lead up to those vaster, deeper truths which we hope to make the subject of future papers. In an introductory note the author explains the purpose of the book;—

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK.

Beloved friends, who are seeking the Lord, but have not yet found Him, it is for you that this little book has been written. When I recently spoke with you, in the course of my pastoral visitation, my soul was filled with deep sorrow over your condition. I still met with many who with manifest earnestness and spiritual desire were seeking salvation, some indeed for many years past, and who, notwithstanding, had not yet arrived at faith.

This ought not to remain so. It tends to the dishonor of our Lord. True religion is thereby brought into contempt, for the world is then right in concluding: the service of Jesus gives neither joy nor salvation. On young converts your influence is by no means helpful, for your example gives them absolutely no encouragement. In this way also, the congregation suffers loss, for instead of helping as joyfully active members to build it up, you are on the contrary serving to divide its energies, and you hinder its spiritual prosperity. To your minister you are often the cause of care and anxiety; you make him dispirited with the thought that the Word of God has so little influence with you. You spend your life in sorrow and gloom, and you place your souls in peril for eternity."

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF FAITH.

He that believeth shall be saved. Man has nothing, absolutely nothing, whereby on his part he can be in a position to contribute something to the attainment of salvation. And yet the Lord will do nothing but reign over a willing people. Man is no stone; on his own side, he must play his own part. It is faith that solves the difficult enigma that man who can do nothing should yet do something: faith which is manifested in the acknowledgement of poverty and misery, in the confession of inability and helplessness, in consent, submission, and surrender to that grace of God which is to be everything in us. More God could not require; less He may not require, for He will not inflict wrong on His own honor and the freedom of man. He requires faith: faith alone. What grace is it: that thus bends to our weakness: he that believeth shall be saved.

Reader, behold, then, these two ways: make your choice. Pray, reason not any longer, nor ask the question if there be no other way; but, come, submit yourself to God and to the Word of His grace: he that believeth shall be saved. No longer yield to the secret thought, that something else may after all still be necessary. I am well aware that everlasting salvation appears to you to be too great a boon over against this meagre and paltry faith. It appears to you too hazardous for your sinfulness to venture so far merely upon faith; yet, see, it is God that hath spoken: *only by faith*. He that possesses this faith, has all; for by it he has Christ. He that does not possess faith has nothing, although he should possess all besides. Faith is indispensable.

THE SEED OF FAITH.

The seed is the Word of God, Luke vii. 2.—A glorious and instructive picture is this of the new life of grace. Like the seed, the word has a divine power of life. Like the earth, the heart is in itself lifeless, unfruitful of itself in what is good. Like the seed in the earth, the Word is sown in the heart and committed to it, simply to be received and kept there. The living power that God has lodged in the seed is the security that the ground, although in and of itself wholly incapable of bringing forth anything but weeds, will be changed into a fruitful field. Thus, however helpless you may feel yourselves to be, shall the living seed of God's

Word send forth its roots in your heart, and sprouting upwards bring forth fruit. Sinner, yearning for salvation, you have only to acknowledge that a living power is presented to you in every Word of God. With that confidence must you keep it in your heart, and the certainty of fruit depends not on any ability of yours, but on the faithfulness of God. Faith is not a thing that is present in you before you receive the Word, or with which you must meet the Word. No! there is life in the Word, and it is by the Word that faith is first awakened.

THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH.

"With thee is forgiveness." Ps. cxxx. 4.—Here is one of those heavenly grains of seed that have only to be received and kept in the heart to become living, and to bring forth faith, peace and blessing. Let me have the privilege of commending it to you this morning, anxious soul.

It is such a *powerful* word. Every one can receive blessing from it. Although you have as yet no faith, take this word as a living seed into your heart, and it will awaken faith. Although you dare not as yet call God your Father, lay up this word in your heart, give it a place there, think over it, and say in spoken words before your God: "Lord, with thee there is forgiveness." This word is living and powerful; it will cause hope to rise in your soul. It will inspire you with new thoughts about God, it will instil into you confidence and boldness before Him. Insensibly you will get up to saying: "With thee there is forgiveness also for me." It will thus awaken the fear and love of God in your soul. It will bind you to Jesus, it will impel you to dedicate yourself wholly to Him. O soul, mourn no longer over your weakness. Receive this word; it is "living and powerful." Go with it trustfully to your knees, and, although it should be the thousandth time, use it as the language of your heart to God: "Lord, with thee there is forgiveness." This word will work mightily, and faith and peace and love shall be its fruits.

THE REPENTANCE OF FAITH.

"Repent ye, and believe the Gospel," Mark i. 15.—Without repentance no real faith. The entire design of God in the mission of Christ, the great aim for which the salvation of faith has been given to us, is to win the heart back from sin, and to make it free from sin. A real desire for this salvation can thus never arise in the heart that is not also prepared to be loosed from sin, and to abandon it. Faith is a surrender of the soul to God: this is an impossibility where it still continues to give itself to sin. Faith is an appropriation and a reception into the heart of the grace of God: it is an absurdity to suppose that this should take place without a contemporaneous repentance, an abandonment and casting out of sin.

Without faith also no true repentance. Repentance is not only a turning away from sin, which of itself would tend to self-righteousness, but a turning back to God, and this can take place only through faith. Repentance is not a work of one's own power, but a consenting, a co-operation with God's plan, in God's strength, a trustful surrender to the redeeming grace of God. And this can be done only through faith. Repentance is not an actual victory over sin, but the soul has to bring every sin to the feet of the Lord Jesus, the great victor over sin, that He may take it away; and this cannot find place, except by the faith which has acknowledged that He is faithful to forgive sin, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

CLOSING THOUGHTS.

Give yourselves to the Lord Jesus, *just as you are*. You have to give yourself to Him, not as an offering that is worthy of Him, as one who is already His friend and on whom He can look down with complacency. No: you have to surrender yourself to Him as one that is dead, whom He has to make alive, as an enemy whom He must reconcile and forgive, as a sinner whom He must save. The multitude of your sins, the corruption which you feel struggling within you, the very insincerity of your coming to Him, are thus no reason why you should not venture to give yourself to Him. No: just the reverse: these are the proofs that you stand in need of a Saviour; they are at the same time the tokens given by the word of God of those in whose behalf Jesus came. O sinner, just as you are, surrender yourself to Jesus.

Reader, if you are seeking Jesus, if you would come to faith, be admonished by this earnest word: "The devil comes and takes away the word, that they may not believe." Whatever temptation there may be, either from the world without or in your own heart, take heed that you always keep and hold fast the word. Let not the devil take it away from you. Let the precepts and promises of the word be your meditation day and night. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. iii. 16.)

And now anxious one why do you not believe? O, faith is no imagination that you too are a chosen one, but a laying of yourself down on the immovable rock of the word of the Lord. "God loved the world," "Christ died for the ungodly"; and now He comes to ask you—see to it, I entreat you, that you give Him an answer: "If I speak the truth to you, why do you not believe?"