

The Berran.

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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THE MORNING OF THE RESURRECTION.

Ye saints of God! the Lord is come
To bear his wearied people home,
Beyond the reach of care;
Where guilt and sin are terms unknown;
The Lord is come to bear his own,
And place them with him on his throne,
To dwell for ever there.

The resurrection morning breaks,
And each imprison'd saint awakes,
Call'd forth to life again;
Entranc'd a while in dumb surprise,
Earth sees her shrouded tenants rise,
And wend their way to yonder skies,
Call'd up with Christ to reign.

May I be one amidst that throng,
To join the everlasting song
Of glory, honour, pow'r;
That, when creation's pillars yield,
And nature's Lord shall be reveal'd,
His sov'reign arm may prove my shield
In that decisive hour.

EPAPHRAS.

THE PURE IN HEART.

We are to inquire, First, who are the pure in heart? This is not the natural state of the heart of fallen man. With that point I start. It is needful that we have a right understanding with each other upon that point, since it is one frequently overlooked and much misunderstood. Many seem to think that the heart is naturally pure and good, full of innocent simplicity and virtue. If a young person just escapes gross outward sin, many a fond mother, and sometimes a father also, will speak of that child as all that is amiable and excellent, as having a good heart, pure and spotless as snow. Thus flattered, instead of humbled, the youth goes forth vain and conceited, and soon manifests corrupt propensities and sinful lusts, rushes into dissolute company, follows vicious pleasure with eagerness, and treats God and godliness with ineffable contempt. It might be thought that his friends, I mean those who so call themselves, would now see their error, and be sensible that the youth's heart was not so very pure as they once imagined. But no—in the midst of all his folly and dissipation, while he is becoming the slave of lust and sensuality, while his heart is full of vanity and impurity, and his tongue pours forth wanton and corrupting words, you may yet hear friends, old enough to know better, say, Poor dear youth, he has his follies, it is true, but he has a good heart all the while! The youth is aware that they say and think this of him, and interprets it as a license from his elders for his present course—that it is what all do at his time of life—and that if the heart is good all the while, his case is not so very bad; the heart is the main thing, and God will accept a good heart. In a few years, if not cut off in his follies, he begins, it may be, to settle down into a somewhat more sober life: he finds that a more regular course of conduct is more decent in the eyes of the world, more conducive also to health, not quite so expensive, and on the whole, more suitable and respectable. Now, he reforms, and gives himself to business, and plunges into it with his whole soul. Still he would retain his old error in regard to the goodness and purity of the heart. He speaks of what is past as the follies of youth, he recounts his sinful follies with evident satisfaction rather than pain, and would end his recital with some such expression as this, Well, I yet had a good heart. And so at present, in the midst of manhood, though his heart is full of ambition, desire of gain, the love of the world, and enmity against God, yet he thinks himself still a good-hearted man. At length old age insensibly steals on; gray hairs are here and there upon him, surely the mistake of a whole life will at length be detected;—Ah, no! still more than ever does his heart doat upon the world, he loves money more heartily, and becomes more morose, envious, peevish in heart, than ever, yet he would still be thought a good-hearted old man. Thus the same mistake runs throughout all his course—and that a capital and fundamental mistake—he has been wrong in his first and main principle, imagining his heart good and pure, when he has never even known what it is to be pure in heart. That he is ignorant of this, the follies of his childhood, the vices of his youth, the ambition and worldliness of his manhood, and the selfish avarice of his old age, have all combined to prove. What fills and sways his heart throughout is the world, and things of sense—not God, or the things of God. The thought, to which he clings even in his last sickness, as ministers often see with pain, his fondest, dearest thought, that whatever he has been, and whatever he has done, he had yet a good and pure heart withal, is directly opposed to the testimony of truth in the oracles of God. Look at man as described by God under any dispensation since the fall, and produce me one clear testimony that man's heart is naturally good and pure. Look before the flood, in those days of primitive simplicity, the golden days of poetry and fancy,—what was the heart of man then? "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The flood subsides, and only Noah and his family survive—yet the flood itself had not washed away the natural corruption of the human heart—for immediately after, this is God's renewed testimony, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Every one familiar with the history from the deluge to Moses, and from Moses to David, needs not to be informed of

the desperate corruption of the human heart displayed at those periods even in the most favoured people upon earth. How pathetically does Jehovah lament the fact: "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" But I mentioned David: surely he, the man after God's own heart, if any, was pure in heart. Listen to his own confession and prayer, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." The testimony of the inspired author of Ecclesiastes is most express: "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go down to the dead." The holy prophets seem to have been taught of God to entertain no better opinion of the native purity of the human heart. Ezekiel calls it a stony heart: Jeremiah describes it as a rebellious heart, an uncircumcised heart, a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. And as for the New Testament, the very language of its covenant proceeds upon the fact of the native corruption of the heart of man. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."—then, I infer, God's laws were not there before; and if his laws were not there, the laws of sin, of corruption, of lawless disobedience, were governing the heart: and then the heart was not pure. Our Lord's testimony, as given by St. Matthew, has been referred to. I repeat it, as recorded by St. Mark, for every word bears strong testimony on our present point. "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man." "What man, who wishes not to deceive himself, can hear that passage, and then lay his hand upon his heart, and look up to the heart-searching God, and say, This heart is and has ever been a pure heart? Surely our first point is settled, namely, that the pure in heart are not men in their natural state. If these testimonies from Scripture in regard to the heart of all men in general, and of God's most favoured people in particular, have failed to convince you, I will not pollute your ears with proofs, which might be multiplied without end from heathen authors, which would show the desperate depravity, the lamentable want of moral purity, the licentiousness and grossness of abominations, which prevailed in the hearts of men of the most wise and polished nations in the heathen world. No heart then is naturally pure. This is the first point which I desire to press upon your deepest convictions. This is what parents should teach and urge upon children, and what we should all teach and urge upon ourselves, that every heart is naturally anything but pure in the sight of Him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with complacency or satisfaction. Young people, let me ask, nay, all of you ask yourselves, Have you thought of this? have you understood and felt it? that you have a heart naturally prone to vanity, folly, pride, lust, and sin, in all its forms? that the seeds of every sin are plentifully sown in every heart by corrupt nature? and that, with the heart in that state, you can never see God, or heaven, or glory? My dear hearers, it is no pleasure for me to tell you these solemn truths so plainly. It were more pleasant, perhaps, to speak smooth things, to compliment all, and to displease none; but I come to you with the testimony of God in the whole tenour of Scripture, which testimony is confirmed by all experience, and then I tell you as plainly, as faithfully, yet, I hope, also as affectionately as I can, that not one of you has been by nature pure in heart.

But I have a Second point, for which I would hope you are now prepared. You may be made pure in heart. Some, yea, let me hope, many of you know and understand by your own happy experience this blessed truth, that the heart may be made pure, that though so defiled, it may yet be cleansed. "Wash me," said David, "and I shall be whiter than snow." There is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. And here, brethren, I confess to you with the plainness which I wish to mark this discourse, that I know of nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ which can make your heart or mine pure, I mean, pure in the sight of God, with whom in the matters of the heart and soul we chiefly have to do. And I might offer this single proof. God has given his pure and holy Son to die for sinners, even to shed his blood for their sakes, and has declared, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sins. And when it is asked, what blood is meant? he tells us, not the blood of bulls, or of goats, but "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Then, nothing else can; God would surely have spared his own Son if any other sacrifice could atone for sin, or any other blood than His wash away its pollution. When a king gives his own son as a ransom, you may be sure that one of his nobles or inferior subjects would not suffice. Facts also fully prove the adequacy of this one only remedy and means of purifi-

cation. In every age it is found a true saying by many, that the blood of Jesus Christ possesses this cleansing virtue; it has cleansed a countless multitude; it has wrought moral wonders in what seemed desperate cases; it has made the impure chaste, the drunkard sober, the covetous liberal, the lover of pleasure a lover of God. Whatever be your sin, however it has been your tyrant, and for however long, if you will but have recourse to this blood of Jesus Christ, you shall be made pure from its guilt, and pure from its polluting influence; the tyrant shall receive a death-blow, his strong hold shall be undermined, a stronger than he shall overcome this strong man. If you had been, up to this hour, a man of the world, a man of pleasure, a man whose heart has not been tight with God, only despise not this scriptural doctrine of the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing from all sin, but use it as offered of God, and you shall become a new creature in Christ Jesus. But there must be faith. The work indeed is God's, because He gave the Saviour, and He by His Holy Spirit applies the blood of Christ. But God's work does not set aside man's duty. God loves truth and holiness, it is man's duty to love it also. God turns the heart. "It is the sinner's duty to obey the call: 'Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?' God gives the seed, the rain, the harvest; man's duty at each step is plain and evident. So here it is God's to purify the heart by the blood of Jesus Christ: it is man's duty to exercise faith in that blood. Observe the words of St. Peter, speaking of the conversion of the Gentiles: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." This faith is a most important principle; you can never have a pure heart without it. It is the receiving principle; and if that be wanting, nothing can serve. There is light, for instance, around us, how clear, how serviceable, how beautiful, how free to all, from the beggar to the king! But there is a poor man without the receiving principle, the power of vision—all is perpetual night with him. Music, sweet and melodious, is heard, but it is nought to him who has not the receiving faculty of hearing. So with the matter before us; there is a cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ; you need it; God is ready to give and to apply it; he offers it to you all; but one—oh! which of us is the man?—has not the receiving faculty; he has not true faith; he will depart uncleansed, unpurified in heart. I know, brethren, that people can speak slightly of faith; but they are not people who read and understand their Bibles. The man who thinks that he can receive without faith all the blessings of salvation, which are offered only to faith, may as reasonably expect to be healed by medicine, which he hears of, or merely sees, or keeps as it may be, he does his Bible, in a closet out of sight, but never takes in hand, or uses, and applies. What then is a man to do who has no faith? for "all men have not faith." Let him desire it, seek it, labour, strive, pray for it, and it will not be withheld: "it is the gift of God;" and he is ready to give that and all good gifts to them that ask him in His Son's name. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Let him hear, therefore, and read the word of God; let him meditate therein day and night; let him compare its offers with his own spiritual wants; and he will find that there is in the blood of Jesus Christ, given to pardon and to purify, the very thing which his soul needeth. Then, looking at the freeness of the promises, the compassionate character of the Saviour, the gracious offices of the Comforter, he will find faith formed within him, and that faith will apprehend Christ, and he will experience the delightful truth before us, that a heart once impure, corrupt, and dead, may be cleansed, purified, and animated into life. Have you experienced this? Then give God the glory. It is His Spirit who has wrought this in you. For His Spirit is the Purifier of the heart, the Lord and Giver of spiritual life, the Sanctifier of all the elect people of God. The Holy Spirit is like the wind, blowing indeed where it listeth, yet purifying the air, refreshing the earth, wafting health and vigour, life and renovation, wherever it moveth. The Holy Spirit is like fire, ("Quench not the Spirit;") melting what was hard, refining what was debased, purifying off the dross. The Holy Spirit is like water, cleansing away defilements, impurities, spots, and taints of sin. "Wash you, make you clean." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—Rev. John Hambleton, M. A., Islington.

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD.

From the 19th Homily of the Church of England.

Now, to entreat of that question, whether we ought to pray for them that are departed out of this world, or no. Wherein, if we will cleave only unto the word of God, then must we needs grant, that we have no commandment so to do. For the Scripture doth acknowledge but two places after this life; the one proper to the elect and blessed of God, the other to the reprobate and damned souls; as may be well gathered by the parables of Lazarus and the rich man; which place St. Augustine expounding, saith in this wise:

That which Abraham speaketh unto the rich man in Luke's Gospel—namely, that the just cannot go into those places where the wicked are tormented—what other thing doth it signify, but only this, that the just, by reason of God's judgment, which may not be revoked, can shew no deed of mercy in helping them, which after this life are cast into prison, until they pay the uttermost farthing! These words, as they confound the opinion of helping the dead by prayer, so they do clean confute and take away the vain error of purgatory, which is grounded upon this saying of the Gospel, Thou shalt not depart thence, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. Now doth St. Augustine say, that those men which are cast into prison after this life on that condition, may in no wise be holpen, though we would help them never so much. And why? Because the sentence of God is unchangeable, and cannot be revoked again. Therefore, let us not deceive ourselves, thinking that either we may help other, or other may help us by their good and charitable prayers in time to come. For as the Preacher saith, When the tree falleth, whether it be toward the south or toward the north, in what place soever the tree falleth, there it lieth; meaning thereby, that every mortal man dieth either in the state of salvation or damnation: according as the words of the Evangelist John do also plainly import, saying, He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life; but he that believeth not on the Son shall never see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him.

Where is then the third place which they call purgatory? Or where shall our prayers help and profit the dead? St. Augustine doth only acknowledge two places after this life, heaven and hell. As for the third place, he doth plainly deny that there is such to be found in all Scripture. Chrysostom is also of the same mind, that unless we wash away our sins in this present world, we shall find no comfort afterward. And St. Cyprian saith, that, after death, repentance and sorrow of pain shall be without fruit: weeping also shall be in vain, and prayer shall be to no purpose. Therefore he counselleth all men to make provision for themselves while they may, because, when they are once departed out of this life, there is no place for repentance, nor yet for satisfaction.

Let these and such other places be sufficient to take away the gross error of purgatory out of our heads: neither let us dream any more that the souls of the dead are any thing at all holpen by our prayers: but, as the Scripture teacheth us, let us think that the soul of man, passing out of the body, goeth straightways either to heaven, or else to hell: whereof the one needeth no prayer, the other is without redemption.

The only purgatory, wherein we must trust to be saved, is the death and blood of Christ: which if we apprehend with a true and steadfast faith, it purgeth and cleanseth us from all our sins, even as well as if he was now hanging upon the cross. The blood of Christ, saith St. John, hath cleansed us from all sin. The blood of Christ, saith St. Paul, hath purged our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God. Also in another place he saith, We be sanctified and made holy by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ done once for all. Yea, he addeth more, saying, with the one oblation of his blessed body and precious blood, he hath made perfect for ever and ever, all them that are sanctified. This then is that purgatory, wherein all Christian men must put their whole trust and confidence: nothing doubting, but if they truly repent them of their sins, and die in perfect faith, that then they shall forthwith pass from death to life. If this kind of purgatory will not serve them, let them never hope to be released by other men's prayers, though they should continue therein unto the world's end. He that cannot be saved by Christ's blood, how shall he look to be delivered by man's intercessions? Hath God more respect to man on earth, than he hath to Christ in heaven? If any man sin, saith St. John, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. But we must take heed that we call upon this Advocate, while we have space given us in this life; lest, when we are once dead, there be no hope of salvation left unto us. For, as every man sleepeth with his own cause, so every man shall rise again with his own cause. And look, in what state he dieth, in the same state he shall be also judged, whether it be to salvation or damnation.

THE CLAPHAM SECT.

In the last number of the Edinburgh Review, July 1844, we find an article with the above title—"The Clapham Sect." It is more than probable that 99 out of 100 readers would be at a loss to discover in the title, any clue to the subject matter of the article; but a few words explain it. Henry Thornton, William Wilberforce, and several other eminent Christian men of the last generation, happened to reside on the villa-cinctured common of Clapham. They lived much together, enjoyed much Christian intercourse with each other, and at their houses men like-minded according to Christ Jesus, from various parts of the country, used to meet and consult about religious objects. At Clapham Common the Bible Society and other societies were first planned by these eminent men of God. Hence the title, "the Clapham Sect."

We hear of "signs of the times," and it is the habit of many to indulge in the supposition that there can be no "signs of times," except such as are unfavourable; but in this article, as it strikes us, we have such a "sign of the times" as ought to call forth the most "abundant thanksgiving to God," for who could have anticipated such a change of public opinion in favour of evangelical truth?

Had we been informed, that in the last number of the Edinburgh Review there was a long article entitled, "the Clapham Sect," and that the subject of the article was the religious opinions of Wilberforce, Thornton, Lord Teignmouth, Charles Simeon, Henry Martyn, and others of the same principles, we should certainly have anticipated ridicule and censure of the strongest kind. But, thanks be to God! the very reverse is most remarkably the fact. A little good-natured wit there may be about the weakness of some of these good men, and some passages lead us to fear, that the writer of the article is not himself under the influence of the truths on which they lived: but terms of higher commendation of men whom God delighted to honour, are not to be found in any memoirs written by their most enthusiastic admirers.

We regard the article in question as one of the most remarkable publications of the present day, and we cannot conceive that the university of Cambridge should not be benefited by the following too-well-merited reproof. Speaking of evangelical religion, the writer calls it—"that science for the diffusion of which the halls and colleges of that learned university had been almost exclusively founded—the only science which Cambridge neglected, and which CHARLES SIMON taught."—Dublin Christian Journal.

Of Henry Thornton, the reviewer says "Having inherited an estate, which though not splendid, was enough for the support of his commercial credit, he adjudged that it ought never to be increased by accumulation, nor diminished by sumptuousness; and he lived and died in the rigid practice of this decision. In the division of his income between himself and the poor, the share he originally assigned to them was nearly six-sevenths of the whole; and as appeared after his death, from accounts kept with the most minute commercial accuracy, the amount expended by him in one of his earlier years, for the relief of distress, considerably exceeded nine thousand pounds. When he had become the head of a family, he reviewed this decree, and thenceforward regarded himself as trustee for the miserable, to the extent only of one-third of his whole expenditure. The same faithful record showed, that the smallest annual payment ever paid by him on this account amounted to two thousand pounds. As a legislator, he had condemned the unequal pressure of the direct taxes on the rich and poor; but instead of solacing his defeat with the narcotic of virtuous indignation, combined with discreet parsimony, he silently raised his own contribution to the level of his speech. Tidings of the commercial failure of a near kinsman embarked him at once on an inquiry, how far he was obliged to indemnify those who might have given credit to his relative, in a reliance, however unauthorized, on his own resources; and again the coffers of the banker were unlocked by the astuteness of the casuist. A mercantile partnership, (many a year has passed since the disclosure could injure or affect any one,) which without his knowledge, had obtained from his firm large and improvident advances, became so hopelessly embarrassed, that their bankruptcy was pressed on him as the only chance of averting from his own house the most serious disasters. He overruled the proposal on the ground that they whose rashness had given to their debtors an unmerited credit had no right to call on others to divide with them the consequent loss. To the last farthing he therefore discharged the liabilities of the insolvents, at a cost of which his own share exceeded twenty thousand pounds. Yet he was then declining in health, and the father of nine young children. Enamoured of truth, the living spirit of justice, he yielded the allegiance of the heart to justice, the outward form of truth. The law engraven on the tablet of his conscience, and executed by the ministry of his affections, was strictly interpreted by his reason as the supreme earthly judge. Whatever might be his topic, or whatever his employment, he never laid aside the ermine.

"His piety was reserved and unobtrusive. Like the life blood, throbbing in every pulse and visiting every fibre, it was the latent though perennial source of his mental health and energy.

"A peace, perfect and unbroken, seemed to possess him. His tribute of pain and sorrow was paid with a submission so tranquil, as sometimes to assume the appearance of a morbid insensibility. But his affections, unimpaired by lawless indulgence, and constant to their proper objects, were subject to a control to be acquired by no feebler discipline. Hills from without assailed him, not as the gloomy ministers of vengeance, but as the necessary exercise of virtues not otherwise to be called into activity. They came as the salutary lessons of a father, not as the penal inflictions of a judge."

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES.

Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting." (Belshazzar, in DANIEL v. 27.) In the night of that very day when he profaned the holy vessels of the Temple, in rioting in this feast of impiety, and praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone, the living and the true God called him to an awful account. He weighed him in the balances of righteousness; and the wicked king of the Chaldeans lost, at one and the same moment, his kingdom, his life, and his soul.

My dear hearers, the balances in which we must be weighed, are already prepared. The hand of the Lord himself will hold the scales! and the word of truth instructs us how the balances will turn as to many a character. Let us judge ourselves. There may be those present, whose love is the love of iniquity,

* Hos. vii. 9. † Gen. vi. 5.
† Gen. viii. 21.

* Dent. v. 29. † Psa. li. 5.
† Psa. li. 10. † Eccl. ix. 3.
† Ezek. xi. 19; Jer. v. 23; ix. 26; xvii. 9.
† Heb. viii. 10; Jer. xxxi. 33.
* Mark vii. 20-23. † Psa. li. 7.
† Zech. xiii. 1. † Heb. ix. 22.
† 1 John. i. 7.

* Jer. xxxi. 18; Lam. v. 21.
† Ezek. xxxiii. 11. † Acts. xv. 8, 9.
† 2 Thess. iii. 2. † Eph. ii. 8.
† Rom. x. 17.
† 1 Thess. v. 19. † 1sa. i. 16.
† 1sa. i. 18.