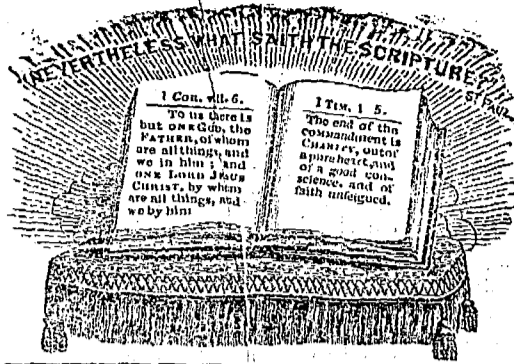


THE BIBLE



CHRISTIAN

TRUTH, HOLINESS,

LIBERTY, LOVE.

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No. 4.

Poetry.

LIVE TO DO GOOD.

BY GEORGE W. BETHUNE, D. D.

Live to do good: but not with thought to win
From man reward of any kindness done:
Remember Him who died on cross for sin—
The merciful, the meek, rejected One;
When he was slain for crime of doing good,
Canst thou expect return of gratitude?

Do good to all; but, while thou servest best,
And at thy greatest cost, nerve thee to bear,
When thine own heart with anguish is oppress'd,
The cruel taunt, the cold averted air,
From lips which thou has thought in hope to pray,
And eyes whose sorrows thou hast wiped away.

Still do thou good; but for His holy sake
Who died for thine; fixing thy purpose ever
High as his throne, no wrath of man can shake
So shall he own thy generous endeavor,
And take thee to His conqueror's glory up,
When thou hast shared the Saviour's bitter cup.

Do nought but good; for such the noble strife
Of virtue is, 'gainst wrong to venture love,
And for thy foe devote a brother's life,
Content to wait the recompense above;
Brave for the truth, to fiercest insult meek,
In mercy strong, in vengeance only weak.

PASSING AWAY.

BY L. M. SIGOURNEY.

"The fashion of this world passeth away."
1 CORINTHIANS, VII., 31.

A Rose upon her mossy stem,
Fair Queen of Flora's gay domain,
All graceful wore her diadem,
The brightest 'mid the brilliant train;
But evening came, with frosty breath,
And, ere the quick return of day,
Her beauties, in the blight of death,
Had pass'd away.

I saw, when morning gemmed the sky,
A fair young creature gladly rove,
Her moving lip was melody,
Her varying smile the charm of love:
At eve I came—bit on her bed
She drooped, with forehead pale as clay—
"What dost thou here?"—she faintly said,
"Passing away."

I looked on manhood's towering form
Like some tall oak when tempests blow,
That scorns the fury of the storm
And strongly strikes its root below.
Again I looked—with idiot cower
His vacant eye's unmeaning ray
Told how the mind of godlike power
Passeth away.

O earth! no better wealth hast thou?
No balsam for the heart that bleeds?
Fade all thy brightest things away?
Fail all thy props like bruised reeds?
The soul made answer—"Hopes are mine
To dwell in realms of changeless day,
Where lips have never breathed the sound,
"Passing away?"

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?—We refer once more to this subject, it being within our knowledge that the inquiry has not been without interest to many readers. What we desire farther to inculcate is that Christianity is no less a code for the practical duties of every-day life, than it is of principles for the government of the heart and the affections. We repeat that religion consists not in the strict belief of cer-

tain doctrines, or in outward co-operation with Church organizations; but in the "life and conversation" of a man. He greatly mistakes the character of genuine religion, and sadly fails to appreciate its peerless beauty, who supposes that connexion with a Church, and mere conformity to its rules and discipline, constitute him a Christian. The mistake it is to be feared is no less general than it is fatal. Too many, at this day, rely upon Church membership, not only as an assurance to the world that they are Christians, but as a passport to future and eternal happiness. If we are wrong, then the yoke of the Redeemer is light indeed, and his repeated exhortations to self-denial are a mere waste of words.

For such a profession of Christianity in this day involves no self-denial, but rather otherwise. Now, at least in this country, Church membership is reputation. Religion walks abroad in her silver slippers. To go to Church is but too fashionable, and but too many Church edifices seem to be built exclusively for the fashionable and wealthy, and for their accommodation only. The fellowship of men, without reference to other considerations than their oneness of faith and attachment to the "despised Galilean," as inculcated in the Gospel, is in too many instances entirely lost sight of. The communion of saints, the glory of primitive Christianity and the professed creed of the Protestant Church, is virtually becoming obsolete. People now-a-days talk much of religion, but mournfully do they halt in its practice. Men dispute loudly and earnestly about creeds, but the imperative requirement of the Gospel—the authentic, absolute command of the Redeemer, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only"—this, which is the substance, the life's blood, the bone and sinew of Christianity, is strangely and fatally overlooked. Men wear the livery of religion, because it is admired; but the spirit of devotion, that which animates the sinless intelligences of Heaven and makes it their delight to do Jehovah's will, is but too generally lacking among Christians.

Now we believe that Christianity should dwell in men's hearts as an irresistible impulse to good and virtuous actions; and as a principle too divinely imperative to be swerved from with impunity. To "do good unto all men" is something more than to live a blameless life, and it implies benevolence to men's bodies as well as to their souls—a care for the perishable as well as for the imperishable part of our kind, seeing that each alike is the workmanship of His hands and the object of our common Father's regard. Compassion for the poor and needy, the down-trodden and the outcasts of society, those whom the world has spurned or forgotten, the afflicted and distressed—this, a hundred-fold more than the inculcation of doctrine (though that was duly cared for), was the daily practice and the manifest delight of the great Author of our holy religion. Such acts of disinterested benevolence constituted the great moral miracles which, perhaps more than any other, commended his religion to all who observed his life. Contemplating the conduct of the perfect exemplar of Christianity, we might an Apostle exclaim, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is to visit the fatherless and the widows."

It will be conceded that that cannot be true religion which does not prompt a man to imitate the example of the immaculate Redeemer. The true Christian, like Christ, must "go about doing good," for "He hath set us an example that we should walk in his steps." He who lacks grace or self-denial to emulate the example of Christ breathes not His spirit and is none of His. The true and sincere follower of the Redeemer will act as the Redeemer acted; will go whithersoever he went, and with reverent gladness tread in the luminous imprint of his footsteps. He will sedulously strive, will watch for opportunities, to "raise the fallen, cheer the faint"; will kindly lift up from their social and moral degradation the outcast and scorned; from this he will not be deterred by the atheist's laugh, the coxcomb's sneer, or the worldly exquisite's derision.—The potent law of kindness will be more imperative with him than the opinion of the world, and will necessitate him, to do his heavenly Father's will with alacrity and delight. "Ye are my

friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." "He that is not with me," that does not by his example corroborate my teachings, "is against me."

In view of this great truth, that the practice of Christ's precepts is equally imperative with belief in his doctrines, what solemn reflections are awakened! What fearful responsibilities are incurred! Well may a man tremble to increase, by the profession of religion, his accountability to his Maker and Judge.—Nay, if a man by his own choice elects the Christian's standard of morals, he cannot complain if the world judges him by that standard; and most assuredly, if he voluntarily assumes the garb of Christianity, he will righteously be held accountable hereafter for every act derogatory to her character, for every failure of duty which may lower her in the estimation of his fellow-men. What tremendous consequences flow from this position! How immeasurably below the number of professing Christians are the examples of Christian life! How little do Christians do in comparison with what they profess! To an observant, candid mind, the idea is positively startling. If professors of religion would calmly sit down and examine *seriatim* their actions for one week, a month, a year, how few could hold themselves guiltless of practically denying the influence, power and spirit of that Christianity in which they profess to believe unto salvation; and many, at the final judgment, will look in vain for those who will testify that they received from their hands even a cup of cold water for discipleship's sake, or were visited by them in prison, affliction of distress, because they were co-followers of the lowly Redeemer.

But practical Christianity has yet another aspect. It authoritatively teaches and requires the purest morality, the highest justice, in all the ordinary business relations of life. A man may not, with impunity in the sight of God, be a professing Christian and lay his religion aside during six days out of seven. They who "know nothing of religion in business," know nothing of it practically elsewhere. Wherever religion exists, it controls. It will stand in abeyance to no other principle. It must be a man's controlling motive, his alpha and omega, his rule of life, his rule of life, or it will forsake him altogether.

This, however, is so obvious that we need not dwell upon it. What, then, is Christianity? Not as professed by too many, but as practised by the sincere self-denying follower of Christ. Truly it is most lovely and of good report. Under the outspreading of its cherubic wings, "justice and mercy meet together—righteousness and peace kiss each other." To verify its doctrines by obeying its precepts should be the Christian's constant aim, and is the surest method of promoting personal happiness, of strengthening and purifying all social obligations and organizations, and of hastening that era of holiest joy which shall yet fill men's hearts and overflow a renewed, redeemed, regenerated world.—*New York Spectator.*

THE BETTER LAND.

"The shapings of our heavens are the modifications of our constitution," said Charles Lamb, in his reply to Southey's attack upon him in the Quarterly Review.

He who is infinite in love as well as wisdom, has revealed to us the fact of a future life, and the fearfully important relation in which the present stands to it. The actual nature and conditions of that life He has hidden from us—no chart of the ocean of Eternity is given us—no celestial guide-book or geography defines, localizes, and prepares us for the wonders of the world. Hence imagination has a wide field for its speculations which, so long as they do not positively contradict the revelation of the Scriptures, cannot be disproved.

We naturally enough transfer to our idea of Heaven whatever we love and reverence on earth. Thither the Catholic carries, in his fancy, the imposing rites and time-honored solemnities of his worship. There the Methodist sees his love-feasts and camp meetings, in the

groves and by the still waters and green pastures of the Blessed Abodes. The Quaker, in the stillness of his self-communing, remembers that there was "silence in Heaven." The Churchman, listening to the solemn chant of vocal music, or the deep tones of the organ, thinks of the song of the Elders, and the golden harps of the New Jerusalem.

The Heaven of the Northern nations of Europe was a gross and sensual reflection of the earthly life of a barbarous and brutal people. The Indians of North America had a vague notion of a Sunset Land—a beautiful Paradise far in the West—mountains and forests filled with the deer and buffalo—lakes and streams swarming with fishes—the happy hunting-ground of Souls. In a late letter from a devoted missionary among the Western Indians, (Paul Blohm, a converted Jew,) we have noticed a beautiful illustration of this belief.—Near the Omahaw mission-house, on a high bluff, was a solitary Indian grave. "One evening," says the Missionary, "having come home with some cattle, which I had been seeking, I heard some one wailing, and looking in the direction from whence it proceeded, I found it to be from the grave near the house. In a moment after the mourner got up from a kneeling or lying posture, and turning to the setting sun, he stretched forth his arms in prayer and supplication, with an intensity and earnestness as though he would detain the splendid luminary from running his course. With his body leaning forward, and his arms stretched towards the sun, he presented a most striking figure of sorrow and petition. It was solemnly awful. He seemed to me to be one of the ancients, come forth to teach me how to pray."

A venerable and worthy New England clergyman, on his death-bed, just before the close of his life, declared that he was only conscious of an awfully solemn and intense curiosity to know the great secret of Death and Eternity.

The excellent Dr. Nelson, of Missouri, was one who, while on earth, seemed to live another and higher life, in contemplation of Infinite Purity and Happiness. A friend of ours once related an incident concerning him, which made a deep impression upon our mind. They had been travelling through a summer's forenoon, in the prairie, and had lain down to rest beneath a solitary tree. The Doctor lay for a long time, silently looking upward, through the openings of the boughs, into the still heavens, when he repeated the following lines, in a low tone, as if communing with himself in view of the wonders he described:

"Oh! the joys that are there, mortal eye hath not seen!
Oh, the songs they sing there, with hosannas between!
Oh, the thrice-blessed song of the Lamb and of Moses!
Oh, brightness on brightness! the pearl-gate uncloses!
Oh, white wings of angels! Oh, fields white with roses!
Oh, white tents of Peace, where the wrapt soul reposes!
Oh, the waters so still, and the pastures so green!"

The brief hints afforded us by the sacred writings concerning the Better Land, are inspiring and beautiful. Eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of the good in store for the righteous. Heaven is described as a quiet habitation—a rest remaining for the people of God. Tears shall be wiped away from all eyes; there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. To how many death-beds have these words spoken peace! How many feeling hearts have gathered strength from them to pass through the dark valley of shadows.

Yet we should not forget that "the kingdom of Heaven is within"; that it is the state and affections of the soul; the answer of a good conscience; the sense of harmony with God; a condition of Time as well as of Eternity.—What is really momentous and all-important with us is the Present, by which the Future is shaped and colored. A mere change of locality cannot alter the actual and intrinsic qualities of the soul. Guilt and Remorse would make the golden streets of Paradise intolerable as the burning marl of the infernal abodes, while Purity and Innocence would transform hell itself into Heaven.—*National Era.*