

are the fathers of the Reformation, Wycliffe is its grandfather.' In the days when cesarism and simony were rampant in the Church, when English barons were fretting against Romish tyranny, when the souls of Englishmen were being fed with monkish tales and hollow sacraments, who was it that with clear, strong voice stood up for freedom and light? It was this quiet Englishman, John Wycliffe. And he stood with the New Testament in his hand, nay, rather with the New Testament in his brain and in his heart, and there was his inspiration and his strength. Behind the Reformation were Luther and Calvin and Huss; behind Huss was Wycliffe; behind Wycliffe the New Testament: behind the New Testament the witnesses; and behind the witnesses, Christ.

Not in so critical and strategic a sense, and yet in a very serious and important way, does Christ depend upon the living witness of His followers to-day. He is not here Himself. He does not now stir men's hearts with the thrill of His voice. He does not now manifest His beauty through a present human form. You say that we have at any rate in the Bible the signal witness of the Apostles. True, but it is also true that the majority of men, men in Christian lands even, do not go to the Bible for their impressions of Christ and His Gospel. To many of them the Bible is a dry book. To some of them even it is a repulsive book. They are not at all familiar with its pages. We may make up our mind to this. It is a serious fact, a fact that should be held in view by the statesmen of the church that those outside the church do not in these days, and have not to any great extent at any time derived their ideas of Christ and Christianity from the book—the printed record. And yet they have ideas, ideas which are subtly and powerfully shaping their lives. Whence come they? The answer is readily given. From the living men and women who profess to be the followers of Christ. And it is in full accordance with human nature that it should be so. Ideas that in the abstract are unnoticed are capable of attracting attention when bound up with a living personality. Men who have no fondness for written politics will listen by the hour to the political orator. Men who are not literary enough to read Shakespeare, will watch with breathless interest the actor's embodiment of Shakespeare. Hamlet in the book does not touch them. Hamlet on the stage stirs them to the depths. And in the same way men who are not spiritually-minded enough to read the Bible will listen to the preacher's voice; or if they will not do that, there is one thing they will do—will all do—they will watch the Christian's life. Believe me, there is no object which arouses so much curiosity, stirs up so much excitement in a crowd of men than the advent of a Christian among them. They regard him as an attempt to answer the deepest questions of their hearts. It follows then that we are the medium through which Christ is revealed to men, that we are His interpreters to a sinful, doubting, hungering world. We too stand upon the mountain gazing upon a vanishing Christ. Upon our ears falls the solemn charge "And ye shall be witnesses unto Me." From this standpoint I propose to look at two matters. I. The Importance of Right Teaching. II. The Importance of Right Living.

### I. The Importance of Right Teaching.

The word heresy is an old word. It occupies a por-

tentous place in church history. In modern times it occasionally starts into view written in large capitals. Is there any room for such a word? There are two classes who are frivolous in the use of it,—in the first place the extreme liberal who, having strayed into the No-Man's land of theological indifference, makes light of any error in doctrine, and in the second place the rabidly, heedlessly orthodox man to whom heresy is so trifling a matter that the word becomes to him a "random shot" discharged at any one who may not think exactly as he thinks. Is there any sea-room for us between these two triflers? I think there is. There is such a thing as heresy, such a thing as error in doctrine, and the heresy of heresies is that of bearing false witness to Christ. There may be various forms of this false witness.

(1) *That of honest but mistaken men.*—It is said that in these days, and in fact always there are men honest in their purpose, and yet most wofully astray in their teachings; and we are asked what shall be done with them. Well, no one can doubt that for a man to be honest, and by that I mean that he has used all available light, to be mistaken is a very sad thing. One thing, however, I would notice, viz., this, that it is very important that we are sure that men are in the class referred to before we attempt the task of judgment. We must be sure that they are honest. Can we be sure? We are bound, I grant, in all Christian charity to treat men as honest until we know them otherwise; but that is a different thing from being scientifically certain that a man is perfectly honest in his investigations. It seems to me that God who reads the heart, and God only, can be certain here. Then we must be sure that they are mistaken. Can we be sure? We may think they are. We may say that if we are right they are wrong, but can we be infallibly certain? Here too it seems to me that absolute certainty belongs to God, and to God only. And if God alone can be certain about these men why not leave them in the hands of God? Why should we take upon ourselves the task of appointing them their exact place in the universe? I may have my opinions about Emerson, Parker, Colenso, etc.; but when I am asked to pronounce upon their eternal destiny all I can say is, "I am not on the throne but God is." If these men are to be classed as false witnesses, then theirs is a class that in all humility I refuse to deal with.

(2) *That of self-interest.*—It is exceedingly painful to even suggest this possibility, the possibility of one who calls himself a Christian bearing false witness to Christ from motives of self-interest. And yet such a possibility is conceivable. Paul evidently had it in mind when in the face of Corinthian culture, Corinthian antipathy to so coarse a theme as a crucifixion, he boldly declared: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He evidently felt there was a temptation, a temptation to add to his own popularity by subtracting something from his presentation of Christ. And just here is the subtle, strong temptation of our age—not to present that which is false, but to hold back that which is true. The oath of the witness in court is "to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," and applying this formula to the obligations of the Christian teacher, it seems to me that our peril lies in the second part. We are tempted