

all besides. Wherever else you look, 'the eye is not satisfied with seeing.' But the single eye 'looking unto Jesus' is the soul's inlet for celestial joys—joys that never weary and never wear away, but glowing like the sun-light to the meridian glory of the day of God. Would you grasp this prize? Let your whole heart be given to the Lord, to love, to serve, to please, to glorify Him. Look not to the right hand nor to the left. You cannot return to where you were, before you turned to God. To look back is worse than perilous. 'He that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of God.' Remember Lot's wife."—*Rev. J. E. Sampson.*

THE CATERPILLAR CONVENTION.

The invisible and the impalpable is not therefore the unreal. Nor yet is the thing that is unknown or incomprehensible therefore a nonentity.

The caterpillar is sluggish—crawling, feeding, dying. Get together an August convention of them, including all caterpillar wisdom. Let some sage old worm of them—a little stiffer, a little more torpid, a little nearer the end than the rest, or one a little newer and more conceited and impudent than the rest—rise up on a dry stick and say: "We live here, feed well, crawl royally in our velvets, and then go out. That is the end. This myth of a future, with wings, and flight, and a life after a new sort—stuff and nonsense! Have done with that! Let us eat and drink and be merry, my caterpillars, for to-morrow we die and are no more!" And every caterpillar hammers on his stick in applause. Not one of them can put in a denial, though he may be in the very throes of the final bursting into winged life. So the congress shall resolve that there are no butterflies—no beautiful ghosts of them in more beautiful realms of life; resolve that unanimously, and then go and cling each to a leaf, and die into butterflyhood, none the less! So impotent would their disbelief be to destroy the royal fact of them. "Butterfly ghosts are a traditional superstition—there are no butterflies." Are there, then, none? Which is the most gorgeous reality, caterpillar or butterfly?

Let suggestive evidence be brought by some more thoughtful worm, that there may be other and higher forms of life in the world. You can conceive them answering with what goes for sense among men, 'Higher life—the Unknown, Unknowable, Unthinkable!' These suggestions of powers, intelligence. Oh, those are only ways things have—ways of their own—spontaneous, automatic. That huge, shapeless thing which set itself down on brother worm, there, yesterday, and flattened him, was not the foot of an Intelligence; it was only a queer and disastrous working of one of Nature's laws. There are no ghosts—no intelligences higher and mightier than we to manage things over our heads.

So the congress laughs the thoughtful worm out of court, and votes unanimously, with great clapping of their mandibles, and turns bird, beast, man, angel, God, out of caterpillar faith and thought. Did they vote, then, out of existence the universe of the (to them) Unknown and Unknowable?

MR. RYLE AND HIS TRACTS.

Rev. Claude S. Bird, M.A., writes as follows in the *Christian Treasury* regarding this author, with some of whose excellent tracts many of our readers are well acquainted—a fair share of the eleven millions and a-half put into circulation having found their way to this country:

From Helmingham those tracts are dated which first made Mr. Ryle famous, sounding out clear notes as a trumpet's in many an ear. It is remarkable how they have been preserved, as of sterling worth, in households where other tracts have perished like ephemera. We cannot look back to their first publication, but well remember that when first we commenced a round of cottage visits twenty years ago, a good number of these thick tracts with bold headings—bold both in meaning and in type—were already extant, and were eagerly sought after by the people. "We like Mr. Ryle's tracts," it was said. Nor was it the poor only that profited largely. Many a parsonage and many a refined home were the better for these tracts. We recall to mind the glowing cheek and brightened eye with which a dear friend, who had suffered mental religious struggles, more than once walked into our rooms at college, tract in hand, and began: "Do read this; it is so good; it shows you things just as they are." Once it was the tract headed "Beware," and the description of the Pharisees and Sadducees as surviving still in Christendom, that struck our friend. Another time it was a passage about sincerity not being enough, from "Only One Way," such as this: "I cannot find in Scripture that any one ever got to heaven merely by sincerity, or was accepted by God if only he was earnest in maintaining his own views. The priests of Baal were sincere when they cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out. Manasseh, king of Judah, was doubtless sincere when he burned his children in the fire to Moloch. The Apostle Paul, when a Pharisee, was sincere while he made havoc of the Church; but when his eyes were opened, he mourned over this as a special wickedness." To a person who had just emerged out of Unitarianism into the true faith of Christ, such sentences seemed to break up his old creed like sledge-hammers.

Mr. Ryle is always direct, clear, and forcible in his treatment of the matter in hand. He has a firm grasp of its main features, and displays them with abundant plainness, seldom going much below the surface, where plain readers could not follow him. He rarely argues anything. He knows his own mind, and declares it boldly, like every man of the people, without any ifs or peradventures. A very characteristic passage, referring to his own views, occurs a few pages after the words quoted above:—

"I speak for myself: I can find no resting-place between downright evangelical Christianity and downright infidelity, whatever others may find. I see no half-way house between them,—or houses that are roofless, and cannot shelter my weary soul. I can see consistency in an infidel, however much I may pity him; I can see consistency in the full

maintenance of evangelical truth; but as to a middle course between the two, I cannot see it—and I say so plainly, let it be called illiberal or uncharitable. I can hear God's voice nowhere except in the Bible; and I can see no salvation for sinners in the Bible excepting through Jesus Christ. In him I see abundance; out of him I see none. And as for those who hold religions in which Christ is not all, whoever they may be, I have a most uncomfortable feeling about their safety. I do not for a moment say that none of them are saved; but I say that those who are saved are saved by their disagreement with their own principles, and in spite of their own system. The man who wrote the famous line,—

'He can't be wrong whose life is in the right,'

was a great poet, undoubtedly, but he was a wretched divine."

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XLV.

Nov. 4, } PAUL BEFORE FELIX. { Acts xxiv, 1877. } 10-25.

GOLDEN TEXT:—"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled."—Acts xxiv. 25.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Heb. xii. 1-14. Before many witnesses.
T. Acts xxiii. 23-35. Sent to Felix.
W. Acts xxiv. 1-9. The charges preferred.
Th. Acts xxiv. 11-25. Paul before Felix.
F. Matt. xxv. 14-30. The day of reckoning.
S. 2 Pet. iii. 1-18. The day of the Lord.
S. Rev. xx. 11-15. The great white throne.

HELPS TO STUDY.

While Paul was in prison at Jerusalem, where Lysias had placed him to save him from the fury of the Jews, forty Jews banded together in a plot to slay him. This plot was discovered by the apostle's sister's son, and Lysias sent St. Paul under a guard to Caesarea, where the governor of Judea then resided. Five days afterwards, in obedience to the order of Lysias, a deputation of the Sanhedrim came from Jerusalem to Caesarea as the accusers of St. Paul. They brought with them as their advocate a certain Tertullus. We have a mere outline of his speech before the court. Having sought by artful flattery to ingratiate himself with the governor, he proceeded to charge St. Paul with three crimes,—*treason* against the Roman government, Luke xxiii. 2, 5; *heresy* against the religion of Moses, Acts xviii. 13; and *sacrilege*, by the profanation of the temple, Acts xxi. 28, 29. St. Paul, in his

I. DEFENCE, verses 10-21, follows the course of Tertullus, and after a brief exordium, answers in detail his charges.

1. Answer to the first charge, Verses 10-13.

St. Paul is respectful without flattery.

Many years a Judge.—About six or seven. (Note 1.) The government of his three predecessors had together lasted only eight years.

To worship.—He gives two other reasons for his coming to Jerusalem: to bring alms, v. 17, and to make oblations, offerings to God in the temple service.

To the accusation that he was a mover of sedition, he replies that it was a mere assertion, incapable of proof. He denies the charge of raising up a tumult with reference to those three places, the temple, the synagogues, and the city.

2. Answer to the second charge, Verses 14-16.

This I confess.—While he denied the crimes falsely charged and challenged his accusers to the proof, he pleaded guilty to those portions of the indictment that were true, but contended that they violated no law. For those things in the accusation which were criminal were not true, and those that were true were not criminal.

After the way.—John i. 23; xiv. 6; Acts ix. 2; xix. 9, 23; xxii. 4.

Heresy, translated sect in v. 5, also in Acts xv. 5; xxvi. 5; xxviii. 22. (Note 2.)

They themselves allow.—St. Paul asserts that the doctrine of the resurrection was part of the general belief of the nation. The Sadducees were but few in number. St. Paul maintained that he was a Jew in the truest sense of the word, for Christianity is the fulfilment and truth of Judaism.

St. Paul speaks with courage and confidence because he has a conscience (Note 3) void of offence toward God and man, 1 Pet. iv. 15, 16. A conscience not offended by anything we have done!—not blaming us for disobedience, or forgetfulness, or want of love, towards God,—for selfishness, or unkindness, or wrong, towards men. What a blessing! See what it is called: A pure conscience, 1 Tim. iii. 9; a good conscience, Acts xxiii. 1; 1 Tim. i. 19; Heb. xiii. 18.

I exercise myself—i.e., he tried—practised. We must be always watching, praying, exercising. Even then, how only can we succeed? Compare John xv. 5 with Phil. iv. 13.

Herein—that is, in the belief and the hope of the resurrection. St. Paul might often be wearying of struggling against sin—feel he must give way. But then he thought of the Great Day.

3. Answer to the third charge, Verses 17-21, that he had attempted to profane the temple.

Many years.—Four or five had elapsed since his former visit to Jerusalem, Acts xviii. 22. His motive in coming up had been love for his people, to whom he brought alms. So far from profaning the temple, he had been engaged there in religious exercises.

Whereupon, verse 18, should be in which, that is, while so engaged, in the very midst of these religious observances, certain Jews from Asia, not the rulers, found me.

If there had existed any evil-doing, they should have alleged it when he was brought up for examination before the Council.

Except it be.—St. Paul speaks ironically. So far from any fault having been found with that one voice, exclamation, it was approved of by the dominant faction.

II. THE DECISION, Verses 22-25.

Felix deferred them—put them off—adjourned the case. He was convinced of St. Paul's innocence, and would not condemn him; but he was unwilling to incur the displeasure of the Jews. Perhaps he thought St. Paul's friends would be willing to pay for his release, and that he might make money in him, verse 26. Thus St. Paul was kept in custody two years. (Note 4.)

Felix felt a certain interest in the apostle, and sent for him that he and his wife, Drusilla, might hear him.

As they sat there in state, listening to the prisoner, Felix trembled. Why? See what Paul spoke about, verse 25. Righteousness—doing right in sight of God and man; and Conscience reminds Felix how he murdered the Jewish high-priest, and has treated multitudes with cruelty; how he has for bribes released bad men from prison, and for want of them kept good men there—injustice both ways. Temperance—governing one's self—not letting evil passions break out—not indulging wicked thoughts and wrong wishes and Conscience reminds Felix how he got that wife—enticing her away from her first husband simply because he liked her—no matter who was wronged by it—only cared for himself. Judgment to come—on whom? See Eccl. xi. 9; xii. 14; Rom. ii. 6-9; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. v. 19-21; 2 Thess. i. 8; Rev. xxi. 8. And Conscience tells Felix that he deserves God's terrible judgment. No wonder he trembles!

What will he do? Cry as the jailor did, Acts xvi. 30? Ah no! He crushes the rising thought, silences the voice of Conscience, puts off thinking of such disagreeable things. Did the convenient season come for talking to Paul? Yes, many times—but what did he talk about when it came? verse 26. It was never convenient to repent of his sins and turn to God.

Is it bad to have a Condemning Conscience? There is a worse thing even than that—To have a Conscience which ought to condemn you, but does not.

Why did Drusilla not tremble? Because she had an approving conscience? No: if Felix was bad, she was worse: he did tremble, she was too reckless to tremble. Worse than Joseph's brethren, or Ahab, or Herod Antipas, or even Judas! (Gen. xlii. 21; 1 Kings xxi. 27; Mark vi. 20; Matt. xxvii. 4.) Had God given her no Conscience? Yes, all have it. But she had been deaf to its voice for so long, that now it had ceased to speak! See what St. Paul says of such, 1 Tim. iv. 2—"having their consciences seared with a hot iron," and so, Eph. iv. 19, "being past feeling."

Nothing so grievous in boys and girls as a 'don't-care' spirit—no shame even when found out in sin—laughing at parents' tears and teachers' prayers. Does your conscience warn you when you are going to sin? Does it trouble you when you have sinned? Then be thankful for its voice, and ask God to make it still more powerful. Then two things: (a) When Conscience convinces you of sin, remember our first text for rep., and seek pardon at once. How? See Heb. ix. 14; x. 22.

(b) Try—try hard—"exercise yourself," as St. Paul did—to keep Conscience 'void of offence.' Pray as the Psalmist did, Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Felix—his office—place of residence—character—wife—fitness to judge here—Paul's preface—plea—denials—challenge—avowal—defence of his hope—retort on his persecutors—the effect on Felix—his "deferring"—why—his hope—his later interview with Paul—the result—his procrastinations, and the lessons.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. Felix (happy), called Claudius Felix, a freedman of the emperor Claudius, who appointed him governor of Judea. He ruled the province in a mean, cruel, and profligate manner.—*Smith's Bible Dic.* In the practice of all kinds of lust and cruelty he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave. Relying upon the influence of his brother at court, the infamous Pallas, this man acted as if he had a license to commit every crime with impunity.—*Tactius.*

2. The argument is, Our nation is divided into religious parties which are called sects; thus there is the sect of the Pharisees and the sect of the Sadducees, and so now we are called the sect of the Nazarenes. I do not deny that I belong to the latter sect; but I claim for it the same toleration which is extended by the Roman law to the others.—*Hoson.*

3. Conscience—the word I mean—denotes a fellow-knowledge; a knowledge shared with another, and yet that other one's self. St. Paul says, in one of his Epistles, "I know nothing by myself;" it is properly "with myself;" I have no fellow-knowledge with myself of anything to be ashamed of. That fellow-knowledge is Conscience. Conscience is a man's privacy to his own conduct, in thought and word and deed. Out of this all its workings and all its effects spring. I know with myself. I am so made that I cannot help this fellow-knowledge. I must perforce take cognizance of my own actions, and sit in judgment upon my own secret thoughts. This is Conscience.—*Dr. Vaughan.*

4. Three kinds of custody were recognized by Roman law: (1) Confinement in the common jail; (2) free custody, according to which the accused party was committed to the charge of a magistrate, who became responsible for his appearance on the day of trial, this answered to the modern bail; (3) military custody, according to which the accused was given into the charge of soldiers, who were responsible for his safe-keeping. He was then often chained to a soldier. It was to the military custody Paul was here committed, but the language, "let him have liberty," implies that he was not bound. A form of military custody in which the soldier kept watch of his prisoner, but was not chained to him, was recognized by the law. Because Felix left Paul bound (v. 27) when he resigned the administration of the province into the hands of Festus, it does not follow that he kept him bound during his own administration.