

Faith in an Act.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

"When I was a college-student," said a good old minister to me, "I was under conviction of sin, and I went and talked with two or three of the professors, and got no light or relief. As soon as I began to act out my feelings, faith became the simplest thing in the world." They had given him the theory of religion he learned what it was by practice. All the lectures on gravitation ever delivered would not teach a child to walk; he can only learn to walk by trying to walk. Jesus Christ saves sinners by telling them what to do, and when they begin to do it, he helps them forward. Hundreds of people go home from our churches every Sunday believing their Bibles and believing in Jesus Christ, and yet do not move one inch towards becoming Christians.

I once illustrated the act of faith by the experience of a friend who was in an upper room of a hotel at night when the building took fire. He seized the escape rope that was in his room, swung out of the window, and lowered himself in safety to the sidewalk. He had a good opinion of the rope during the day when he saw it coiled up by his bedside, but it was only an opinion; when he believed on the rope and trusted himself to the rope, it saved his life. The good opinion which thousands of people have of the Lord Jesus, and of Christianity, works no change in their character or their conduct. Even when the Holy Spirit or some startling providence sets them to thinking, they never put their thoughts into a practical step, and soon relapse into their former indifference. A piece of iron that is often thrust into a fire and is not bent into the right shape while heated becomes at length more brittle, and less easily moulded. To hear about Christ very often, to think about him very often, and to be invited to Christ very often, and yet not to lift one foot towards him becomes a very hardening process. It insults his love, grieves the Holy Spirit, and increases guilt. An habitual churchgoer may incur a degree of guilt to which the ignorant neglecter of all religion in the back slums is a stranger.

Some reader of this article who habitually attends a house of worship, who believes in Christianity, who expects to become a Christian at some time before he dies, may ask me the question, "What sort of faith most I have in order to be saved?" My answer is that a good opinion of Christianity or even the desire to become a Christian is not enough. You must make a resolute grasp on that Redeemer whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and put your whole energies into the act. Your only hope of salvation is in Jesus Christ, as my friend's only hope was in that escape rope, and you must "lay hold of the hope set before you."

"Must I repent of my sins if I would be saved?" Yes, in-fact; but repentance is more than feeling ashamed of yourself, or feeling sorry; that you have done often. Repentance is turning from your sins, with an honest endeavor after a new obedience. Turning from—is an act; Whom are you to turn to? Whom are you to obey? Jesus Christ, and him only. Repentance—unto life and faith on Jesus Christ go together. They are like the two halves of one globe. The Spirit that reveals your sin to you, reveals your Saviour to you. To attempt to break away from your long indulged sins may be no easy task; to do it without divine help may be impossible, it becomes perfectly possible if you beseech Christ's help. That beseeching means prayer, and that prayer of faith is an act of your soul. In times past you may have felt shame and sorrow for wrong-doing, and made many a resolution to do better. But neither sad feelings nor good resolutions were of any more avail than a rope of straw would have been to my friend in the burning hotel. You never went out of the region of feelings into positive action.

Jesus Christ does not seem to have talked much to people about their feelings. He demanded action. To the two fishermen by the shore of Galilee, he simply said, "Follow me!" That was a pivot moment; they did not sit down and cry over their sins; they did not promise to think about it as you have often done. They left their nets and started off straightway on a path of obedience that carried them into a career of sharp trials, but of unparalleled usefulness and an immortality of glory. That was faith—a decisive step of faith—and that is the only kind of faith that can save your soul. Whatever Jesus Christ commands you in your Bible, or through the voice of your conscience, to do, hasten to do it. Henry Drummond was right when he said that the first sign that a person abandons, or the first act that a person performs to please Jesus Christ, is the turning point in conversion. For conversion means a new style of character and a new style of conduct. Christ lovingly says to you, "My Spirit will I give unto you," and that Spirit is omnipotent.

Exercise the faith you have, and pray for more. If your attempts to walk cause some tumbles, get up and go on! Felt weakness leads to a tighter grasp on Christ's strong arm. Every step of faith will carry you into increasing peace, joy, power, usefulness; you will begin to live! Your terrible danger now, the danger that may wreck your life and ruin your soul eternally, will be your doing nothing at all! Delay means death. When the flame strikes you, it will be too late for the rope.—The Evangelist.

The Decision of Callimachus.

BY T. R. RICHY.

On a September day two thousand, three hundred and ninety-two years ago, a council of ten Athenian generals and one war ruler occupied the slope of one of the mountains overlooking the plain of Marathon, on the northeastern coast of Attica, twenty-two miles from Athens.

The purpose was to decide whether, with their small army of eleven thousand armed and disciplined infantry and about that many irregular, light-armed troops, they should give battle to the mighty Persian host, one hundred thousand strong, encamped on the plain below in command of the Median general, Datis.

The historian, Sir Edward Shepherd Creasy, argued that "the generations to come would read with interest the record of their deliberations for the reason that on the result of their deliberations depended, not merely the fates of two armies, but the whole future progress of human civilization."

At last the vote is cast, the count is made, and the record shows five and five. So Callimachus, the war ruler must decide it. With what trembling emotion must he, "brave and noble" as he was, have realized his momentous responsibility. Well might even the plumed birds amid the myrtle, the arbutus and all the odoriferous shrubs that everywhere perfume the Attica air, hush their melodies, and all animated nature pause to catch the verdict about to be rendered.

Miltiades, the daring Athenian general, turns to him who, with a stroke of his pen, is to decide the destiny of the world's nations, and thus adjures him: "It now rests with you, Callimachus, either to enslave Athens or by assuring her freedom, to win yourself an immortality of fame such as even Harmodius and Aristogiton have acquired."

Callimachus lifts his pen amid the awful silence and bravely writes: "Let the battle be joined!"

Miltiades at once resumes a warlike attitude and gives command for the Athenian army to prepare for the momentous contest. The Persians fought bravely, but soon the heretofore unvanquished lords of Asia turned their backs and fled, the Greeks following and striking them down to the water's edge, where the invaders were now launching their galleys and seeking to embark and fly. Datis tried by ruse to capture Athens, but the wily Miltiades thwarted his designs and the baffled Persian armada returned to the Asiatic coast, thus ending one of the most decisive and far-reaching battles, in its results, in the world's history. The spell of Persian invincibility which had so long paralyzed men's minds is broken; among the Greeks is generated the spirit which beat back Xerxes, Agesilaus and Alexander in terrible retaliation, through their Asiatic campaign, and for mankind is secured the intellectual treasury of Athens, the growth of free institutions, the liberal enlightenment of the western world and the gradual ascendancy for many ages of the great principles of European civilization.

So much for the decision of Callimachus. But you, dear reader, must make a decision compared with which, in its consequences, the decision of Callimachus amounts to no more than a bauble that bursts and vanishes. His decision pertained to this world, and to time's duration; yours to a future world and eternal duration. The never-ending, never-changing destiny of your immortal soul is involved; likewise the same destiny of those whom your influence reaches. This world and all its wealth, and all its interests are not even to be named in comparison with the worth of what is involved in your decision. The Son of God intercedes at the Father's throne, pleading that you be spared a little longer, that so you may decide wisely. Angelic hosts, with bated breath, from heaven's battlements look on and eagerly listen to catch the verdict that you are to render. "Why halt ye between two opinions?" "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."—Sel.

John Frederick Oberlin.

BY REV. FREDERICK A. NOBLE, D. D.

On August 31, in the year of our Lord 1740, at Strasburg in Alsatis, there was born a child whose destiny in the providence of God was to be clearly interwoven with the destiny of a wretched community of mountaineers, and the descendants of a little company of Huguenots compelled to flee after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, to Steinhil, a mountain fastness in a wild district in the Vosges mountains, a hundred and fifty years before, and whose name has become one of the inspiring and cherished names of history. The child grew into a lad. Under wholesome home training the lad became an earnest, scholarly boy. At fifteen he entered the university at Strasburg. At eighteen he was a bachelor of arts. At twenty he had been ordained to the gospel ministry with a view to service in the Lutheran church. At twenty-seven though he had taken the ordination vows of the ministry, he was still in his study. It was his idea, evidently, that for large usefulness there must be faithful and patient preparation.

At this period in his career a humble missionary, who confessed his own inability to gain access to them, stood

before him and told the story of these wild and degraded mountaineers. On the basis of his story he made an appeal. He wanted this devoted student to go to this people and be their shepherd. He wanted him to take his magnificent mental endowments, his social position, his wide learning, his culture, his hope of promotion, and lay them all on the altar of a community, the one bond of sympathy between him and whom was that they were both human. He was fitted for a professor's chair in the university he so much loved. He had the talent and the training to justify him in anticipating advancement to almost any place open to the men of his time. He was asked to subordinate it all, nay, to consecrate it all to the welfare of these rude men and women in the well nigh inaccessible region of Steinhil. Could much more be asked? After a deep and earnest struggle in which it was made clear to his own soul that the call which had reached him was the call of God, he said "yes," and went. He became their spiritual guide and teacher and friend. It was like the changing of their long cold winters into tropic warmth. It was like the broadening of their horizon till they saw the resplendent beauty and felt the pulse of the great world about them. Into the slow and sluggish life of this people he poured the hot and stimulating blood of his own choice life. The place was desolate and solitary; he made it glad. It was a wilderness; at his touch it blossomed like a rose.

For fifty nine years, until he was eighty six years of age this devoted servant of Christ had his home among these people, away in this remote district. He prayed for them, he taught them; he preached to them, he bore their burdens; he toiled with his own hands at the hardest tasks, that they might the better know how to toil; he carried them in his thoughts and heart as only one can who has caught the vicarious spirit of Jesus. And then abundantly ready for his home going he heard and answered another call of God and went up to dwell in the heights of the new Jerusalem.

It was a marvelous record the man made. The vulgar, the despised community to whom he was introduced a little less than three score years before, his final retirement from them, had been made over new and the dominion of corruption and vice into whose subjection they had come, had given way to a domain of gentle manners and good morals. Many had come into a personal experience of the saving grace of God in Christ. There were Christian churches, Christian homes, Christian schools. There were other institutions designed to be helpful in a Christian way. There was a Christian public sentiment. The community had risen to the point where it had pride in itself—self respect and aspirations. One saw everywhere the evidence of thrift and comfort. Moreover this work was done in such a wise and thorough way that it abides. Seventy years after the death of this servant of God, the fountains he opened are still flowing.

But who was this large soul? this lad of brilliant promise? this man of stalwart strength and heroic purpose and fine culture? this devoted and beloved pastor? this exponent of human brotherhood? this brave philanthropist and uncompromising advocate of the rights of all to a fair chance in life? Very fitly may the name be spoken in tones of love and reverence, for it was John Frederick Oberlin.—Ex.

Our Name.

Our neighbors who make much account of the name whereby they would be called, and are yet quite unable to agree upon such a name, in some instances express preference for the word "disciple" as characterizing them. One of their papers said, recently, that "it meant something in the time of the apostles to be disciples. [It meant being forsaken by friends, persecuted and put to death." But it certainly does not mean that now, and if that was the one word by which believers were to be called in that earlier day it must be out of date and improper now. The word is used a good many times in the gospels, referring to those who were under the direct personal instruction of the Master or Teacher. It is used only a few times in the Acts, and not once to designate any person who was put to death. Saul breathed out "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord"; but it is not recorded that he put any to death. And, so far as appears, Saul was the only man who ever lifted a hand against a "disciple." If Christ was simply a Teacher, then believers may be called strictly disciples; but when Jesus is thought of as a Master, then his people are servants obeying his commandments. If he is a King, they are citizens of his kingdom, his subjects. If he is thought of as making himself an offering for sin, consummating his work on the cross, then believers are his redeemed. If he is thought of as sanctifying himself, "that they also might become sanctified through the truth," then they are saints, "the sanctified" in Christ Jesus. And inasmuch as no soul can enter into the life of Christ, or can hope for salvation through the blood of Christ until it has become sanctified to him by a full surrender of itself and its all to him, no better word has yet been found to describe his people than the word "saint." That word is used