

THE WORDS OF JESUS.

BY THE REV. THOS. BINNEY.

I DO not wonder at men who regard Jesus only as an authoritative teacher being utterly perplexed by many of His utterances about Himself; and I do not wonder that such men eliminate entirely from the sayings of Jesus whatever they find hard to be understood, and reduce His instructions to the preceptive inculcations of a superior morality. The Church, however, is established on "the foundation of the apostles and prophets," though Jesus Christ is "the chief corner-stone." The central truth in the Church is placed in the light of two revelations—the one the prophetic word, as our schoolmaster, leading us to Christ; the other the apostolic exposition, to show us the meaning of His mission and work. I would not depreciate the instructions of Jesus, but I do say that, with the exception of those sayings of His which are dimly anticipative of suffering and sacrifice, I regard most of His practical lessons as intended to have their place after we have learned to trust in His atonement, or as tests and demands to show us its necessity. It is no disparagement to Him or His laws if we accept those as our guide to the cross whom He has inspired and commissioned for the purpose. It is no disparagement to Him if, led by them, we are brought to trust in His work for our salvation, and then to listen to His regal utterances with a feeling that finds its embodiment in the words, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The apostolic epistles lead us to Christ, and then we listen to His moral teaching and all His preceptive laws.

The discourses of Jesus, which were difficult to understand by those who heard them, must be the same to us (if we have a faithful record of what He said), unless we can read them in the light, and with the help, of what was made known by the ministry of the Spirit. If the Evangelists have not given, pure and simple, what Jesus said, but what they afterwards understood Him to mean, then we have not the Words of Jesus, properly speaking, at all. The Gospel in that case would come to be a commentary, not a text. If it should be said that the Gospels were written "that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing we might have life in His name," I accept the statement; but I take it in conjunction with the historical fact that the Gospel has been preached some years before the Gospels were written, and that they would be read for the most part in the luminous atmosphere extensively diffused through the pervading influence of Christian thought.

The way in which Jesus refers to Himself is altogether distinct from anything to be met with in the inspired prophets of the Old Testament. The way in which the apostles referred to Christ is precisely the way in which He referred to Himself. They do not speak about themselves, as He is constantly doing; but when they speak of Him, they do speak of Him with that very peculiarity of presentation which we before noticed in Himself. That is to say, they do not profess to teach simply what He taught; they do not confine themselves to ideas which He put into words; they do not carry about with them reports of His conversations and copies of His discourses, and offer these as the sum and substance of what they have to communicate. These were not, in their estimation—valuable as they might be in other respects—the one thing needful, the saving truth, the unspeakable gift, the source and means of immortal life. No; it was not what Jesus had said that they dwelt upon, but what He was—what He had done. They preached Him—they spoke of what He had "accomplished," and spoke of it in such a way as to show that He, personally, was the life of the world and the light of men, and not that He had simply taught or revealed it.—From "Dr. Binney's Sermons." London: Macmillan.

PAYING THE FARE.

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

THAT was an expensive voyage which Jonah made when he "fled from the presence of the Lord," and ran away to Tarshish. He found a ship just ready to sail, and he "paid the fare thereof." But he paid dearly. How much money he paid we do not know; but it was a dead loss, for he never got to Tarshish. He paid away his credit as a servant of the Lord. He made a hard draft on his conscience, and that

is always a dear bargain for any man. Nothing hurts us like the hurts we give to our conscience.

After Jonah's sinful voyage began, the second part, and the hardest part, of the bill came in. For the Almighty sent after him the policeman of a mighty gale, which caught hold of the vessel and well-nigh shivered it into wreck. Poor Jonah had not paid his fare to the bottom of the sea; but there is no help for him. The frightened crew pitched him out into the deep, and but for God's interposing mercy he might have been devoured by the sharks instead of being preserved by that "great fish" which was sent to transport him safely to the dry land. A dear voyage that! The prophet who ran away from God lost his money, lost his time, lost his credit, lost the approval of his conscience and of his God, and would have lost his life but for a miraculous interposition. All this was the "fare" which one man paid for sinning.

But many of our readers may be committing the same terrible mistake. For no path seems to most people so easy and pleasant to travel, as the path of sinful inclination. It is what the Bible calls "walking in the way of a man's own heart," and in the sight of his own eyes." One man, for example, is entirely absorbed in making money. When this becomes a greedy appetite, the money-lover must pay for it with daily anxiety and worry, and he runs the fearful risk of being eaten up with covetousness. A greed for wealth grows with years. When a rich miser of New York tottered out into the street at fourscore, and a friend asked him how he felt, the feeble old miser replied eagerly, "I feel better to-day: stocks are up." Ah! what a *fare* that old millionaire had to pay for travelling farther and faster than others on the road to wealth! It shrivelled up his very soul. Gold may be a useful servant, but it is a cruel master. It is not easy to own it without its owning us. Where one man makes it a rich blessing to others, thousands make it the ruin of their souls. Love of money drew Lot to the fertile valley of Sodom, and he "paid the fare thereof" in the destruction of his family. Love of money made Gehazi a knave: he "paid the fare" in an incurable leprosy. Love of money was one of two sins for which Judas paid with the suicide's rope, and everlasting infamy. No man can make money safely and wisely, unless he holds his earnings as a trust from God. What would it profit you to win the wealth of an empire, if you should pay for it the price of your undying soul? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

We cannot stop to recount all the penalties which men and women have to pay for sinning. The costliest thing in the world is sin. It costs purity of conscience, and costs the favour of God. It will cost at the last the loss of heaven. The sin of grieving the Holy Ghost has cost many a one everlasting perdition.

"Show me the better way—show me the safe way," exclaim some of my readers who are alarmed at their own course of sin, and who really desire to live a better life. "Show me the way, and tell me what is the *fare* thereof." Friend, salvation is free on God's side; but on *your* side it must be won by repentance and faith. As far as Christ's precious atonement is concerned,

Nothing, either great or small,
Remains for you to do;
Jesus died, and paid it all
All the debt you owe!

But the road to heaven, which the crucified Jesus has opened to you, can only be entered by your abandoning your sins, and following Him in faith and self-denial. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except a man take up his cross and follow Christ, he cannot be His disciple." Friend, this "fare" you must "pay" to enter heaven. Are you willing?—From "Thoughts for Heart and Life." London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Whatever our place allotted to us by Providence, that, for us, is the post of honour and duty. God estimates us not by the position we are in, but the way in which we fill it.

Bengel says:—"The Bible not merely was inspired, but is so still. The Holy Ghost not merely inspired the men as they wrote, but he is still connected with the Scripture. It was originally Spirit-breathed, but the Spirit is still breathing upon when the soul thirsting after God reads the words, 'Ho, everyone that thirsteth,' etc.; the words are breathed again by the Spirit. It seems as if the ink was not yet dry, and as if the warm breath of eternal love, from which these promises flowed, was even now quickening and consoling the troubled soul."