

NARROW-MINDEDNESS.

God helps many souls without the common means of grace. Often the lives of those who are not in the Church put to shame the lives of the most privileged. The unbaptised, the unconfirmed, and noncommunicants often shew most plain signs of the work of God's spirit in them. This everyone will grant: But people are apt to judge that it is so proved to be small matter whether they belong to the Church, and use the sacraments and other means of grace. There is much well meant and well sounding talk about this, which misleads many souls.

When our Lord was teaching among the Jews, there was the same state of things among God's people. God had a Church then as He has now. There was a fixed way of entering it. There were clear rules for those who wished to keep up their union with it. There were special blessings promised through the right use of the privileges which God had provided through joining in its fellowship and its common worship. Yet some of Christ's sternest words were those in which he held up the Samaritans, and even those who were not of Israel in any sense, as better than the Jews. It might have been said that Christ made little of God's Church in those days, and of the good things God had promised his people as the fruit of faithful obedience to God's rules in His Church. But this would have been as wrong and misleading as the error of the same sort common in our own day.

Our Lord's words to the Samaritan woman, as told us in the 4th chapter of S. John's Gospel at the 22nd verse, shew what His judgment was.—“Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.” The meaning plainly is this. The Jews lived and worshipped in the Church which God had founded, according to the laws and rules which God had given. The Samaritans had separated from that Church, had founded a separate body according to their own notions, and worshipped, devoutly indeed, but still, wilfully. God's covenant was with the Jews, and in the Jewish Church He had provided the means for man's salvation, to which special promises were given. Christ did not say that no one could be saved who did not seek salvation through the wells of salvation provided in the Jewish Church; He did imply that men ran risk of loss by hewing out cisterns for themselves.

There are some remarkable words of Christ in S. Matt. xv. 26. He said to the woman of Canaan, “It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.” These words sound hard and almost cruel. But we are sure that Christ always spoke from a knowledge of what was needed in each case. Does it not seem as if He knew that this woman ought not to have remained outside the Church, that she knew her duty and had been kept back, perhaps by worldly motives, from taking her place among “the children,” and receiving her portion of spiritual meat regularly at her Father's table.

Christ himself lived as a faithful member of the Jewish Church, and His disciples did the same, till the ruin of the Temple shewed that the Kingdom of God, now set in order according to Christ's direction, by the Spirit's guiding, was wholly to displace it.

Now, the special presence of God is not confined to one place, in the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem. The sacrifices in which Christ's death was foreshewn are no longer offered in one central home of worship. In every place God's presence can be found, and the pure offering of the one Sacrifice, once offered, can be pleaded before the Mercy Seat. The Lord's death is shewn, and the Holy Spirit, Who joins men in one body, guides them to worship in spirit and in truth.

As in old days, so now the streams of God's grace overflow. God's mercy goes after even the wayward and the wandering. He does not bind Himself by the rules He has given men: He will not loose His sheep, if He can find them by following them outside Jerusalem in the wilderness where they have strayed. He can make the “high hills a refuge for the wild goats and the stony rocks for the conies.” But this in no way sets men free to make light of the green pastures and still waters which He has prepared. Though men “in every nation,” as S. Peter tells us, may “fear God and work righteousness,” and so be “accepted,” and though souls misled or untaught may yet be miracles of God's hallowing grace and patient love, yet we are not to be less thankful for the rich blessings stored for us in the Church, or less careful to use them faithfully. If much has been given to us, God will ask the more. If those less privileged than we are can use their smaller, fewer helps to such good purpose, what courage we may have in turning to profit the ten talents that are ours!

The Gospel is love and mercy from God to man, but it is also right and justice from man to man.

The noblest spirits are those that turn to heaven, not in the hour of sorrow but in that of joy. Like the lark, they wait for the cloud to disperse, that they may soar into their native element.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

The Church of Christ is not a club, or association of people who happen to agree on certain matters of opinion, and meet together, when and how they please, for purposes that suit their taste and fancy. God forms the Church by His own will and His own power. It has the laws of its being and its movement from Him. Each one who is in it has a place and a duty given to him for which he receives strength. The Church is not like a bundle of sticks, tied together by some outward bond. It is like a living, growing tree, planted by God, all the branches of which draw nourishment from the same root, and share one life. It is the Body of Christ, from Whom the life goes forth that makes men His living active members.

BELIEVING AND DOING.

HERE are four things. All of them are needful. Christian people must believe and do, ask and receive. Look at the Church Catechism, and you will see that this is the right order. First comes a short preface, telling us that we are Christians; then follow instructions on the Creed and the Commandments, on Prayer and Sacraments.

It am not going to say much to you about the preface—four questions and their answers—at the beginning of the Catechism. For it will be needful to join a word or two about it to what is said about each of the four things that follow. Only mark the way you are dealt with. The Church, you see, does not treat baptized people as infidels. Your mother tells you that, by Baptism, you are a child of God; and she bids you live as God's “obedient child.” Four things are set before you: the Catechism says you must *believe* and *do*, *ask* and *receive*.

1. You must believe. The Articles of the Christian Faith are in the Apostles' Creed. “Articles” mean “little joints.” The Faith is joined together as one living whole: it is not a set of man's opinions. God made us and not we ourselves; and God made our Creed, not we ourselves.

1. The Creed teaches us first to believe in God the Father, Who made us, Who loved the world even when it was a world of sinners, Who prepared a way of salvation through Jesus Christ.

2. We believe in Jesus Christ, Who is both God and Man, Who came to save sinners, Who lived, and taught, and worked, and died, and rose again, Who by all this work of His provided abundant salvation for all mankind, and went up into heaven, there to remain till that salvation has been applied by the work of the Holy Spirit in His Church.

3. The Holy Spirit came. From that day the Body of Jesus, Which is in Heaven, became present also upon earth “in another form,” the Church. Salvation came to men, when the Spirit came from the Father in the Son's Name. “The power” came first to the Apostles; they baptised many; and the Lord thus “added to the Church daily such as should be saved.” This great salvation is applied, one by one, to sinners now. The Holy Spirit is in the Holy Church and in her saints or holy members. There is, as the Nicene Creed in the Communion Service says, “one Baptism for the remission of sins,” the being “born of water and of the Spirit;” and we have a pledge of the “Resurrection of the Body,” when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Communion. Thus are the children of God trained up from infancy for the enjoyment of “the life everlasting.”

II. You must *do* what God commands.

1. “Have” God, and God alone. “Have” Him, as you “have” your parent or child. But give Him “the honour due:” set Him above all.

2. Worship no image or fancy of man's device, and choose not your own religion: come and worship God openly before men, in His House, bowing heart and knee.

4. Take not the Name of God in vain: honour His Name, His Word, His Sacraments, all holy things. Honour the Name of Christ which you bear, your Christian Name; and “depart from iniquity.”

4. Keep the “Lord's Day” and give to His Service “all the days of your life.” On the Lord's Day especially go to the Lord's Service of Holy Communion, use the Lord's Prayer for the Daily Bread of soul and body, and feed on the Lord's Body.

5. “Honour all men,” parents and children, masters and servants, kings and subjects, priests and people, for the sake of Him who is Lord of all.

6. Hurt no body by thought, or word, or deed: “let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

7. Soil nobody's purity, and guard your own. Be modest in dress, and moderate in food.

8. Take nothing that belongs to your neighbour, and be strictly honest in all your dealings, as to another's time, and money, and goods.

9. Speak no evil, except duty compels you. Tell “the truth” about common things; and do all you can to spread the knowledge of Him Who is “the Truth.”

10. Keep as far from sin and as near to God as you can. Set your heart against the desire of evil: give your heart to God and seek His face overmore.

OUR DEBT: HOW SHALL WE PAY IT

We are all in heavy debt to God. We have nothing with which to pay the duty that we owe. No man has the power to give us what we need. How are we to come before God and meet His claim? He will not mark off the debt, as if it were no matter whether paid or not. He tells us plainly that we must give Him faith and love and obedience and worship. Are we to say, in despair, that there is no use in trying, and that God cannot mean to demand what He asks?

Our hope is in the fact that God is unlike other creditors. When we owe Him a debt and have nothing to pay, He bids us come to Him and get it. He offers grace and righteousness, even all we ought to have and to bring. We can meet God's claims out of the treasures of God, which He is always waiting to give to us, and which in His mercy He accepts when we offer it before Him.

ABIDE WITH ME.

THIS beautiful hymn was written by Henry Francis Lyte, an English clergyman, who died at Nice some years ago. The manner in which it was composed is thus told in the *Christian Weekly*: It was the autumn of 1847, the gloom of the winter was already settling upon the coast, and the pangs of decay tinged the leaves. The pastor who was now preparing to leave the parish, and who seemed like one already hovering over the grave, determined to speak to his people once more, perhaps for the last time. He dragged his attenuated form into the pulpit, and delivered his parting discourse, while great tears rolled down the hardy faces of the worshippers. He then administered the Lord's Supper to his spiritual children. Tired and exhausted, but with his heart still swelling with emotion, he went home. The old poetic inspiration came over him, and he wrote the words and music of his last song. He had prayed that his last breath might be spent, “swan like,”

In song that may not die

and his effort was to prove a literal answer to his prayer. The poem composed under these interesting circumstances was the well known hymn chant beginning—

“Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide:
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.”

SISTER DORA.

A WOMAN died in England, a few weeks ago, with a strange history.

Dorothy Patterson was the daughter of a clergyman, a delicate and even sickly girl in childhood and a member of a family of high social position, in a class where women are carefully sheltered from the world as are Easter Lilies from the winter wind.

When Dorothy reached womanhood, however, she became remarkably beautiful, and developed the strength and energy of a man. She followed the hounds, dressed, danced, and tried to find a field for her enormous vitality in ordinary ways, but in vain.

At last she resolved to devote her life to others. She gave up fashionable life, and took a village school to teach, to discipline herself.

Afterwards, she joined a religious charitable society, nursed the sick, scrubbed the floors, cleaned the grates, etc., but even this menial work did not satisfy her restless energies.

At last she became the manager of a small pox hospital, in the Black Country of England, and there she found her proper work and place.

Sister Dora's masculine strength, wonderful beauty, keen delight in a laugh, and sound common sense, gained her a commanding influence over the rough miners. Her life was given wholly to their service. Her medical and surgical skill was great.

On one occasion, when the doctors had decided that a patient's arm must come off, Sister Dora declared that she could save it. She was warned that the man would die, but she persisted, and for weeks never left his bedside. She succeeded.

Years afterward, when she lay ill, this man would walk ten miles on a Sunday to ask for her. “Tell her it was ‘her arm’ that rang the bell,” he would say, and go back again.

She knew no fear when nursing her patients, and often when a man was sinking into the collapse which precedes death from small pox she would place her lips to his, and inflate his lungs with her healthy breath, in hopes of restoring vitality.

Her strength was so great that she lifted men and carried them from one ward to another, as other women would babies.

Yet she never lost her womanliness; and it was through this and her tender sympathy that she maintained her absolute control over men of this character. She influenced them to give up drinking and immorality.

When “Sister Dora” died thousands of the miners came to follow their faithful friend to the grave.