

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

CHRIST OUR BROTHER.

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"He is not ashamed to call them brethren."—Heb. ii. 11.

The humanity of Christ was the great stumbling block to the Jews. Were they to be called on to believe in, as their Messiah and Lord, one who was a poor, despised, crucified Nazarene? In this chapter the writer of this epistle says, "You Hebrews are in danger of being ashamed of the humanity of Christ, but to save man it was necessary that He should become man, and He is not ashamed of you; He calls you brethren."

I. *Christ our Brother.*—"In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Let us see how in everything Christ was human. Think of the mode of His entrance into the world. See Him as the Babe of Bethlehem, like any other infant feeble and helpless, uttering cries betokening His necessities, dependent for food, clothing, and guardianship on those around Him—Brother then to every infant who is born.

Human nature was divided by the ancients into body, soul, and spirit. Take this tripartite nature of man and see how like He is to us in all things.

1. *The body.*—"He was an hungered." All the pains and anguish of intense hunger were felt by Him—Brother then to all the poor and hungry! He thirsted. At Jacob's well He was dependent on another to give Him water. On the cross he said, "I thirst"—Brother then to all who in any way thirst! He knew what the pleasures of life were. He was a guest at feasts—Brother then of those who know the dangers of plenty! He was weary. He was asleep in the boat after His long toil. He sat weary with travel and heat by the well—Brother then to all who are weary! He suffered bodily pain. Scourging brought to Him agony and distress. The result of this is seen, I think, in His fainting shortly afterwards under the burden of the cross. The anguish of the suspension on the cross, the piercing of the nails, the slow losing of blood, drop by drop, must have caused an experience to Christ of the fulness of agony—Brother then of every sufferer! He died. Whatever is meant by the separation of the soul from the body, from which we shrink, he knew it and experienced it—Brother then to each of us in that He died!

2. *The soul.*—By this we mean not exactly the higher and immortal nature, but that which is somewhat like instinct in animals. He was our Brother in experiencing a shrinking from death; in manifesting human benevolence, compassion, and sympathy; in associating with humanity; in displaying love for children; in having private and special friendship for a few; in knowing the anguish of unrequited affection; and in manifesting human self-respect. In Him we see the most glorious manliness. There was the tenderness that is often falsely contrasted with, but which is ever an element of, real manliness. Thus He was our Brother with all the sensibilities and tenderness of humanity, and the most beautiful affections.

3. *The spirit.*—There was that wonderful depression that came upon Him at different times. We have the agony of spirit in Gethsemane and on the cross. He felt what it is to seem to be forsaken of God and all we can comprehend by being apprehensive of spiritual gloom and darkness, and the fear of being deserted by God. Again, He was tempted, and He had all the faculties and capacities to which temptations are applied and adapted. But with instincts pure and holy He resisted the temptations, and did no sin. Some people think the body is made impure and sinful. Not so. Our natural instincts are pure and holy because they are Divine. The first Adam was tempted and fell; the second was tempted and stood. Once more, He "was made perfect through sufferings." "For both He that sanctifieth"—Jesus—"and they who are sanctified"—the followers of Jesus—"are all of One,"—God the Father—"for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and as our Leader He was under discipline, and was made perfect through sufferings. It is so with us also; we are brought to glory as He was, by God, through sufferings. He was a sharer with us in discipline by the same Father, and in sanctification by the same Spirit, journeying to the same heavenly

glory. Thus "in all points He was made like unto His brethren."

II. *Christ is not ashamed of the relationship.*—Two brothers may be born in the same cottage, fed from the same breast and trencher, trained at the same school, and one of them may rise in social position, but with seeming greatness unite real littleness, and be ashamed of his brother who continues a humble cottager. Or one may live a life of sensuality and bring disgrace on the family name, and the other be distinguished for virtue and benevolence, and the virtuous man may be ashamed of his brother. Or, one may have shown kindness continually to his brother, and the other have repelled it by constant hostility and ingratitude, so that at last the other may be ashamed of him. Or, all three cases may be combined, and there may be one brother high in position and character, and of high generosity, becoming ashamed of a brother low in life, in character, and in gratitude. Judging after the manner of men, might not Christ be ashamed of us? But He is not ashamed of the relationship. When He was a man on the earth, He said that everyone who wishes to do the will of God through Christ Jesus is His brother. After His resurrection His language was the same, "Go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father"—our Father. He is the same, therefore—our Brother. In the form of man He ascended, and "in like manner" He is to come again. At the judgment He owns His brethren—"Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these My brethren." In heaven He is exalted as the glorified Immanuel. All this proves that "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." Why is it?

1. Because of His mighty disinterested love. He loved us when we were unlovely and had no love to Him. Human love, when deep and true, is never ashamed of the lowliness of its object. A truly noble nature recognizes a friend the more he needs help. Though we are mean, and low, and despised, yet Christ is not ashamed of us, because He loves us.

2. Because He knows us thoroughly. Nothing is hidden from Him. He knows all our imperfections. He knows our weaknesses, how apt we are to yield to temptation, and the conflicts we have to engage in; and is not ashamed of us.

3. Because He knows what good is in us, for He put it there. He understands us, though sometimes we are foolish and forgetful, and seem to be ashamed of Him. He knows that at the bottom of our hearts, in spite of infirmities and shortcomings, we do love Him. Battling with our great foe, fighting the fight from day to day, though often wounded, faint, and ready to fall, He sees we still grasp the sword and hold the shield, and will not basely surrender to the enemy. Journeying on towards the heavenly city, though too often we stumble, and loiter, and wander, He sees we do not turn our backs on it and give way to obstructions, but resume our way and press forward. Beneath the faded exterior and withered blossom and leaf He sees the living germ that shall bud and blossom and bear fruit. "Beneath the seeming skeleton He sees ply the vital forces that shall one day form muscle and nerve, and develop into beauty and glory." He sees the first homeward step of the prodigal, the first tear, and hears the first stammering prayer. He sees the little patches of blue sky that tell that fair weather is coming. He sees the first few flowers of the spring that tell that winter is going. He sees the first few streaks of light that tell the day is dawning. He knows what He has done in us, and what He means to do, and sees the end—the perfection of His work of grace in us. He sees the full-blown flower in the bud. He sees the fair summer sky through the opening in the storm-cloud. He sees the perfect day in the first streak of daylight. He sees the mighty river in the little fountain. He sees the man in the new-born babe. And in us, fearing, sorrowing, struggling, fighting, bleeding, fainting, falling, He sees those He is leading to glory, who will soon be surrounding His throne, exulting in bliss, perfect as He is perfect—therefore He is not ashamed of us. Or, as Keble puts it, for

"Thou hast deign'd,
Creator of all hearts! to own and share
The woe of what Thou mad'st and we have stain'd;
Thou knowest our bitterness—our joys are thine—
No stranger Thou to all our wanderings wild:
Nor could we bear to think, how every line
Of us, Thy darken'd likeness and defil'd,
Stands in full sunshine of Thy piercing eye,
But that *Thou call'st us brethren!* sweet repose
Is in that word. The Lord who dwells on high
Knows all, yet loves us better than He knows!"

And is this the Jesus that some of you are rejecting? Is this the Christ that some of you are ashamed to own? Surely you do not know who it is you thus treat with neglect. He is man's best friend—our true Brother. Could He come nearer to us? Could He have shown more tender love to us? He comes among us still as He came at first—as our Brother. He appeals to us; He presses our hand; He mingles His tears with ours as a partaker of our infirmities, and beseeches us to be His. Brethren, what more could He have done to show His love and win us to Himself? O sinner! by all the beauty of His character, by all the disinterestedness of His love; by the genuineness of His brotherhood, embrace Jesus Christ as yours. He wants to be your Brother. He wishes you to love Him. Trust Him. Accept His salvation and rejoice in His love.

What an honour it is to have such a Brother! We may be obscure in the world; we may be in the humblest rank in society; but we may look up and say, "The King of kings upon the throne of the heavenly Majesty is one who is not ashamed of me. He calls me His brother, His sister. How safe we are! What harm can come to us when He who rules the universe is our Brother?" How sure we are of succour and sympathy in sickness, poverty, anxiety, pain, weariness, darkness! Will He who craved for the sympathy of the disciples withhold His sympathy from us? He is "a Brother born for adversity." When we are tempted, will not He who was tempted—the High Priest who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities—succour us? When we have to die, will not He who died for us be with us? If the pains of death be very sharp; if the valley be very dark; if the river be very deep, we may call on Him and say, "My Brother, help me. Put beneath me Thine everlasting arm, O my Brother!" And how He will welcome His brethren on the other shore! How He will take us by the hand, and bring us to His Father, and say: "Here am I and the brethren Thou hast given Me;" and He will acknowledge His relationship to us, and summon us to share with Him His everlasting glory! And then, brethren, when we are made like to Him, when we have lost every defilement and every infirmity, when we reflect His glory, when we see Him as He is, when we are perfect as He is perfect, throughout eternity "He will not be ashamed to call us brethren."—*Christian Leader.*

THE BIBLE.

The Bible is recommended by its own intrinsic merits, and the study of it is enforced by the example of eminent men, some of whom are thus honourably mentioned: "Sir W. Jones, a most accomplished scholar, who has made himself acquainted with the eight-and-twenty languages, has left it on record, that amidst all his pursuits the study of the Sacred Volume has been his constant habit. Sir Isaac Newton, the greatest of mathematicians, was a diligent student of the Bible. Mr. Locke, a man of distinguished acuteness in the study of the human mind, wrote to recommend the study of the New Testament, as having 'God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth unmixed with error for its matter.' Milton, the greatest of poets, evidently had his mind most deeply imbued with the study of the Word of God. Boerhaave, eminent as a natural philosopher, spent the first hour of every day in meditation on the sacred pages. Here no man can say that he has not leisure. A most beneficent institution of our Creator has given us, for this duty, a seven-a part of our time, one day in every week, one whole year out of every seven."

And why should not the Bible be in universal use? What is there for which it is not suited? What situation, what relation, what character, what circumstances are there, for which it does not provide? It defines the prerogatives of kings, and the duties of subjects. It contains orders for the priesthood, and is a directory for public worship. It is the servant's guide, and the master's memorandum book; a good primer for children, and a useful monitor for parents; a rule for husbands, and a law for wives; the young man's best companion, and the maiden's true mirror. It is a manual for the merchant, an armoury for the soldier, a chart for the voyager, a hand-book for the lawyer, a pharmacopœia for the physician, a dictionary for the theologian. It has a staff for age, a remedy for sickness, a balm for the lacerated heart, and an antidote for the bane of sin. It furnishes a refuge