

Contributors and Correspondents

CHRISTIAN BOLDNESS.

Christian courage or boldness is a noble quality. Man's noblest characteristic. It is not a mere presumptuous forwardness, or hypocritical ostentation, or self-righteous parade; like the Pharisee in the temple, or love-greetings in the markets, chief seats in the synagogues, or for a pretence, making long prayers. Concerning all spurious boldness, there is pronounced the greater condemnation. Neither does it imply uncharitableness, consciousness, intolerance, or coercion. To be truly bold in defending truth, and in denouncing error one need not be harsh and bitter against others. The highest courage is to be courageous in affection.

This true quality consists in an intelligent conviction of the truth of God's Word, and once being fully persuaded in our own minds, and cordially embracing its holy principles, then there is to be a frank, fearless, and faithful declaration of this truth in profession, and in practice, and in speech, and in life. The doctrines, principle, and precepts of Divine truth are to be woven into the texture of every relationship, business, condition and circumstance of life. This truth is to shine in the golden embroidery in every feature of character and in every form of action; wherever and among whosoever we are. The darker the surroundings, let it shine the brighter, instead of concealing it. The louder the din of wickedness, let its tones be the more certain. And the more corrupt and ungodly society, the more let it be extended in purity and piety of wealth and conversation. This is genuine Christian boldness.

It is to defend the truth of the right in the face of all opposing enemies; and to denounce the error and the wrong whenever manifest. Such courage will always be characterized by deep, self-humility, and strong faith in God, in its spirit and in its exercise, as has been beautifully and strikingly exemplified in the case of Stephen the proto-martyr. He was a man of deep humility, of strong faith, and of great Christian boldness. Men may possess many noble qualities, but this is the noblest; for while it detracts from one, it consecrates, hallows and crowns all.

Christian boldness is needed.

There is great need at the present time for its open and universal manifestation by and among Christians. We live in an age of self-assertion. All things are pressing to the front and claiming to be proved or tested; if thereby, they may share in the favours and popular rewards of the world. The most trifling hobby is pushed at railway speed into notice, and men are prone to lose sight of higher interests. Truth, with all its claims, must not be laggard. Believers must hold it forth. It is vital. It is the sword of life. Error is fatal, and the issues at stake are eternal. There may be many good and true things among men, but this is prominent in importance. The magician's serpents may be real serpents; that is not the question. Moses's serpent must assert its superiority of divine prerogative by swallowing up the others. And so this divine truth, in the lives of believers, must assert itself whenever it comes as the only way of salvation. It is born imperial and must rule. We are in possession of the light that is to illuminate the darkness of this world—of the truth that is to confound the error—of the love that is to overcome the hatred; of the life that is to save the dying world; and shall we lack boldness to press to the very front, and claim the right which good men have over bad men? The right which truth has over error! Error has no legitimate claim to propagation, truth has a universal claim. Wrong has no rights but to be condemned and punished. Right has the highest sanctions to assert itself.

The prominence given to the acquisition of material wealth, the attention given to mere mental studies and secular culture; and the eagerness to be surrounded with all modern improvements, these all indicate to the observant eye the necessity of Christian boldness. These may be all very good in themselves, but Christian men and women must just give greater prominence, in word and deed to the mandate, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." This must be first and chiefest, and all else must be subordinate.

There is a prevailing indifference, and a disregard to the sacred and divine aspect of things, which call for the exhibition of Christian boldness in the disciples of Christ. The question in many quarters nowadays is not, "Has God enjoined?" or "Is it obligatory?" But what will be most entertaining, interesting, convenient, enjoyable? In such an atmosphere we must re-assert that God has spoken this word, not man; that God has appointed it to be read, and that He be worshipped accordingly to its teaching; that God has instituted the Sabbath, and it must be kept holy, that God has appointed sacred ordinances, and these must be revered and observed; not for fear of man, but for fear of the righteous judgment of God.

Moreover, believers are actors on the public stage of society. The world will read the actors, when they will not study the play or drama. Hence the necessity of setting forth in all its force and beauty and purity, the blessed gospel. The honour of our Divine Master, the perishing condition of men; the establishment and extension of our Lord's kingdom in the world, all imperatively demand the

open and universal manifestation of true Christian boldness. He alone has the right to rule. All other powers which oppose are usurpers, and all who seek to dethrone Jesus are traitors. Shall we lie quiet under usurpation? Shall we be cowardly in presence of such high treason? Our claim to be bold and courageous is royal, it is from the authority and by the special prerogative of the king of kings and Lord of Lords. Now is the time too. The enemy is in the field and is boastful. The more need have we to be bold. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

SEMAJ.

ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.

One does not know which most to admire, Professor Tyndall's candour or his boldness. Nobody who reads this remarkable address can doubt that the learned author thinks he is right, and every truth-loving reader will sympathize with his choice, "if it is forced upon him," of "commotion before stagnation, the leap of the torrent before the stillness of the swamp." Professor Tyndall furnishes in his own productions, perhaps, a more convincing argument than any he cites in his eloquent defence of the literary acquisitions of students of science. He has not his superior among the ablest writers of the day "in clearness and vigor of literary style." It is lumpid as a running brook, clear as the crystals among which his investigations have largely lain. He attempted a difficult task when at Belfast he sought to place before his hearers an impartial survey of the past history and present condition of knowledge. On the whole, it ought to be acknowledged that he has acquitted himself of that task ably and impartially. He exhibits a very extensive, if not always a profound acquaintance with the literature of the subjects at which he glances. His point of observation is evidently a lofty one, and he looks down with a clear and dispassionate eye upon the several questions that he passes under review. At the same time, most thinkers will take issue with him as to the sources where the latest, the ripest and most reliable results in philosophy and theology are to be found. With regard to the former, he is prepared to accept of the Mills, father and son, and especially Herbert Spencer, as his high priests. And as to theology he seems not to desire to repair to the fountain head, the Scriptures, but accepts the positions taken by ill-informed ecclesiastics of 300 years ago, rather than the results of modern Exegetics. It was not to be expected that he should be familiar with more than what is generally accepted in any department of truth; whereas general acceptance never covers even the well ascertained facts in any domain of research. It may be regarded as a good test of truth so far as it goes, but it never goes far enough. As to Philosophy, it is obvious to every discerning reader that Tyndall assumes too much when he takes for granted that the facts of consciousness are all reducible to the principles which determine matter. From the very dawn of thought to the present day, it has been held by the great majority of thinkers, that there are two classes of facts lying within the scope of man's apprehension. There is a realm of "Metaphysics" as well as of "Physics," the former dealing with all those phenomena with which reason and reflection make us acquainted; the latter with the material phenomena of which the senses give us cognizance. Mathematical or mechanical laws are applicable only to the latter; while the former have rules of their own. It is a fact that I think, I feel, I believe, I wish, as certain as that I am protogen developed, that I was born, or that chemical substances are arranged in crystals. So that, after all, he seems to lay himself open to the charge which he makes against Goethe and other inquirers in departments of thought different from his own. If he could justly say of the author of Faust that "he could not formulate distinct mechanical conceptions; he could not see the force of mechanical reasoning; and in regions where such reasoning reigns supreme, he became a mere ignominious failure to those who followed him," the same he truly said of himself, respecting all questions that are to be tested by mental or moral principles. His special studies, it seems justifiable to say, have given such an unconscious bias to his mind, that he is incapable of estimating facts that are not determinable by mechanical laws. Although manifested by a man of very great erudition, he is after all only a specialist. He does, indeed, bestow a passing glance upon the emotional element in man's constitution, but in such a way as shows that he attaches comparatively little importance to it. But the emotional nature, comprehending what is known as the conscience as well as the feelings, and which may be summed up in the term religiousness, is the main element in our manhood. You might as well leave the sun out of the account, in describing the solar system, as attempt to explain the phenomena of humanity, without reference to what is known as the spiritual nature in man. Darwin, Huxley, and Herbert Spencer, with all their laudable generalizations, have not succeeded in offering anything like an intelligible or satisfactory theory of even animation, much less do any new facts, proved or alleged, brought to light by them, go the shortest way to bridge over the gulf that has been always held to exist between matter, even organized, and mind. They can, indeed, use indefinite terms, and assume that by employing these they settle the question beyond dispute. "Nascent senses," "the differentiation of a tissue at first vaguely sensitive all over," are the phrases by the use of which they would explain the phenomenon of life; while they speak of "the interaction of organism and environment through countless ages past" as sufficient to account for the "totality" of manhood, mind being "a result of the play between organism and environment through cosmic range of time," whatever that means. And as regards Theology, he assumes that it is hostile to science. But

he is careful never to appeal to its authoritative documents to prove this. He wants it judged by the ecclesiasticism of the Middle Ages; but I regret that authority as sincerely as Tyndall repudiates the authority of the early pioneers of science, who with a little truth mingled up a great deal of fiction. At the same time I do not think he does justice to the productions of the schoolmen, when he speaks of their "philosophy and its verbal wastes, which led to no issue, but left the intellect in everlasting haze." Perhaps they were guilty of "wordweariness;" but a believer in the theory of evolution ought to be the last to find fault with any period in the history of the human race required to bring it to its present state of perfection. Even a learned professor at Oxford in this year of grace 1875 daily makes use of the scholastic metaphysics, when he speaks of subjects and objects, of generals and particulars, of abstract and concrete, of genus and species. It is fashionable to deride Aristotle and the schoolmen; but those who affect to despise them owe more to them than they admit. Human thought, with its subtle processes, had sooner or later to pass through a probation of acute criticism, before it could become a perfectly reliable instrument in the pursuit of truth; and we may safely say that there could not be a John Tyndall, such as we have to-day, if there had not been a Duns Scotus or Thomas Aquinas in a former age.

Besides, it is not fair to charge even the Church of Rome with the persecution of Bruno, or Gassendi, or Copernicus, or Galileo. It was the scientific men of the age that persecuted them—at least it was in their quality of men of science rather than that of teachers of Christianity, that ecclesiastics denounced these advanced thinkers, some of whom were themselves ecclesiastics. In all matters of science the Church then as now was advised by scientific men, and if it pronounced erroneous views on such subjects, it was because the great body of the professor teachers of science were wrong. Professor Tyndall acknowledges that "the world" any more than the Church of that period "was not prepared to hear of the doctrine of atoms with tolerance." But even though the Church of the Middle Ages had arrayed itself against the science of the period, I should not concede to any man that Christianity in its relations to science ought to be judged by the attitude then assumed by ecclesiastics. Jesus and His Apostles are the authorized expounders of our religion; and I challenge any man to point to a single utterance of theirs that can be rightly interpreted as hostile to free thought or science. On the contrary, I claim that the Lord Jesus was the greatest extirminator of superstition and mere traditional authority that the world has ever seen, and he was worthily followed by the Apostle Paul, the apostle of the truth and the champion of liberty; and that Professor Tyndall is now in possession of the advantages which he enjoys, in virtue of the emancipation of the human intellect achieved by the triumph of the true principles of Christianity, as they were anew brought to light at the Reformation. Montreal, Jan. 21, 1876. R. O.

(To be continued.)

Psalms vs. Hymns.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—“Advance” seems to think that I purposely avoided the twenty-sixth verse (not twenty-fourth) of the eighteenth Psalm. I intended to place the metrical and prose versions of all the passages to which he referred side by side; but I found on copying three of them that my paper would be too lengthy if I gave the whole. I therefore stopped where I did, without once thinking of the verse in question. I think “Advance” for calling my attention to it. The intelligent reader can see, on examining the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses, in connection with each other—for both make but one sentence—that the metrical version expresses the idea of Divine recompense with peculiar vigour. It is a spirited and accurate rendering of the original; and if we meet with it in one of our great English poets we would greatly admire it. Surely “Advance” does not understand it, for I scarcely think he would purposely garble the passage by quoting a part of it, and thus obscuring the sense, when taken out of its connection with the preceding part. There are two words in this verse, and I believe that they are used nowhere else in the Psalms—perhaps not anywhere in the English Bible. I refer to “trythist” and “wight.” Both of them are very expressive words; and though “trythist,” like all similar parts of a verb used with an elision of the vowel in the last syllable, makes a somewhat rough ending of the line, yet that is preferable to a smoother form secured at the expense of the sense.

I fancy that your correspondent objects particularly to the word “trythist,” because it is somewhat antiquated; but surely he must not think that its rare use in modern composition renders it unpoetical. If he has the faculty of appreciating poetry, he will notice that this old-fashioned word is used to real advantage in the following verse:

“The lassos fast an' cleanly neat,
Mair brae than when they're due,
Their faces blythe, in' sweetly trythe,
Hearts loud an' warm, an' kin'.”

“Advance” is altogether mistaken if he supposes that the Scottish version of the Psalms was “composed or collated by Messrs. Stornhold and Hopkins,” for it was made by John Bousso.

Another correspondent, with apparent earnestness, asks “our sticklers for the exclusive use of the Psalms” to help him “out of the difficulty” of finding a Psalm suitable to be sung in connection with baptism when he has “the privilege of administering” that ordinance. He also says that he experiences the same difficulty with reference to the Lord's Supper, and likewise desires a similar assistance with reference to it. The state of your correspondent appears to be very distressing, and I would gladly help him if I could; but there are symptoms of his complaint that make me extremely doubtful of being able to relieve

him. With regard to baptism, there are many people who feel satisfied with such Psalms as refer to the Covenant of Grace, of which it is a seal, either as made with Abraham, or with David as the type of Christ. In connection with the Lord's Supper, besides the two grand thanksgiving Psalms, ciii. and cxvi. (some call the Supper the Thanksgiving), there are other Psalms, such as the xxii. xl. that describe the sufferings of Christ nearly as much in detail as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John do; and though they were composed hundreds of years before He came in the flesh, they describe His sufferings and death, together with the redemption that He wrought as if they had all taken place already. To the Church they now speak of accomplished facts as clearly as any modern Hymns can do.

If “Aleph” wishes to sing hymns on these or other occasions, why not do it? for I do not think that “our sticklers for the exclusive use of the Psalms” will trouble him much for it. At all events I do not believe that there is any law in the Canadian Presbyterian Church to punish or prevent him. Why then trouble the Church with a matter wherein men have all reasonable liberty already? Is it wise to attempt to commit the whole Church to a course to which some of its members and office-bearers have decided objections and conscientious scruples? I wish those restless spirits who are so fond of tampering with her forms of worship would keep quiet, and permit her to prosecute her great work in peace. I remain, yours truly, D.

Psalms vs. Hymns.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR.—The Rev. Wm. Inglis in his contribution to the discussion of the above subject, has not improved its tone by shifting the question of “orthodoxy” from the mode of worship to the worshipper. Were we to judge of the orthodoxy of our sanctuary services, prayer and preaching included, by the individual acts or even by the habitual walk of those who profess faith in Christ, the controversy would take a far wider range, and even the Word of God itself be called in question, as an infallible rule of faith and manners. Very likely the individual who would emphasize his disapproval of hymns in the graceless manner described, might, all things considered, be safely set down as possessing very little of a gracious or true missionary spirit but is this a legitimate result of the man's praising God, exclusively in the words David's Psalms, as the general drift of the charge would seem to imply? Or, to place the matter in its proper position in this discussion, I put the query thus: Is the spirit of the Psalms of David as now used in the service of praise, unfavourable to the cultivation of a true missionary spirit? Let your readers please turn with me to Psalm lx. v. 9 and 10. which read as follows:—

O God, thou to thine heritage
Didst send a plenteous rain,
Whereby thou, when it weary was,
Didst it refresh again.
Thy congregation tho', did make
Their habitation there;
Of thine own goodness for the poor,
O God, thou didst prepare.

Here we see the Lord preparing his people for missionary work, by first filling their souls with his own gracious fulness, in order that, having freely received, they might freely give: see verses xi.,—

The Lord himself did give the word,
The word a plenteous rain;
Great was the company of them
The same who published.

Or what do your readers think of the 18th and 19th verses, of the same Psalm, as a basis for missionary work?

Thou hast O Lord! most glorious,
Assembled up on high;
And in triumph victorious led
Captive captivity
Thou hast received gifts for men
For such as did rebel,
Yea, a zeal for them that God the Lord
In midst of them might avail.

Hos!d be the Lord, who is to us
Of our salvation God,
Who daily with his benefits
Capitously doth load.

(These last quoted verses, I would commend to the prayerful consideration of your other correspondent “Aleph,” who complains of his inability to find in the Psalms, any expression of praise for a risen Saviour. It is hoped he will find gospel here, as also direct terms in which to praise God for it.) To return from this digression, however, to the subject under consideration, I would ask,—can we in the whole range of modern hymnology, find anything better fitted to exhort and keep alive a true missionary spirit among God's people or prove more sustaining to the spirit of the missionary himself, pursuing his arduous work, than the 18th Psalm? Far more to the point, and more seemly in the mouth of a Christian, than the divolling nonsense embodied in many of our modern hymns of praise are the words of the majestic doxology with which that psalm concludes,—

His name for ever shall endure,
Lest like the sun it shall;
Non shall be bless'd in Him, and bless'd
All nations shall Him call.

Now bless'd 's the Lord our God,
The God of Israel,
For he alone doth wondrous works,
In glory that excel

And bless'd be his glorious name
To all Eternity
The whole earth let his glory fill,
Amen, so let it be.

While I certainly agree with Mr. Inglis in the belief that good old paths are not built on another man's foundation, he will at least admit with myself that they lie somewhere in the neighborhood of where good old men have trod.

I am, Sir, yours truly, AN ELDER.

WERE the happiness of the next world as closely apprehended as the felicities of this, it were a martyrdom to live; and unto such as consider none hereafter, it must be more than death to die, which makes us amazed at those audacities that dare be nothing and return unto their chaos again.—Sir Thomas Browne.

Psalms vs. Hymns.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR.—Your correspondent “Aleph” is no doubt correct, when he says the Psalms do not furnish suitable songs of praise for many subjects under the New Testament dispensation. But it is equally true, as was hinted at by a previous correspondent, D, that some of the hymns now in use, contain very “queer” not to say untrue expressions. Indeed he might have put in much stronger terms, as they not only contain occasional departures from truth and sense, but have absolutely revolutionized some views of religious truth. Take for example the *Heavenly state*. The uniform teaching of the psalms is that it consists in loving God, and keeping his commandments. The very first begins, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. But his delight is in the law of the Lord” 24th. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and pure heart.” The 119th is a magnificent acrostic, setting forth in a great variety of ways, the blessedness of observing the divine statutes, and of purity of heart and life. Indeed it pervades the whole of them. The New Testament teaches the same thing. Our Lord's first public announcement was “the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” When he sent out the twelve disciples, this was their commission, “as ye go preach, saying, the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” And when he was demanded of Pharisees when it should come, he answered them: “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you.” But what is the teaching of the hymn books on this subject? They ignore its very existence in this state of being, and assign to it a place so remote both in time and space, as to remove it entirely out of the category of Christian experiences. Its time is after death.

“Death is the messenger,
That calls the soul to Heaven.”
“Beyond the dark and narrow tomb
Appears the dawn of heaven.”
“Death like a narrow sea divides,
That Heaven's land from ours.”
Death shall land our weary souls,
Safe on the Heavenly shore

Its location, is away among the stars in “regions unknown.”

“When I can read my title clear,
To mansions in the skies.”
“O let my thoughts and wishes fly,
To those bright worlds beyond the sky.”
There is a place of sacred rest,
Far far, beyond the skies.

Even in that universally popular hymn “Nearer my God to thee,” the redeemed spirit is represented as “flying upwards cleaving the sky on joyful wing, till sun moon and stars are left behind in order to get, ‘Nearer to God.’” While the teaching of scripture is, that God comes to us, and dwells with us and in us. The very children in the Sunday schools are taught to sing of a “Father, (not here but) in the promised land” and this is “a happy land far, far away,” on reaching which they are to become, “Angels and with the angels stand.” The whole thing a visionary, sentimental groping in the dark, instead of a distinct conception of the apostles' assurance that “the kingdom of Heaven is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

Other doctrines have shared a similar fate, at the hands of these uninspired psalmists, so that before adopting an authorized hymn book for the use of the churches, it would be well to appoint an efficient committee of ministers and laymen to make the selection, and see that it is freed as much as possible from all “queer” and untruthful expressions, and from all unscriptural doctrines. Yours Truly, LAYMAN.

Desponding Christians.

Desponding Christians do not make successful workers or valiant soldiers. “Feeble hearts,” and “ready-to-halts,” and “little-faiths,” win no battles and wear no crowns. They are so occupied with themselves, with their own experiences, their own evidences, their changing moods, and feelings, that they have no time for manly, noble service. They are so busy in trying to perform “acts of faith, and having performed them, they are so intent on analyzing them in order to ascertain whether they be all of the exact quality or quantity which will recommend them to God, that they have no space for “joy in believing,” and no room for the free, large-hearted labour, which such joy cannot fail to lead to. Tossed up and down on the waves of unbelief, like Paul's ship in Adria, they are in fear of perpetual shipwreck, and have no heart to work. Shutting their eyes against the light, they grope their way uncertainly, and cannot run the race. Afraid to believe, but not afraid to doubt; afraid to trust, but not afraid to distrust; doubting themselves, and making that a reason for doubting God; putting away peace, but giving full scope to gloom; refusing light, but letting darkness reign within them; they are not in condition to do hard work, nay, to do any work. Strength comes from joy, and of that joy they have none. They refuse both food and medicine, and they become lean and sickly. They are fitter for the hospital than the battle-field. They seem, too, to get more and more emaciated, though the food provided is abundant. Labouring under what physicians call atrophy, the more they eat the less the less they seem to be fed.—HORATIUS BONAR.

The highest philological attainments sometimes fail to discover the intimate sense of Scripture, which, nevertheless, is at once obvious to a spiritual instinct. The Christian finds the living interpretation of Scriptural language in his own experience.—Liddon.