

ONLY.

Only a seed—but it chanced to fall
In a little cleft of a city wall,
And, taking root, grew bravely up,
Till a tiny blossom crowned its top.

Only a flower—but it chanced that day
That a burdened heart passed by that way,
And the message that through the flower
was sent,

Brought the weary soul a sweet content,

For it spoke of the lilies so wondrously clad,
And the heart that was tired grew strangely
glad

At the thought of a tender care over all,
That noted even a sparrow's fall.

Only a thought—but the work it wrought
Could never by tongue or pen be taught,
For it ran through a life like a thread of
gold,
And the life bore fruit—a hundred fold.

Only a word, but it was spoken in love,
With a whispered prayer to the Lord above,
And the angels in heaven rejoiced once
more,
For a new born soul "entered in by the
door."

ELSIE'S CHILD.

BY DINNIE M'DOLE HAYES IN "ILLUSTRATED CHRISTIAN WEEKLY."

Aunt Matilda was sitting in the twilight rocking, with her knitting-work, and humming,

"There is a land of pure delight," as she watched the sunset die on the mountains, when Elsie came down stairs, and drew a footstool to the old lady's knee. It was an old girlish habit; the nestling at auntie's knee when any trouble possessed her. She was understood without any words. The soft withered hand left the knitting, and fell to stroking Elsie's hair; its owner well knowing that the burden would be revealed before long.

Presently Elsie broke forth:

"Auntie, I do wish you could tell me how to manage Eddie better. I presume you were shocked at the scene we had to night: he determined not to go to bed and went to sleep only when too tired to keep his eyes open. It's some battle or other between his will and mine every day or two. I don't think I'm fit to be a mother!"

"Well, dear," said her aunt, "what are you going to do about it? You are most emphatically a mother."

"Yes, I am. I can't shift responsibility and I don't want to; but what shall I do? He must mind me, he must not be indulged in such fits of temper; and yet it takes all there is of me to control him while he is a baby. What will it be hereafter? He shall mind me, though." And with this very determined statement of the case, Elsie laid her head on the lap of peace beside her.

"As thy day, so shall thy strength be," said the old lady, "and don't be discouraged, Elsie. It don't seem very long since I saw you, a little black-headed fury, screaming and stamping your feet because your mother would not let you play with a water-pail."

"Poor mother!" sighed Elsie. "I just begin to realize what she endured to raise us all."

"She brought you up very creditably, if I am any judge. But about Eddie; you pray for him, do you not?"

"Pray for my child, aunty? Why, of course I do."

"Well, for what do you pray?"

"Why, I ask that I may be enabled to train him aright that he may become a child of God."

"And when do you expect him to become a child of God?"

"When he comes to years of discretion and able to choose, I hope."

"Elsie, Elsie," said the old lady, with unwonted warmth, "where in the Bible do you find a passage that justifies a mother in that manner? Why don't you ask the Lord to convert him now?"

"Aunt Matilda, Eddie is not three till next month."

"Old enough to love the Saviour, Elsie, if he is old enough to love you intelligently. Doesn't the whole drift of Scripture go to show that God loves to call a child? We read 'Suffer little children,' as if it were a tender, poetic sentiment to put over the grave of childhood, instead of a command of Christ for the living, and we go away from the spirit of the Word, and give our children over to something else until they are old enough to choose Him. Look at Hannah. Her child, dedicated to God before his birth, and given, in all the literalness of her faith, to the temple while he was but a baby. He grew up a child of God. It seems to me that Samuel and Hannah are a glorious type of the Christian mother and child. If, in those dim days of shadows, her faith could take so much, what may not the parent of these days hope to receive? Now that every soul may enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, you may give your son in his infancy in as literal a dedication as hers."

"You upset all my ideas of things," said her niece. "I have always thought of Eddie's accepting Christ when a boy or young man."

"According to your faith be it unto you. The promise is unto you and to your children. Why may not you and your husband ask that Eddie's early years may be sanctified by the rule of Christ? Thank God, your child has a Christian father."

"Yes, thank God," murmured Elsie, her cheeks wet.

"I have often thought of the subject in connection with my father's family," Aunt Matilda went on. "He was a godly man, full of faith and prayer. One day a young minister, with his wife and baby, was visiting at our house, and in conversation with him, father said, pointing to the baby on the floor, 'Now you have given your child to God in a solemn covenant, train her up in the fear of God, and in after years she will give her heart to the Saviour.'"

"I made no reflections upon it at the time, but since I have thought and prayed the thing out. All of father's six children were converted between the ages of fifteen and nineteen. Does it not look as if, in his own mind, he unconsciously limited the time, and his faith, the thing that God answers, took hold on that period of youth in praying for his children? I did not think that either he or mother expected us to be converted in childhood, faithful and devout though they were."

"Auntie, you let a new light upon me," cried Elsie, lifting her head. "As you make it seem, there is certainly a great incongruity between the facts of the Gospel and the way we treat our children. Why, the great stumbling-block in the way of accepting the truth is its simplicity, and yet we think our children must grow older before they are able to take it."

"Yes," said Aunt Matilda, "the very fact that one is in his simple childhood is the best thing in his favor. A child should take in the knowledge and love of Jesus as it does the sunshine, or its bread and milk."

"The subject has a wonderful breadth to it," said Elsie. "I suppose every mother of a strong-willed child feels sometimes that she works against fearful odds. But with God in the child's heart, working through the child's faith, as well as through the parents', there must be victory. But, oh, what kind of mothers must we be?"

UNDEFINED RELIGION.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

My old Scotch friend, Dr. William Arnot, used to say that the Apostle Paul and the Apostle James stood like two noble athletes, back to back, but

both contending for the two opposite poles of the same glorious Gospel. Paul was the champion of faith as the only ground of justification. James was the champion of godly living as the fruit and the evidence of inward faith. He was a blunt, trenchant writer, and had no more patience with sham than had that rough Scotch iconoclast who was buried the other day at Ecclefechan.

James denounces two sorts of false religion: one a system of outward ceremonial, and the other of mere inward emotion. Then he gives two very essential characteristics of pure and undefiled religion—viz.: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world." Of course, the apostle did not mean that these were the whole of Christianity, any more than Sir Walter Scott meant that he had not given his sons any other education when he tersely said "I have taught my boys only two things: to ride a horse and to speak the truth." Manliness and truthfulness were two prime essentials, in Sir Walter's estimation. James' two essentials in Christian character were pity for the suffering and purity before the world. He who is lacking in these is lacking in true religion. He presupposes faith in Christ and regeneration by the Spirit, and these two traits of charity and purity are the evidences of genuine grace in the heart. We need a reaffirmation of these two sterling evidences of true piety in these days.

I. There is a kind of benevolence which aims to commute with God by the mere payment of money. It is not so cruel as to leave the widow and the orphan (who are the Apostle's types of the needy and destitute) to starve. Therefore, it contributes to found asylums and to establish orphanages; but the *personal sympathy*—which is more to the suffering often than silver and gold—it is too indolent or too selfish to bestow. Christ exemplified the power of personal attention when He went to lodge with the social outcast, Zaccheus, when He dined with Simon the leper, and when He led the poor blind man out of the town. Christ taught the secret of all successful charity, yes, and of all successful effort to win sinners to the gospel of salvation. It is by personal sympathy. When you take a poor family a loaf or a ton of coal, you have opened the way for a Bible. Each one has its element of true religion. When you have established a hold on an unconverted sinner by personal kindness, you have got a key to his or her heart for the admission of your gospel of eternal life. Here is a hint for Sunday-school teachers who wish to win their scholars to the Saviour. Here is a hint for pastors, and here is a rebuke also to all that class of rich professors who imagine that it is enough to throw greenbacks into a contribution box, and begrudge the time, the toil, and the wear on their nerves which are required in personal visitation and sympathy with the suffering. If all the well-to-do Christians in our land would divide up the poor and the vicious among themselves, and each Christian endeavor to *look after* one or more, we could dispense with a large amount of asylum, retreat, and reformatory, as well as poor-house and penitentiary. Long before millennium comes, Christians will find out that they cannot do Christ's work by "farming out" their charities or by turning over the neglected classes to organized machinery. The only way to bring suffering and sinning human nature to God is by personal effort, and personal effort must be born of personal sympathy.

II. The other test of sincere piety is to keep unspotted from the world. This does not mean monasticism; nor does it mean the hateful pharisee-

ism that says "Stand aside, for I am holier than thou." True godliness is no more to be taken out of business, out of social life, and out of politics than the leaven is to be taken away from the meal or the salt is to be barreled up by itself. Christ puts his followers right into this wicked world and commands them to let their light so shine that men may see their good works and be led to honor God. The Christian who is afraid to mix with his fellow-men, lest his godliness be rubbed off, has really but little godliness to lose.

What the apostle enjoins is that Christians keep themselves clean and uncontaminated by the sinful spirit and the sinful customs of those who have no fear of God before their eyes. Ye are not of the world, said Christ to His disciples. He knew that the world has its reigning spirit, its usages, its laws, and its pleasures, which do not recognize any Christ, or any holiness, or any Heaven. With all this His blood-bought Church must have no more communion than light with darkness. "The world that spots and stains us," says Robertson, of Brighton, "is the spirit of evil around us." This spirit rejects Christ and His humbling, self-denying religion. It does not persecute Christians in these days, but takes the life out of their spirituality. This world draws up to a Christian with its cozening invitations, as Judas did to his Master, when he said: "Whomsoever I kiss, take him and hold him fast." It is the sinful world's treacherous kiss that smirches a follower of the holy Jesus. One reason why some Christians make no more headway in the spiritual life is that the world holds them fast.

We pastors detect this demoralizing influence of worldly conformity upon young converts. As long as they keep true to their covenant and find their richest satisfactions in serving their Master they grow in grace; but as soon as they attempt to serve Christ and Mammon also the compromise fails, and Mammon gets the whole. As soon as they begin to "fulfil the lusts of the flesh" they cease to "walk in the Spirit." Self-indulgence grows. Pride grows. Their piety begins to feel the unhappy atmosphere, as the lungs feel foul air. New tastes and appetites are formed. The dancing-party crowds out the prayer-meeting. Luxurious living begins to monopolize time and thought and purse, so that God is robbed outright. Gradually, the white garment of the disciple of Christ begins to show ugly spots, until it is hard to discover in it any beauty of holiness. The dividing line disappears, and the sworn follower of Christ becomes the partner and actually the slave of the world which crucifies his Lord. The secret of the weakness of the Church in these days is that it is losing its faith in God's Word, and its steadfast loyalty to Christ's commandments. How can it draw an evil world up out of the pit, when it is losing its foothold and allowing the world to draw it in?

There are two safeguards. One is to seek such pure, sweet satisfaction in doing good and in serving Jesus that we shall not hanker after the world's poisonous delights. The King's banquet makes the husks of sinful earth seem tasteless. The other is communion with God. The Apostle James describes undefiled religion as "before God our Father." We are to live in His eye. As the heliotrope turns its face to the sun, we are *always* to behold the face of our Father in Heaven. Brethren, when we see most of the beauty of Christ and the glories of our inheritance, we shall care