

Contributors and Correspondents

For the Presbyterian.

ASSURANCE.

BY RODRICK HENDERSON, FLORIDA.

"He"—say one—"that believeth on the Son hath the witness in himself." There is the outward witness—the testimony of God. As soon as a man knows that he is a sinner, and believes in Jesus as the Saviour he needs, he has the witness in himself. The outward witness, as sure him that Christ is life—not merely the way that leads to life at last, but life now, even "eternal life."

When we accept of this "life," in other words believe "that Jesus is Christ, we are "born of God." What better witness could there be than consciousness of life? Many of God's children never stop to question whether they are "born again" or not. They are sure of it. When Lazarus "came forth" instantaneously into light and life, he had the strong testimony of consciousness that he was alive. The man who springs instantaneously, at "the voice of the Spirit that quickeneth," out of death into life, has the clear, convincing testimony of consciousness.

But how is it with him whose conversion was gradual, and imperceptible to himself and others? Can he know that he is a Christian? In regard to our physical life, not one of us is conscious of when he began to live. The great fact is we are living now. We know that we are living. We have not the least doubt of it. So a man may not be able to tell when he was converted, or how he came to believe in Christ, but still know that he is just as certainly spiritually as physically alive. If he is alive that is the point, and not so much how or when the change took place. It we know "that whereas we were once blind now we see," it is enough.

But a Christian may not be conscious of life, and so be in trouble for want of evidence that he is a child of God. A sick man may be altogether unconscious, and have the appearance of being dead, and yet be alive. When the physician tests him with his instruments and appliances he finds the man "is not dead, but sleeping." Let us try by God's Word the man who says that he has no evidence of being alive spiritually, but that he should like to have. Is not this very anxiety a very good "witness"? A man who thinks himself not yet God's child, may show by his yearnings and fears that he is "one of the number." But suppose we try such an one by the Word of God, and the fundamental doctrines of it: "Brother, do you know that you are a sinner before God? "Ah, yes!" "Do you know that you are unworthy of mercy?" "Yes, unworthy!" "Do you know that Jesus died for sinners, and that by believing on Him you are saved?" "Yes, I believe all that God says about Christ." "Well, just listen: 'if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive'; 'whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God'; 'whoever believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.'" Those passages are significant. Look now at the passage quoted at the beginning of the article, "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." This means that each and all who believe on Jesus Christ as the Son of God have the witness of the Spirit. They may not think so. They may construe this witness into evidence that they are yet unsaved. On the other hand the same apostle teaches that those who do not accept Christ on the testimony of the father have not the witness of the Spirit. They may believe that Christ was a perfect man—that they are to be saved by copying His example—they may have all such ideas of Christ as these and believe in this Jesus, in this way, for salvation; but God is not going to give them the witness, because they cannot in this way get life. There can be nothing to witness if there is no life. There can be no life only by believing on Christ as God reveals Him to us. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." If a man profess to have this inward witness let him be assured that he is not a child of God if he does not believe that Jesus is the Saviour, and the only one. There is salvation in none but Jesus; and there is salvation in Jesus only by believing in Him as "God manifest in the flesh"—believing that He died for us—that "by His stripes we are healed." There is salvation in no other Christ but this. "He that hath the Son—as God bears witness to Him—"hath life; and he that hath not the Son"—as God bears witness to Him—"hath not life," and therefore cannot have the witness. The Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, will never enter the heart of a man who does not believe in Jesus as the atonement and only atonement for his sin. If you do not believe what God says you make Him a liar; and do you think the Holy Ghost will enter any soul, to renew it and to abide there, who makes God a liar? But wherever there is true faith in God, and in Christ, there the Holy Spirit dwells.

As before stated, the witness is in the heart of every Christian, let him know it or not. But all are called upon to have full assurance. The apostolic language is, "I know in whom I have believed." "I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me from the love of God." "We know that we have passed from death unto life." John says that the very reason why he wrote his first epistle was that they might know that they had eternal life.

If we profess to be Christians we have no right to doubt our salvation. We dishonor God by so doing, because he tells us to be sure of it. We cannot be strong in the power of God's might, as God tells us to be, and as the world needs us to be, if we have doubts about our acceptance. How much would the early Christians have accomplished for Christ, if they had said, "I am afraid I am not a Christian?" or, "I hope I am a Christian?" We are soldiers of Christ, and ought to be sure whether we are on His side, or on the devil's. What would you think of a soldier in the army of Wellington, with his British uniform on and all, if he said he was not quite certain which he belonged to, Wellington or Napoleon? We are told to know that we have eternal life so that we can go on in the Divine life, growing stronger in the faith, and so better able to do our Master's work. "Those things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and yet may believe"—not begin to believe, for he has spoken of that already, but go on increasing in faith—"that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God."

Now, how can the doubting Christian become sure that he is saved? As already noticed it is God's will that all who believe in Christ may know that they have eternal life. God wants His children "to have full assurance. It cannot but be so. It would be astonishing if God would want any Christian to be in darkness. A father would not want his boy to fear that he might only be a stranger after all, without any right to the father's name. A parent would be distressed if a child of his were possessed of such a thought. Our heavenly Father wants all His children to know that they have eternal life. But how is this to be known? John tells us: "and this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to his will He heareth us." There is nothing more in accordance with God's will, for our sakes, and the sake of the cause of Christ, than that we know we are saved. God hears such prayer. "And if we know that He hears us . . . we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." So, if we ask for assurance, knowing that God hears us, then, we have it. Knowing that God listens to us in itself assurance that God answers, and therefore that we have eternal life.

"Presbyterian Record" and Sabbath School Lessons.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—On the title page of the Presbyterian Record I notice the significant patronimic: "By authority of the General Assembly." I suppose all contained in it to be regarded as under that seal. On page 61 (March No.) are comments on Sabbath School lessons by one Rev. Geo. M. Grant, M.A. On Elijah's attachment to Elijah he says: "Love makes the servant disobey his revered master." That is information to me. I had just been telling my pupils that it was not disobedience. That when Elijah asked him to renounce, and not trouble himself making toilsome journeys with his Master, he would not accept of the leave granted, but like Ruth with Naomi did more than was asked. The exposition in the BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN says it was "not a command" made to Elijah, and "Elijah who, with all his stern independence, craved for sympathy must have been gratified by affectionate care." Well, "by authority of the General Assembly," I stand rebuked for my ignorance, I must remember henceforth that love makes a servant obedient to his Master.

On page 62, concerning the destruction of forty-two children by two she bears, our rev. teacher says, "This is the one exception to the beneficent character of Elisha's many miracles." In my stupidity I did not know that was one of Elisha's miracles at all. I thought Elisha cursed the wicked youths in the name of the Lord, and she bears came and tore them. Newman Hall says, "It was God, not Elisha, who sent the bears." What a boon it is to be a learned theologian. It will take the authority of the General Assembly to keep me from misleading my class. It seems I make so many mistakes. The learned expositor says, "that the children made the instruments, showed a recklessness of unbelief on the part of parents that could be punished in no other way. And for the children, it was true mercy to take them from such parents." Well, you see I was all astray again. I did not know there was no other way of punishing the parents; much less did I understand that she bears were sent to tear these wicked children as an act of mercy. Query—did they drive them off the earth, with Elisha's curse in the name of the Lord upon them, straight to heaven? It seemed to me so much like a judgment, that I never thought of it as a dispensation of mercy. Yours etc., IGNORANCE.

The excesses of our youth are drafts upon our old age, payable with interest about thirty years after date.

Encouraging Progress.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—It is proposed in the following article to give a brief history of the rise and progress of a congregation of Presbyterians in the village of Brucefield, county of Huron. This history will extend over a period of eighteen months, since its formation, and will show what united effort and firm determination can accomplish on the part of comparatively few individuals, that the blessings of a preached Gospel and other ordinances of God's worship shall be continued and enjoyed by the present, and handed down to future generations in all the purity and sympathy which so eminently characterizes the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

On the 23rd Sept., 1876, forty-five families in and around Brucefield, holding to the basis of union which the Presbyterian Church in Canada now stands, left their former place of worship with all that they had to a very large extent been the means of procuring, and adjourned to another building, where they took into consideration the necessary steps to pursue in order to procure for themselves a supply of religious ordinances; delegates were chosen and appointed to appear at the next meeting of Presbytery for this purpose. The Presbytery at once recognized and granted the claim, and supplied them for the three following months; after which at next meeting, four members of Presbytery were appointed to supply them along with a retired minister in the neighborhood, until they were organized into a regular congregation. This being effected at the next meeting of Presbytery, they appointed Revs. F. McQuig and H. Matheson and J. McAsh, elders, a session; and having intimated their desire to have a minister, they asked to hear probationers, that from them they might choose a pastor. At this stage of their history a meeting was held in January 1876, that an opportunity of securing a most suitable site for a church with a very suitable house thereon for a manse offered itself; this being obtained the congregation set to work with a will, and with a great many difficulties to contend with, provided, and had conveyed to the grounds all the material for the building. The work commenced at the opening of the spring, and the whole was completed by the end of October.

And now their stands in Brucefield a Church, an ornament to the village and a credit to the congregation. The building was formerly opened on Sabbath, November 26th, 1876, Rev. Mr. Fraser of Kincardine conducting the services in the morning and evening, and Rev. Mr. Ball of Guelph in the afternoon. On all occasions the church was filled to overflowing, and the interest manifested in the preaching of the Gospel and other services was altogether unprecedented in this neighborhood, and we may safely say that the recurrence of the Sabbath ever since, awakens in the minds of all a desire to be found in the courts of the Lord's house. On the following evening a soiree was held, tea was served in the church to the satisfaction of the most fastidious; the intellectual and vocal part followed. We were favored with the presence of every minister in the neighborhood, together with the Rev. Mr. Fraser of Kincardine. The choir of the Seaforth congregation that stands unequalled in this part of the country favored us also with their presence. The speeches and music on this occasion were such as will not soon be forgotten. The proceeds on all these occasions amounting to \$260, went to defray the expenses of the interior furnishing of the church and supplementing the building fund, and it is not the least pleasing part of their history to be able to state that the church is being occupied free of debt. A short time subsequent, a meeting of the congregation was held at which it was decided to ask leave to moderate in a call to a minister; previous to this the Rev. T. Thompson of McKillop, received the unanimous call of the congregation, but for various reasons then given, he did not then see his way clear to accept, but nothing daunted and believing him to be the man for Brucefield Church, a call was extended to him a second time, which he accepted; and now Mr. Thompson is the minister of the Union Church, Brucefield, at a stipend of \$700 and a manse. His induction took place on the 21st of February last, the Rev. Mr. McQuig of Orlinton, presiding. Rev. H. McQuary of Wingham, preached. Rev. Mr. Hartley, of Rodgerville, addressed the minister; Rev. Mr. Gracey, Thames Road, the people, after which, the Rev. Mr. McQuig introduced Mr. Thompson to the people, and a cordial welcome accorded to their new pastor, was manifested by many a hearty shake of the hand as the congregation passed out of the church. The managing committee met in the manse, and handed out to their new minister, seven months stipend in advance. A soiree was held in the evening, when addresses were delivered by the already mentioned Reverend gentlemen, together with the Rev. Mr. Goldsmith, of Sestorth, and the Rev. H. Cameron, of Kippen; a very handsome amount was realized and appropriated in procuring books for the Sabbath school library. In conclusion we would not forget to mention the good feeling and harmony that has pervaded the minds of all engaged in carrying on the work, and many an earnest heart and willing hand strove with each other, as to who should accomplish most. We have already occupied too much of your valuable space, but have been actuated by a desire that others placed in alike difficult circumstances, should be encouraged, that with a strong pull and a long pull, and a pull altogether, how much may be done by a few individuals, with a blessing of the great head of the Church, when united together in harmony and good feeling, pervading all other operations.

The greatest man is he who chooses the right with invincible resolution; who resists the sorest temptations from within and without; who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully; who is calmest in storms, and most fearless under menace and frown; and whose reliance on truth, on virtue, on God is most unflinching.

God's Love.

In 1867, Mr. Moody met in Dublin the boy preacher. The latter afterwards came over and preached seven successive nights from "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." On the seventh night, said Mr. Moody, he thus began: "My friends, for a week I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you. I have been hunting all day for another text, but I can't find one so good as this. My poor stammering tongue won't let me tell the whole story. If I might borrow Jacob's ladder and climb up into heaven, and ask he who stands in the presence of Almighty God, how much God loved the world, Gabriel could only say: 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'" My friends, I have been trying to tell this story ever since. If I see a poor drunkard reeling through the streets, I want to go and tell him that God don't want him to perish, and that Christ desired to redeem him. "Greater love has no man than this, that he lays down his life for his friends; but Christ laid down His life for His enemies." He loves them unto the end, although they betray Him. God's love is unchangeable. We love a man as long as he is worthy, but when he is proved unworthy we cease to love him. But God loves us always. His love is unchangeable. And let me tell you this: If you go down to hell, it must be under God's love. There was a mother that had a son that was arrested for murder. The father disowned him. But the mother went down to the prison, and whenever she could, she went into his cell, and prayed with him, and counseled him, and cheered him. She didn't care for the world. It was nothing to her what the world said. She would be with her boy, for there was nobody else in the world to love him, and when the boy stood in the dock, and the awful sentence of death was passed upon him, she felt it more than the boy did. Her love was stronger than death, and she loved him through it all. She will not go to the execution, but she will beg with her tear-filled eyes for her boy's dead body, and when she has received it, she will lay it in the ground tenderly, and wet his grave with her tears. But great as is that love, it is not as great as God's love for us. Even a mother will sometimes forget her duty and her love, but God says, "Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee." His love is not only unchangeable, but it is unfailing. You may think that He does not love you, but He does. He wants to just woo you to Himself; He wants to forgive you your sins; He wants to make you an heir to his kingdom, if you will only just come to Him and let Him.—Moody.

Momentous Question.

Is it possible that Christianity has no effective remedy for the world's greatest prevalent curse?

Must that power which, in the centuries past, has conquered kingdoms, overthrown tyrannies, changed the fate of nations, destroyed that slavery which bound millions of human bodies in fetters and chains, sit down before the evil of intemperance in hopeless defeat?

Is the gospel of Christ the power of God to deliver a human soul, only? Has it no might to break the chains that bind society to this "Juggernaut" this insupportable burthen, beneath which thousands of Christian families groan, and under which even the nation reels? Is Christ to be robbed of the jewels that he purchased with his blood, by this destroyer of millions, and his church continue to look on with comparative indifference? Will the opening of church doors on the Sabbath, and a few times during the week, the performance of usual religious services in the family and the church, destroy this monster crime of the ages? As soon will the boy and his dipper relieve Niagara's cataract of its volume and power. The whole enginery of moral and religious power must be brought to bear directly upon the strongholds of this iniquity; backed by the prayer room and the pulpit, and energized by the faith of Jesus and the spirit of God.

Ordinary warfare will make no impression upon this mail-clad diabolus; the lance and spear have failed to penetrate to his vitals. A sad spectacle presents itself, when, in the face of the church of Jesus, this Philistine defies the armies of the living God, and triumphantly enters family, altar and pulpit, to grasp and destroy the fairest and best. Must this humiliation continue. Is there no hope?

To you, reader, we look for an answer. Will you take the field for Jesus against this foe? Remember that the "battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift, but to those, however weak, who go forth in the name of the Lord Jehovah. Surely there must be a David, somewhere, who shall lead God's hosts to victory. Young man, young woman, up! gird you! and with whatever instrument you may be skilled, hurl it against this foe of God and man!

Christianity is the only vital force that claims any power to overthrow this evil. Can it do it? Will it do it? Jesus waits the answer, "from henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his footstool." A heathen world looks for the answer; and upon that answer depends the extension of Christ's kingdom! Now, every State in the American Union (excepting three—Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont) lies powerless in the hands of this "gigantic crime of crimes." Now, "upon the side of the oppressor there is power," but does not the time hasten when He will "judge the fatherless and the oppressed?"

"When wealth and power have had their hour Comes for the weak the hour of God."

Is my life one of self-denial, and self-conquest, and living to God? Am I willing to bear toil, weariness, want, hardship, and if need be, suffering for Christ's sake? Do I endeavor, with Divine help, to meet in a right spirit the petty annoyances and vexations, and the little trials of every-day life? In these, and in all things, do I cheerfully take up my cross for Jesus' sake, remembering that if I know no cross I shall receive no crown?

The Death of the Christian.

BY THE REV. J. B. BURNS.

The Angel slept; a light shone in the prison; An angel touched his side, "Arise!" he said, and quickly he hath risen, His fettered arms untied.

The watchers saw no light at midnight gleaming, They heard no sound of feet; The gates fly open, and the saint, still dreaming, Stands free upon the street.

So when the Christian's eyelids droop and close, In nature's parting strife, A friendly angel stands where he reposes, To wake him up to life.

So give a gentle blow, and so release The spirit from its clay; From sin's temptations and from life's distresses He bids it come away.

It rises up and from its darksome mansion It takes its silent flight; And feels its freedom in the large expansion Of heavenly air and light.

Behind it hears time's iron gates close faintly; It is now far from them; For it has reached the city of the satiate—The new Jerusalem.

A voice is heard on earth of kinefolk weeping The loss of one they love; But he is gone where the redeemed are keeping A festival above.

The mourners throng the ways and from the temple The funeral bell tolls slow; But on the golden streets the holy people Are passing too and fro;

And saying as they meet, "Rejoice! another, Long waited for, is come;" The saviour's heart is glad, a younger brother Hath reached the Father's home.

"Tis a Point I Long to Know."

It is questionable whether the beloved Newton did not make a mistake when he wrote this hymn. It represents a species of morbid anatomy that is too often met with, but that ought not to be encouraged. O Christian man, will you never settle this question? Will you never cease to brood over your wretched heart, and to ask, Why am I thus? Is it your duty to decide the case. Shall the soldier on the battle field, instead of valiantly assailing the enemy, sit down in a retired nook, and inquire which side he is on? Such soldiers will never storm the battlements of Satan.

Our great Captain has set before the Church an arduous task, but a certain victory. A world is to be won to God. But for the promised help of our Almighty leader our hearts might well fail us. But if God be for us, who can be against us? Rousing ourselves then at the rally cry, let us lay aside the weight of misgiving as to our spiritual condition, and go forth heartily to the conflict.

We shall not make many efforts for the salvation of our fellow creatures until our doubts shall be dissipated, and we shall know that God is ours indeed. The dull and lifeless frame will give place to zeal and animation. Prayer will not prove such a task and burden. We shall not turn our eyes so exclusively within to look at the darkness and the vanity and the wildness there. No! we shall look more unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. Then the flame of His love shall kindle ours, and irradiate our darkness and consume our unbelief.

Doubting Christian, you belong to the invalid corps. Your proper place now is in the hospital. See if you cannot get well and report the duty. Hobble forth on your crutches and carry some water to those who are bearing the burden and heat of the day. Up and be doing! and God will bless you.

Random Readings.

Dr EDWARDS, speaking of beer-drinkers, says: "Their diseases are always of a dangerous character, and in case of accident they never undergo even the most trifling operation with the security of the temperate. They almost invariably die."

LIFE passes, work is permanent. It is all going—fading and withering. Youth goes. Mind decays. That which is done remains. Through ages, through eternity, what you have done for God, that, and only that, you are. Deeds never die.—F. W. Robertson.

No two things differ more than hurry and dispatch. Hurry is the mark of a weak mind; dispatch of a strong one. A weak man in office, like a squirrel in a cage, is laboring eternally, but to no purpose, and is in constant motion without getting on a jot. Like a turn-stile, he is in everybody's way, but stops nobody. He talks a great deal, but says very little. He looks into every thing, but sees into nothing. He has a hundred irons in the fire, but very few of them are hot, and with those few that are he only burns his fingers.

Mr. MOONY is opposed to shouting. A Methodist brother could not hold in any longer when the great evangelist was preaching about "Heaven, one evening last week, and burst out with "Glory! Amen!" "Young woman," said Mr. Moody, pointing to a young lady immediately in front of him; "young woman, never mind that man shouting out there; just see that you don't lose your crown, that's all. That's more important than any thing else. Don't lose your crown. See that you get into the kingdom of heaven." Rather embarrassing for the young woman.

The sight of a penitent on his knees is a spectacle which moves heaven, and the compassionate Redeemer, when He beheld Saul in that situation, exclaimed, "Behold, he prayeth," will not be slow to strengthen you by His might and console you by His Spirit. When a "new and living way is opened into the holiest of all," by the blood of Jesus, not to avail ourselves of it; but to prefer remaining at a giddy distance, will be a source of insupportable anguish when we shall see others entering into the kingdom, and ourselves shut out. It is impossible too often to inoculate the momentous truth that the character is not formed by passive impressions, but by voluntary action; and that we shall be judged hereafter, not by what we have felt, but by what we have done.—R. Hall.