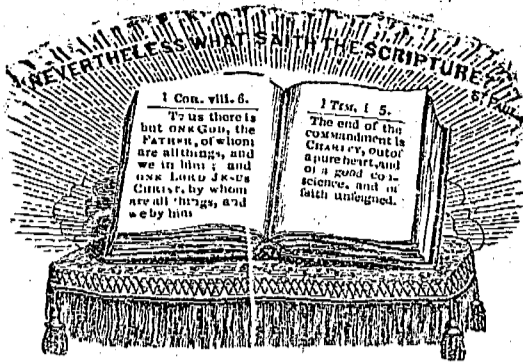


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CHRIST THE FOUNDATION OF THE BELIEVER'S HOPE.

BY REV. HENRY WARE.

We may say once more, Christ is the only foundation of the believer's hope. It is from him and his gospel, that we learn those truths concerning the mercy and placability of God, which gave hope of pardon on repentance, and of acceptance in our imperfect attempts to please him;—from him alone, also, that we derive sufficient assurance of a future life, and an existence of eternal purity and peace. Upon these points the understanding might speculate, and sometimes plausibly conjecture; but what could it ever know? What did it ever know in the uninstructed lands of heathenism? The whole history of the world teaches us, that on these points, so interesting to man's heart, so essential to man's happiness, there has been nothing but superstition and dim conjecture, except where the gospel has been revealed. It is the message of Jesus Christ, which has taught the grace of Almighty God; which has proclaimed his long suffering and compassion; which has encouraged sinners to repent and return by invitations of forgiving love; which has declared the kind allowance of our Father for unavoidable imperfection, and thus given courage to human weakness. It is this only, which proclaims to a world lying in wickedness, that "God hath not appointed it to wrath, but to obtain salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ;" and "hath sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Man—doubting, frail, tempted, fearful—hears the voice of love, and looks up in the humble assurance of faith. No longer an alien, but a son, he seizes the outstretched hand of his blessed Lord, and goes on his way rejoicing.

There is another hope which he finds on the same rock—the hope of coming immortality. Once he was in bondage through the fear of death. But now, his Saviour hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. The bitterness of death is past. There is light within the tomb. There is a visible region of glory beyond it. And the child of earth, who once shuddered and was wretched in the dread of everlasting extinction, is now able to smile upon the dreary pathway to the grave, and triumph over the terrors of corruption.

What an inestimable privilege is this! With his open bible, before him, and the image of his gracious Saviour in his mind, how does the conscience-stricken penitent rejoice amid his tears, in the hope of offered pardon! How does the humble and self-distrusting believer, who stands trembling and abashed in the presence of infinite purity—find comfort in the encouraging accents of Christ's soothing voice, and the hope of acceptance at the throne of grace. How does the dying offspring of the dust—to whom existence, and friendship, and virtue are dear—rejoice with holy gratitude in the hope, that his existence shall be renewed, and his desires satisfied, in heaven. Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift—this glorious hope, which, in every season of trial and every stormy strait of sorrow and fear, is "an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast."

It is not necessary to go further than this. We perceive that the foundation of the Christian church, and of all true religion in the world; and of individual faith, knowledge, virtue, and hope, is laid in Jesus Christ. All our religious light, security, and peace rest upon this rock. Other we have none, and can have none. Let us have this, and where shall we go? who will teach us the words of eternal life? who instruct us in the things which pertain to our everlasting peace? who guide us to the Father of love; and open to us the gate of heaven? Every other guide is uncertain; every other path is dark. Men have followed them; and gone astray; have walked in them and stumbled; have sought rest in them, and found none. There is none other commissioned from heaven, but the Son of the Virgin. "There is no name given among men whereby we can be saved, but that of Jesus Christ."

TRUE GLORY.

There is another and a higher company, who thought little of praise or power, but whose lives shine before men with those good works which truly glorify their authors. There is Milton, poor and blind, but "bating not a jot of heart or hope,"—in an age of ignorance, the friend of education,—in an age of servility and vice, the pure and uncontaminated friend of freedom,—tuning his harp to those magnificent melodies which angels might stoop to hear,—confessing his supreme duties to Humanity in words of simplicity and power. "I am long since persuaded," was his declaration, "that to say or do aught worth memory and imitation, no purpose or respect should sooner move us than love of God and mankind. There is Vincent de St. Paul, of France, once in captivity at Algiers. Obtaining his freedom by a happy escape, this fugitive slave devoted himself with divine success to labors of Christian benevolence, to the establishment of hospitals, to visiting those who were in prison, to the spread of amity and peace. Unknown, he repaired to the galleys at Marseilles, and, touched by the story of a poor convict, personally assumed his heavy chains, that he might be excused to visit his wife and children. And when France was bleeding with war, he appeared in a different scene. Presenting himself to her powerful minister, the Cardinal Richelieu, on his knees he said,—“Give us peace; have pity upon us; give peace to France.” There is Howard, the benefactor of those on whom the world has placed its brand, whose charity—like that of the Frenchman, inspired by the single desire of doing good—penetrated the gloom of the dungeon, as with angelic presence. "A person of more ability," he says, with sweet simplicity, "with my knowledge of facts, would have written better, but the object of my ambition was not the Fame of an author. Hearing the cry of the miserable, I devoted my time to their relief." And, lastly, there is Clarkson, who, while yet a pupil of the University, commenced those life-long labors against slavery and the slave-trade, which have embalmed his memory. Writing an essay on the subject as a college exercise, his soul warmed with the task, and, at a period when even the horrors of the middle passage had not excited condemnation, he entered the lists, the stripling champion of the Right. He has left a record of the moment when his duty seemed to flash upon him. He was on horseback, on his way from Cambridge to London. "Coming in sight of Wade's Mill, in Hertfordshire," he says, "I sat down disconsolate on the turf by the road-side, and held my horse. Here a thought came over my mind, that, if the contents of my Essay were true, it was time some person should see these colonies to their end." Pure and noble impulse to a beautiful career!

Such are some of the exemplars of True Glory. Without rank, office, or the sword, they accomplished immortal good. While on earth, they labored for their fellow men; and now, sleeping in death,—by their example and their works,—they continue the same sacred office. To all, in whatever sphere or condition of life, they teach the same commanding lessons of magnanimous duty. From the heights of their virtue, they call upon us to cast out the lust of power, of office, of wealth, of praise, of a fleeting popular favor, which "a breath can make, as a breath has made,"—to subdue the constant, ever-present suggestions of self, in disregard of those neighbors, near or remote, whose happiness should never be absent from our mind,—to check the madness of party, which so often, for the sake of success, renounces the very objects of success,—and, finally, to introduce into our lives those lofty sentiments of Conscience and Charity which animated them to such godlike labors. Nor should these be mere holiday virtues, to be marshalled only on great occasions. They must become a part of us, and of our existence,—ever present, in season and out of season, in all the amenities of life,—in those daily offices of conduct and manner which add so much to its charm, as also in those grander duties, whose performance evinces an ennobling self sacrifice. The first are as the flowers, whose odor is pleasant, though fleeting—the latter are like the precious ointment from the box of alabaster poured upon the head of the Lord.

To the supremacy of these principles let us all consecrate our best purposes and strength. In so doing, let us reverse the very poles of the worship of past ages. Men have thus far bowed down before stocks, stones, insects, crocodiles, golden calves,—graven images, often of cunning workmanship, wrought with Phidian skill, of ivory, of ebony, of marble,—but all false gods. Let them worship in future the true God, our Father as he is heaven, and in the beneficent labors of his children, on earth. Then farewell to the Syren song of a worldly ambition! Farewell to the vain desire of mere literary success or oratorical display! Farewell to the dismal, blood-red phantom of martial renown! Fame and Glory may then continue, as in times past, the reflection of public opinion; but of an opinion, sure and steadfast, without change or fickleness, enlightened by those two suns of Christian truth, love to God and love to man. From the serene illumination of these duties, all the forms of selfishness shall retreat, like evil spirits at the dawn of day. Then shall the happiness of the poor and lowly, and the education of the ignorant have uncounted friends. The cause of those who are in prison shall find fresh voices,—the majesty of Peace other vindicators,—the sufferings of the slave new and gushing floods of sympathy. Then, at last, shall the Brotherhood of Mankind stand confessed,—ever filling the souls of all with a more generous life,—ever prompting to deeds of Beneficence,—conquering the Heathen prejudices of country, color, and race,—guiding the judgment of the historian,—animating the verse of the poet and the eloquence of the orator,—ennobling human thought and conduct, and inspiring those good works by which alone we may attain to the heights of True Glory. Good Works! Such even now is the Heavenly Ladder on which angels are ascending and descending, while weary Humanity, on pillows of stone, slumbers heavily at its feet. —*Sumner's "Fame and Glory."*

DR. FRANKLIN ON INFIDELITY.

The following letter of Dr. Franklin, found in his works, edited by his grandson, William Temple Franklin, (London edition, vol. 3, p. 279,) addressed to the author of an infidel publication, submitted to him in manuscript, (probably Paine,) claims the attention of every member of the community.

DEAR SIR,—I have read your manuscript with some attention. By the argument it contains against a particular Providence, though you allow a general Providence, you can strike at the foundations of all religion. For, without the belief of a Providence, that takes cognizance of, guards, and guides, and may favor particular persons, there is no motive to worship a Deity, to fear its displeasure, or to pray for its protection. I will not enter into any discussion of your principles, though you seem to desire it. At present I shall only give you my opinion; and though your reasonings are subtle, and may prevail with some readers, you will not succeed so as to change the general sentiments of mankind on that subject; and the consequence of printing this piece will be, a great deal of odium drawn upon yourself, mischief to you, and no benefit to others. He that spits against the wind, spits in his own face. But were you to succeed, do you imagine any good will be done by it? You yourself may find it easy to lead a virtuous life without the assistance afforded by religion; you having a clear perception of the advantages of virtue and the disadvantages of vice, and possessing a strength of resolution sufficient to enable you to resist common temptations. But think how great a portion of mankind consists of ignorant men and women, and of inexperienced, inconsiderate youth of both sexes, who have need of the motives of religion to restrain them from vice, support their virtue, and retain them in the practice of it till it becomes habitual, which is the great point of its security. And perhaps you are indebted to her originally, that is, to your religious education, for the habits of virtue upon which you now justly value yourself. You might easily display your excellent talents of reasoning upon a less hazardous subject, and thereby obtain a rank with our most distinguished authors. For among us it is not ne-

cessary, as among the Hottentots, that a youth, to be raised into the company of men, should prove his manhood by beating his mother. I would advise you, therefore, not to attempt unchaining the tiger, but to burn this piece before it is seen by any other person, whereby you will save yourself a great deal of mortification from the enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of regret and repentance.

If men are so wicked with religion, what would they be without it? I intend this letter itself as a proof of my friendship, and therefore add no professions to it, but subscribe simply.

Yours, B. FRANKLIN.

A GOOD HEARER.

We hear much said about good preachers, but the text above named is worthy of a discourse.

1. A good hearer will come to the sanctuary to hear. He is hungry and thirsty, and wants living bread and drink. Other people come there for divers other purposes than that of hearing; but that is his errand. Therefore he will have ears to hear.

2. And he will come promptly. He is interested, and in earnest, and he feels that he has something to do with the Alpha as well as the Omega of divine service; and he cannot interrupt other people's hearing by a late arrival. You will find the good hearer in his place in good time.

3. And he must hear with much prayer. He did not forget that before he left home, but warmed up his heart into a fit state to receive the Word ere the hour of public worship arrived; and he kept on keeping his heart warm, by frequently lifting it up to the throne of grace. "These frequent looks of the heart to heaven," says Leighton, "exceedingly sweeten and sanctify our other employments, and diffuse somewhat of heaven through all our actions." So the good hearer thinks, and his own practice eminently sanctifies the employment of hearing the Word, and makes it profitable.

4. The good hearer hears for himself. There are a plenty of people, who turn all the arrows of divine truth to the souls of other people, and apply the discourse, most carefully and faithfully, to the cases of those about them. But the good hearer ventures to suppose that the being addressed by the speaker is himself, and acts accordingly.

5. The good hearer is a doer of what he hears. Some go on swimmingly with most other matters about hearing, till they come to this; but here they fetch up. Hearing is one thing, and a pretty easy and comfortable thing. But doing is another thing, and quite often, a very uncomfortable affair. People are not very fond of putting them together. But the good hearer will not suffer them to be separated.

Besides all the good they do to themselves, good hearers accomplish another most important object; they make good preachers. How it sets a speaker on fire to see hearers wide awake; all eyes and ears are drinking in his words, as if life hung upon them. The sight kindles him wonderfully. The warm blood shoots rapidly along his veins. There is a powerful stimulus to increased energy and zeal. He preaches a hundred fold better for having those good hearers.

I have heard of "preachers preaching people to sleep;" but I have seen hearers hearing preachers to sleep. They heard so stupidly, languidly, sleepily, that they put all the fire out there was in the speaker's heart. Their indifference disheartened him. How could he preach zealously and fervently when those who had not gone already to sleep were nodding around him, or on the verge of it, in all directions!

"But it is his business to keep us awake by his zeal and energy." But so it is your business to keep him awake by your felt and manifested intense interest in his preaching.—Such attention would rouse, comfort and animate him. Why not give it to him? If you wish him to be a good preacher, be a good hearer. It will do more toward that object than all the other things together which you can do. Try it.—*N. E. Puritan.*