

THE CONSTRAINING LOVE OF CHRIST.

BY R. TAYLOR, D. D.

"We are not able to determine whether this constraining love of which the apostle speaks means Christ's love for us or our love for Christ. We see no good reason why it may not mean either, or even both. The one draws Christ to us, the other draws us to Christ. And so, in either case, if that love is felt as it should be, it looks both ways and exerts over us a power to which we love to yield.

We have no heart to resist it. But to what does this love of Christ constrain us? We might answer in a word that it constrains us to anything and to everything, in thought, word or deed, that we think would be pleasing to Christ. It was the principle which controlled the apostle from the time of his conversion, near Damascus, till he sealed his testimony with his blood.

And it will incline all, who are duly constrained by it, to think as our divine Master would have us think, to speak as He would have us speak, and to do as He would have us do. The best of people come very far short, in fact, but not in purpose of thinking, speaking and doing as He would have them. In purpose they are in harmony with Christ.

But this love, when properly felt, not only constrains, it restrains as well, or keeps those who are under the influence and control of it back from all, in thought, word or deed, which they think would be offensive to our Lord. Such is the tendency of this constraining love.

Those who are under the influence of it would no more do what would be offensive to him than they would omit what he requires of them.

The great want of the church at this day is very much more of this constraining love. There is reason to fear that many of her members know nothing of it.

The constraining love of Christ? What a change it wrought in Saul who was afterward called Paul! In all who had been heathen as they were brought under the influence of it! What a revolution, if properly felt, this love would now bring about in the Church and through the Church upon the world! Error would fade away. It would quicken our deadness, warm our coldness and make us more and more like Him by whose love we are constrained.

Think of a whole church, individually as well as collectively, under the influence of this love. Error fades away before it. No evil doing. No evil speaking. And may we not go further and say no evil thinking. Each one laboring to abstain from all wrong and to do all right.

What a light in the community, one person, one church fully constrained by this love, burning, shining! It would hasten in the latter day of glory. It would be that day already in. Oh, for more of the constraining love of Christ in our community, in our hearts.

BIBLE FIRST.

About forty years ago, a Christian man sat at his fire-side in Philadelphia. Near by him, playing on the floor, was his only child, a beautiful little boy. It was early in the morning. The day's work had not yet begun; and waiting for his breakfast, it may be, the father took up the daily paper to read. The boy at once climbed into his lap, and snatched away the paper, exclaiming, "No, no, papa! Bible first—Bible first, papa!"

That lesson, taught by a little child, was probably a turning-point in the life of that man. Death soon came and tore away the sweet little preacher, but his morning sermon was never for-

gotten. The business man, in his loneliness and sorrow, went forth to do his work for Christ. "Bible first, papa," was ever ringing in his ears. It became the motto of his life. He was exceedingly prosperous in business. Wealth accumulated; business increased; friends multiplied. But uppermost in that man's heart was the precious word of God. He read and studied it. As teacher and superintendent in the Sabbath-school, he taught it. He did more than this—he practised its precepts.

The gentleman referred to was the well-known locomotive engine builder, Matthias W. Baldwin, of Philadelphia. Would not the child's cry—"Bible first!" be an excellent motto for all.—*Sel.*

THE INFLUENCE OF CONVERSATION.

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; he that habitually converseth with men of intelligence and gravity, and who are familiar with things which have in them inherent importance, and who talk of them, converse about them in a manner which befitteeth the dignity of that nature to which God has given this wonderful faculty of speech, why, the man is influenced, influenced necessarily by converse like that. The conversation of the ignorant, the stupid, the dull; the converse of the flippant, the vain; the conversation of men of no reading, or of nothing but light reading; the conversation of the corrupt, the licentious, the vicious—why, the influence of the habitual talk of one man like that must tell very greatly upon the habits of another. Let me hear a man talk unreservedly—show himself by his talk, and I will tell you what sort of company he keeps, and what kind of people talk with him. We naturally fall into the same modes of thought, and imitate the language, and even the gestures and expressions of countenance of those we habitually converse and talk with; and so shall we be influenced for our benefit by our converse with this embodiment of the great thoughts of God.

THE DUTY OF LABOR.

Labor is man's great function. With spade and plough, with mining shafts, furnaces and forges, with fire and steam, amid the noise and whirl of swift and bright machinery, and abroad in the silent fields, beneath the roofing sky, man was made to be ever working, ever experimenting; and while he and all his dwellings of care and toil are borne onward with the circling skies and the shows of heaven are around him, and their infinite depths image and invite his thought, still in all the worlds of philosophy, in the universe of intellect, man must be a worker. He is nothing, he can be nothing, he can achieve nothing, fulfil nothing, without working.

Not only can he gain no lofty improvement without this, but without it he can gain no tolerable happiness. So that he who gives himself up to utter indolence finds it too hard for him, and is obliged, in self-defence, unless he be an idiot, to do something. The miserable victims of idleness and ennui, driven at last from their chosen resort, are compelled to work, to do something; yes, to employ their wretched and worthless lives in "killing time." They must hunt down the hours as their prey. Yes, time, that mere abstraction, which sinks light as air upon the eyelids of the busy and the weary, to the idle is an enemy clothed with gigantic armor; and they must kill it or themselves die. They cannot live in mere idleness; and all the difference between them and others is that they employ their activity to no useful end. They find indeed, that the hardest work in the world is to do nothing.—*Selected.*