

The BEREAN.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—ACTS XVII. 11.

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THE COMING OF CHRIST.

Laden with the richest blessings.

"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, having salvation." Zech. ix. 9. I picture to myself a large town, in which all the inhabitants are in the extreme want and misery. They have revolted from their lawful Sovereign, and they are taken with arms in their hands. They are hungry. They are thirsty. Their lives are forfeited. They are tormented with apprehensions; and the hour of their execution, for any thing they know, may be just at hand. But the King's son enters the town. He brings along with him, from his Father's palace, as many pardons as there are inhabitants. He offers these pardons. He offers them with great goodwill, and from a disposition of pure loving-kindness. He causes it to be proclaimed, that an acceptance of the offered mercy shall be followed with a supply of all their wants; that they shall have riches in abundance, and be highly exalted and honoured in the Kingdom. Would not the inhabitants of this rebellious town even leap for joy, on hearing these tidings of peace, and deliverance, and honour, and abundance? Would not their Prince's bounty and love win their hearts, and engage all conversation, and be handed down, from Father and Son, with thankfulness, and praises, and wonder?

But the illustration on which I have ventured does little more than darken and disgrace the point to which I would call your attention. The King of Heaven, of earth, and of Zion, enters the world which his own hands had made; and he enters it, having salvation. He finds the world in a state of blindness, and hardness, and rebellion, and guilt. He finds them, with the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint. He finds them under the forfeiture of all their mercies, deserving of everlasting destruction from his presence, and absolutely condemned to that destruction, yet bent on iniquity, and full of enmity against God. He enters a world, in this state of obduracy and misery, and he brings along with him a salvation, wrought out and purchased with his own blood. Wherever he comes, he offers eyesight to the blind; and the heart of flesh; and a bountiful forgiveness; and the renewing Spirit; and the adoption of children; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding; and a victory over every enemy, and a crown of life to every conqueror. He offers all this, because "he delighteth in mercy." He proves the reality and the immensity of his holy delight, by standing at the door and knocking; by beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God; by converting, from time to time, some notorious transgressors, and setting them up on high, as monuments of the vast dimensions of his love, of the all-cleansing efficacy of his blood, of the sacred and sanctifying power of his precious grace. These words "having salvation" are indeed astonishing words. The circumstance, I doubt not, has excited a joyful surprise among the hosts of Heaven, and a malicious scowling surprise among the hosts of hell.

And is there nothing surprising in the earth, as connected with the precious truth that Jesus cometh, having salvation? O! yes. This is the surprise, that man who, without this salvation, must perish; that man who, by this salvation, can be enriched, enabled, and blessed everlastingly; that man, if left to himself, shall be unaffected by this astonishing grace and disaffected towards Him who bringeth this salvation. O! what is man, in his state of unconquered depravity! Stupid as the brute beast, and as opposite to God, in his carnal mind, as Satan is opposite! But now comes a very solemn, and a very home, inquiry. Have we personally, each of us, received the salvation of the Lord Jesus? Hitherto he has sent his Gospel. Here he has come, having salvation. Here he has made known his presence, and manifested his grace, and shown his mercy. And from hence he has taken some happy souls, year after year; has carried them, in joy and triumph, through the valley of the shadow of death, and has numbered them with his saints in glory everlasting.

But the question is this: Have we all received this salvation? Are there none at this present moment, in the bond of iniquity? Are there none who are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God? Are there none who still continue without repentance, without faith, without love to the Saviour? To you who are yet careless, I would say—Let the diligence and the happiness of others provoke you to jealousy. Shall others be saved, and you continue under wrath? Shall others be glorifying Jesus, and you be rejecting Him? Shall others be rising up towards Heaven, and you be sinking lower and lower, towards hell? Shall others rejoice in the day of Christ, and shall you be able to do nothing better than weep because of Him? God help all present, while the "King cometh, having salvation," to grasp the manifold blessing by the hand of a strong faith, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God!

Meek and lowly in heart.

Though Jesus is a King, yet he is so meek and lowly in heart, that the poorest and the meanest, if they wish to return, may apply with confidence.—I perhaps am speaking to some who are convinced of their sinfulness and their danger, and of the utter ruin of their condition without a Saviour. But your difficulties are many; your guilt is mountainous; your corruptions are a legion, and are powerful; your fears rise high, your view of sin is clear; but as to Jesus, you look at Him out of obscurity. He is indeed, as to his might, and his glory, and his tenderness, and his truth, as the Sun when he shineth in his strength, but the veil, partially at least, is upon your minds, and you cannot behold Him. Your business is with the written

word; and what do you learn from that word? You learn, that he will not despise the day of small things; that he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; that the imploring look of want and supplication will gain his eye, and will interest his heart; and that, in every instance, he will pity the helpless, and fill the hungry with good things, and beautify the meek with salvation. O! follow on, to seek and know, and to call the Saviour yours; and it would baffle an Angel's power to tell you, the greatness of the blessing which is laid up for you. I have no doubt whatever, but if the meekness and the lowliness of Jesus, in receiving returning sinners, were, at this moment, discovered by the whole congregation, the whole congregation would be deeply agitated. They who are going on in iniquity, would fall down before his feet, abhorring their rebellion. They who are seeking him in fear, would blush, and be ashamed, at their dishonourable suspicions of his goodness. And they who have found him to be precious, would take up the language of the prophet, with loudness and in triumph: "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation!"—*The Rev. R. Horsman, of St. Ann's Chapel, Lancaster.*

AIDS FOR SELF-EXAMINATION,

Addressed to Candidates for Confirmation.

The following questions will assist you (by the Lord's blessing) in determining your duty.

1st. Have you been brought to true repentance?

In order to answer this question satisfactorily to yourself, let it be divided into the following particulars:

Do you see yourself to be so sinful as to deserve God's wrath and condemnation? Do you see that your sinfulness lies not merely in particular acts of transgression, but chiefly in your heart; that your heart is the fountain of sin, so that in you naturally dwells no good thing? Is your heart humbled before God on account of your sinfulness? Do you cordially hate it, and desire to be delivered from all sin? Are your affections set upon God and upon holiness? Are you heartily striving to be more, and more free from sin, and to be transformed more and more into the mind of Christ and conformity to His will?

2nd. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Consider this question by dividing it into the following:

Have you been brought to renounce all reliance upon your own works and righteousness for acceptance with God? Do you place any reliance for mercy upon your reformation, your prayers, your religious efforts, your attention to religious duties, or any actions or feelings of your own? Or do you feel that all your help and hope are to be sought in Christ? Have you fled to him and committed your soul to him as all your refuge and righteousness? Do you feel that he is precious to your soul; and do you desire and determine to live wholly unto him?

3rd. Are you willing and resolved to follow Christ, whatever it may cost you?

Are you prepared to give up all vain amusements—all sinful conformity to the world; whatever is opposed to the maintenance of a spiritual frame of mind, and a holy walk and conversation?

4th. Are you resolved to endeavour conscientiously to perform your whole duty to God and your fellow-creatures? Is it your solemn determination to make the will of God, as revealed in his word, the rule and guide of your spirit and life, all your days?

5th. Do you earnestly desire to glorify God and to honour His service by an example becoming the Gospel? Do you realize the great responsibility of that public profession of religion which you contemplate; and will it be your earnest prayer and effort to live consistently with what the world has reason to look for in a Christian?

6th. Do you lean to your own wisdom or strength for ability to live as above described? Or do you feel that your own strength is perfect weakness—that your sufficiency is only of God? Will you look to Him for all your strength, and yet strive to follow Christ as diligently as if your success were entirely dependent upon your own efforts?

7th. Do you find habitual pleasure and profit in secret prayer and in reading the Scriptures? Do you heartily love these duties? Do you feel the absolute necessity of their frequent and regular observance, to all steadfastness in your religious walk, and all prosperity in your soul? Will you make it a matter of conscientious observance, daily to read the Scriptures in a devout manner, and daily to wait upon God in secret and earnest prayer?

If you are able, conscientiously to answer in the affirmative to these questions, you may trust that you know by experience what it is to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and may lay aside all hesitation as to the propriety of your coming to the ordinance in prospect. Indeed, if such be your state, I bid you, in the name of the Lord, come. You can sincerely profess, and consent to, all that is involved in such an act. You will find it to be grateful, as well as very solemn, opportunity of confessing Christ; of writing anew upon your heart, the vows of God which are already upon you, and of seeking, under the special prayer of the Church, as well as by your own earnest supplications, the confirmation of the Spirit of God to seal you "unto the day of redemption." Approaching in the spirit of true humility and earnest hungering after righteousness, you may hope to receive, in the

laying on of hands, by the human ministry, that blessing which no hand but that of "the Shepherd and Bishop of souls," can bestow, even "joy and peace in believing." Your sense of responsibility, as a Christian and steward of God, will be increased; your faith, as a weak and unworthy sinner, leaning upon the strength and righteousness of Christ, will be invigorated; your hope of the prize of your high calling will be rendered more effectual to enable you to "run with patience the race that is set before you."

But here it is important to remind you that in examining yourself by these or similar questions, it is the reality, not the degree of attainment in spiritual things, by which you are to judge of your fitness for the ordinance in view. Tender consciences are not unfrequently much troubled for the want of this distinction. Because they easily ascertain that they are very far from having as deep a repentance, as lively a faith, as fervent a love, and as complete an obedience as they ought to have, and as they suppose Christians generally have; they fear they are too far beneath the will of God to be warranted in coming to the communion of the Lord's Supper, and to that solemn ordinance which is introductory thereto. But who, if this were the true method of ascertaining one's fitness, would not be prevented from approaching? Who could possibly have apprehended that for which he is apprehended of Christ Jesus? Who can say any thing more for himself than that, having set out in the race, he is pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? Having truly repented and believed and loved and obeyed, but having come very far short in all things that denote penitence and faith and love and obedience which he ought to feel, he is striving for more, and endeavouring daily to grow in grace. Christians are bound of very different degrees of attainment in grace. But their privileges as Christians, in regard to communion of the Church, are not different. Though some are more grown than others, all are due unto God; and therefore all are partakers of the hope of salvation through Christ, and of that communion of his body and blood by which the true hope is strengthened and animated.

But suppose not, my friend, that I would turn your attention entirely away from the degree of your attainment in grace and from all comparison between your state as a Christian and the holy standard by which we are commanded to direct our aim and estimate our progress. This you must indeed do habitually and constantly. It is the way by which to see your unworthiness; to grow in humility and true repentance; to realize more and more your need of the atoning blood of Christ, and to feel the exceeding preciousness of a Saviour who is mighty to save to the uttermost. It is the way to see and adore the patience and loving kindness of the Lord, to gather food for continual thanksgiving and praise, and incitements to daily diligence in endeavouring to rise more above the world, obtain more victory over the sin that dwelleth in you, and more conformity to the perfect will of God.

But the question now is, not whether you have need of more repentance and faith and love and obedience and holiness; but whether you have any. Not whether you have advanced to a certain measure of growth in the divine life, but whether you have been born into that life; not how far you have attained towards the stature of man in Christ Jesus, but whether you have attained to the condition of "a child of God and of the light, by faith in Christ Jesus." You may have been born again of the Holy Ghost, and so have begun to live unto God and to be one of his "dear children," and yet you may be still in the infancy of grace; having all the features of a child of God, the heart, the mind, the will—and yet all in infancy; growing indeed, but not growing; becoming daily more established, but yet very weak, very delicate, and peculiarly dependant upon all the means of grace. The question now is: Have you reason to believe that you have been born of the Spirit and are a child of God; that you have and do repent, believe, love, obey, and follow after holiness? Be exceedingly honest and impartial with yourself in determining this question. If you answer "yes, though all is exceeding weak and unworthy;" then come. If any real Christians should more than others partake in ordinances of a sealing, confirming, and invigorating character, surely they are those who are most in the beginnings of grace.—*The Right Rev. Bishop McTearne.*

THE INTRUSIVE CHURCH IN IRELAND.

[The Dublin University Magazine for last September, after a succinct account of the early history of the Christian Church in Ireland, introduces an account of her submission to the Papacy, through the armed interference of King Henry II. of England, as follows:—]

It is well known that the bull upon which Henry founded his title to the Kingdom, was granted upon the express condition that he should reduce the Church in Ireland to a conformity with and subjection to the Church of Rome. The following is an extract from this precious document.

"We therefore with that grace and acceptance suited to your pious and praiseworthy design, and favourably assenting to your petition, do hold it right and good, that for the extension of the borders of the Church, the restraining of vice, the correction of manners, the planting of virtue, and increase of religion, you enter the said island, and execute therein whatever shall pertain to the honour of God and the welfare of the land; and that the people of the said land receive you honourably, and reverence you as their

Lord, saving always the rights of the Churches, and reserving to St. Peter the annual pension of one penny upon every house. If, then, you be resolved to carry this design into effectual execution, study to form the nation to virtuous manners; and labour by yourself and by others, whom you may judge meet for the work, in faith, word, and action, that the Church may be there exalted, the Christian faith planted, and all things so ordered for the honour of God and the salvation of souls, that you may be entitled to a fulness of reward in heaven, and on earth to a glorious renown throughout all ages."

It is very clear, as Dean Murray observes, that "at the date of Pope Adrian's bull, Ireland was not considered within the bounds of the Romish Church; for else, how would those boundaries have been extended by Henry's invasion?"

"It is also evident," our author adds, "that the Irish had not been in the habit of paying St. Peter's pence—and that both in doctrine and discipline they differed widely from the Roman model; for, what else can be the meaning of the words 'to declare to that illiterate nation the verity of the Christian faith?' or, of another expression which I shall quote in the original, on account of its peculiar force: 'ut ibi plantetur, et crescat fidei Christianae religio?'"

[The Reviewer goes on to treat of the Synod of Cashel, at which articles of union between the Anglo-Irish church and state were enacted, and sums up that part of the subject thus:—]

Thus it was that popery became the established religion of Ireland. An ambitious monarch and an encroaching pontiff conspired against its temporal and spiritual independence. Henry agreed to reduce the Church to an ecclesiastical subjection to the Church of Rome, as the price of being acknowledged as the sovereign lord over its lands and its inhabitants.

[We subjoin the Reviewer's account of the part which the Irish Church took at the time of the Reformation, as long as she remained free from foreign influence.—]

In the reign of Mary, the partisans of the papacy were too much occupied with the state of religion in England to permit of their bestowing much attention upon ecclesiastical affairs in this country [Ireland]. Here the distinction of races was marked as the distinction of churches; and as the Protestants were chiefly of English descent, and as such could be relied on as the firm maintainers of British power, any acts of severity towards them, such as were boldly ventured upon in England, where the queen gave a full license to all her vengeful bigotry, might have perilled the security of the Kingdom. But, towards the end of her reign, the absorbing passions attained an ascendancy over her, and her zeal for the propagation of "the catholic faith" began to outrun her discretion. It was then fully resolved, that the same persecuting measures, which filled England with lamentation and mourning, should be enacted here—and the first steps were taken for enkindling the fires in which heretical privacy was to be destroyed, when an accident, which the pious regarded as a providential interference in their favour, frustrated the object of the government, and before it could be remedied, Queen Elizabeth was upon the throne.

As soon as her declaration in favour of the reformed faith was known in Ireland, "the whole body of the Romish priests abandoned their connection with Rome, and adopted the liturgy of the Church of England," and they were followed in this act of ecclesiastical submission by the entire mass of the population. The bishops, with but two exceptions, all conformed.—They agreed unhesitatingly to substitute the Book of Common Prayer for the Missal, and the English Service for the Latin Mass. So that the reformation was in all respects as complete, and as completely established by legal authority, in the one country as the other. "For eleven years," Doctor Phelan writes, and in this he but echoes the acknowledgments of Roman Catholic historians—"the measures of the queen were unmolested by the papal government, and received without opposition by the great body of the Roman Catholics. The lady everywhere frequented the churches; multitudes of the priests adopted the prescribed changes, and continued to officiate in their former orders; and the majority of the prelates, leading, or following the popular opinion, retained their sees, and exercised their functions, according to the reformed ritual. At length the patience of Rome was exhausted, and that spiritual sword unsheathed against these countries, which, as it would appear, is never to be returned into the scabbard, Elizabeth was excommunicated, and her subjects absolved from their allegiance by four successive popes. Her life was assailed by numerous conspiracies; her kingdom given up to the vengeance of Spain, (at that time the greatest power on the continent), and the more mischievous intrigues of the new order of Jesuits."

Of the intrigues by which a spirit of opposition was stirred up against an order of things so generally acceptable, and the weakness on the part of the government by which they were permitted, we have not space to speak. Those by whom they were promoted, well and ably did the business both of the Court and the Church of Rome. But we cannot avoid expressing a sentiment of contemptuous indignation at the temerity and ignorance of the very presumptuous and ill-informed persons who called the Reformed Church, as then established, a new religion, which was attempted to be forced upon the people. Never were any assertions more utterly opposed to historic truth. Lord Alvauly, in a pamphlet which he has published upon the state of Ireland, but echoes the misrepresentations of

the priests and agitators by whom he has been misled, when he talks of the Roman Catholic ministers being deprived of their benefices, their possessions seized, and their functions usurped, by those of an opposite communion. No such deprivation or substitution took place. The officiating prelates and pastors and no other, who possessed the sees and the benefices, in the reign of Mary, were those who continued to hold them in the reign of Elizabeth, and for eleven years after she commenced to reign. It was by their assent and consent, freely given, and in which they were followed by the great bulk of the people, that the changes were effected in the established services, which substituted not a new religion for an old, but the faith professed in the primitive Irish Church, for a system of glozing superstition and priestcraft, which had its origin in the ambition of papal Rome. Which is, then, the intrusive church in this country?—that which, being established by lawful authority, had received the willing assent of the clergy and the people?—or that which owed its rise to the machinations of the emissaries of the papal government, by whom the queen was denounced as a heretic, and her subjects absolved from their allegiance?

THE STRENGTH OF LOVE.

"Love is strong as death."—SOL. SOLO, viii. 6.

And as this love is vast and unconditional, so also is it strong and powerful. But how strong? "Strong," says the Shulhanite, "as death." "What a striking image! Yea, strong as death, we ourselves experienced it. No one can withstand death. With invincible power he wields his sceptre over all flesh; the strongest he casts to the earth, and the most mighty become his prey; and oh! who can resist the love of Christ, when it is exercised in drawing the sinner, and in entangling him in his blessed net? Vain it is then for the soul to kick against the pricks; a Samaritan woman can no longer resist and evade, and Nathanael is obliged, in spite of his "can any good come out of Nazareth?" to yield every preconceived impression, and to confess with the heart, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!" A hardened jailer must fall down to the earth with a broken heart and cry: "What must I do to be saved?" And the heathen centurion is constrained to beat upon his breast and exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God! Yes, strong as death is the love that seeks sinners—who can resist it! It pursues the sinner whom it is resolved to bless; step by step, at every turn; it follows him into the stillness of the closet, in the busy scenes of the world, in the midst of dissipation, and on the scorner's seat; it intrudes upon him in every way, until his heart is vanquished, and he is made to turn out of the path of death. How long, my brethren, did not we strive against its assaults, and seek to escape its snare and net? How long did not we stop our ears against its call, and fortify ourselves against it, that we might not be overcome? But behold it was too strong for us;—it kept the field at last, and we were taken as a prey! Yes; God be praised, it has broken our obdurate hearts, and notwithstanding our fighting and striving, has forced us into the bonds of the covenant! God be thanked and praised throughout all eternity, that we have also experienced in ourselves, that his love is strong as death! who may resist it?"

Love is strong as death. Does not death separate man from this world and its concerns? does it not snatch him away out of the dominion of all that is earthly and transitory? and behold the love of Christ is the same. As soon as light is shed abroad in our soul,—as soon as we are conscious of participating in it, and with Paul, are able to say, "I also have obtained mercy."—then we bid the world good bye;—its pleasures become bitter, its joyous waters become turbid and stagnant, for we now drink from other springs, and in places where we formerly felt at home, we now feel ourselves strangers, foreigners, and oppressed. Oh! how wonderful a change takes place in the heart, as soon as the Lord calls it by name, and the words "Thou art mine" vibrate through it. Then a Mary Magdalene quickly casts away her follies, and becomes the handmaid of the Lord. Then a Paul esteems all that he had hitherto accounted gain, as loss and dung, and is Christ's alone. Then we willingly abandon honour and pleasure, fame and applause, and whatever else the world has to offer, and follow Jesus. Yes, strong as death is the love of Jesus.

Wherever it is acknowledged, felt, and experienced, there it severs the man, in heart and spirit, from the world and its tridles. Then Abraham can no longer dwell in Ur,—Lot in Sodom,—or Moses at the court of Egypt. We turn away from our former pursuits in heart and thought—we weigh anchor, and sail from the shores of the world.

The love of Jesus is strong as death.—It possesses the annihilating power of death for the destruction of the old man, and like electric fire consumes the old Adam. Where Jesus declares his love to a sinner and promises his grace—where his love quickens and is experienced, there is a dying daily and an incessant consoling; the old Adam is already under the power of the flame that will at length burn it into ashes. Oh! to be able to say, that the "Lord of Glory, out of love to thee, has poured out his blood upon the cross, that thy sins caused him all his labour and toil;" and to feel truly assured "that he has clasped thee, even thee, miserable sinner, in his arms, and given thee a place in his heart."—You believe the effect of this knowledge is, to bow down the soul to the dust, and to humble it so, that the sinner cannot open his mouth for shame and sorrow. Such ex-