

The Berran.

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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THOUGHTS ON THE 11st. PSALM.

O Thou, who to the lifeless clay
Didst speak, and bid'st it be;
A greater, nobler power display
And bid it live to thee.

Revive thy work, thy work of grace,
Thou Energy Divine;
The image of Thyself retrace,
And stamp my spirit Thine.

My senses—instruments of shame,
Transform and mould anew;
And teach them, with another aim,
Thy glory to pursue.

The hearing ear, the eye to see,
The tongue to praise Thee, give;
And establish Thine abode in me,
And make it "Christ to live."

Then mine for aye shall be the joy
A stranger may not know;
Foretaste of bliss without alloy,
The pledge of heaven, below.

G. M.

MEDITATION FOR LENT.

Our blessed Lord declares (Matthew ix. 12, 13) "That they that are sick; I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Thus he teaches us that he calls sinners verily, but he calls them to repentance. It follows that no one can come to the Lord without true repentance, real faith, and turning from iniquity.

But repentance is a dying unto sin through real grief and sorrow, and through faith is obtained forgiveness of sins. And this is not effected without brokenness of heart and crucifying of the flesh. Wherefore the apostle calls it "repentance from dead works," which means the works upon which death doth follow. If, then, such works are not departed from, man cannot be profited by Christ with all his merits: seeing that our Lord describes himself as a physician, and that his precious blood is to be healing medicine. But the most valuable medicine brings neither help nor healing, if the patient will not abstain from the use of that which hurts him. Even so the blood-shedding and death of Christ help not him who will not abstain from sin; wherefore St. Paul says (Gal. v. 21): "Which do such things [meaning the works of the flesh] do not inherit the Kingdom of God," that is, they have no part in Christ. Moreover, if Christ and his precious blood is to be our medicine, we must first of all be sick. For it is not the whole but the sick that need a physician. But those are not sick who neither repent of their sins, nor have their heart broken and contrite, nor are afraid of the divine wrath, nor flee worldly lusts and despise vain glory, riches, and sensuality; they are not sick; they feel not the want of a physician, and Christ profiteth them nothing.

Let, then, this be deeply impressed upon you: Christ is come to call sinners; but he calls them to repentance. And why? because none but a heart contrite, broken, and believing is susceptible of the benefit of Christ's merit, blood-shedding, and death. And blessed is the man who feels in his heart this holy call; who sorrows over sin with a repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. (2 Cor. vii. 10.) The Holy Ghost worketh this godly sorrow through the law and earnest consideration of the bitter sufferings of Christ. In his sufferings repentance is preached, and the terrors of God's wrath are exhibited as in a mirror, and then again the mercy of God is preached in the same sufferings. For consider why it is that our blessed Lord suffered so bitter a death; it is even on account of our sins. And again consider how God loved us, seeing that he gave his Son for us. (Rom. v. 8.) Thus you see both the justice and the mercy of God.

How then should he who believes in Jesus, take pleasure in sin, or be unwilling to renounce that on account of which Christ had to shed his blood and breathe out his life? Behold the deep humiliation and contempt with which he had to expiate our pride and ambition, and wouldst thou allow pride in thee, and pant for the honours which the world can give? With what poverty has Christ had to expiate thy covetousness, and art thou dissatisfied and cravest earthly riches? What sorrow and anguish unto death has he had to endure to expiate thy carnal lusts, and wilt thou yet take pleasure in the lusts of the flesh? How can that be pleasure to thee which was bitter pain to thy Master Jesus? How can that give thee joy which made him sorrowful unto death? With what profound meekness and unweary patience did thy Master endure wrong, to expiate thy anger, hatred, malice, bitterness, and implacable mind, and dost thou get angry and think revenge as sweet as life? Is that sweet to thee for which thy Lord emptied the bitter cup of crucifixion?

All those, then, who call themselves Christians and abstain not from sin, crucify Christ afresh and put him to an open shame. (Heb. vi. 6.) They can have no part in the sufferings of Christ, seeing that they tread under foot the Son of God; they count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, counting it a thing which does not cleanse them from sin; they regard not its being shed as a ransom for their sin, and so they even do despite unto the Spirit of grace. If by their godless life they thus despise and reject the great mercy offered to them, the very blood of Christ must cry vengeance upon them, and deliver them over to the righteous judgment of God—and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. x. 31.)

FROM TRUE CHRISTIANITY by Johann Arndt, General Superintendent of the Clergy of Zelle, died 1621.

FOR THE MOURNING CHRISTIAN.

Our Lord marks what is peculiar to the flesh, but never condemns a sinless infirmity of the body. He accepts the homage of the heart, even when the outward posture seems to express the very contrary. Our Lord submitted to learn by experience, that, having been tried in all points like as we are, he might be able to sympathize with us. See how in the garden, when shamefully left by his disciples to watch alone, he graciously supplied from his own knowledge that one only consideration which could extenuate their conduct, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Here is a distinction which the mourning Christian often overlooks. He condemns himself at times in matters which are referable only to physical causes. The state of his health, the tone of the nervous system, the influence of the weather, are some of the agents which produce low and desponding thoughts. He charges himself with unbelief and distrust of God, and wishes to resemble others whom he sees calm and cheerful in their department. He forgets that such happy frames of mind may be entirely owing to the influence of health and good animal spirits, as his own depression is the consequence of the reverse.

Therefore, let him learn to distinguish between his flesh and his spirit. While he ought no more to rest contented with a desponding mind, than with a diseased body, yet let him be persuaded that the good Physician understands the cause of his depression. Let him not then shrink back from prayer under a sense of unworthiness. Let him not say, "When I am in this state I cannot pray." You may, indeed, not be able to engage in prayer in the same manner as when in health; but remember, the Lord does not now desire you to do so; he only expects you to pray according to your state. Thus, indeed, is one of the great requisites in prayer. Let every man present himself in the spirit before the Great High Priest, as did the diseased of every name in the days of his flesh. They never thought of approaching him as they were not, but as they were. If, then, your prayer must be short, let it be special. Lay open your case as it really is. Confess all you feel, and all you fear. Again and again do the same. General nothing. The Lord loves an open-hearted worshipper. Deplore the state of your bodily health, and of your mental constitution. He can give you balm for both. Ask, and he will give you a blessing. Return quickly with thanksgiving, and you shall obtain another.

But the desponding Christian may sink deeper into the waters of trouble. He may be heard to say, "I find so many hindrances without and within. I cannot gain the mastery over my spirit. When I strive to pray, evil is present with me. When I would do good to others, some unworthy thought or motive suggests itself to my mind. I am nothing but sin. I can neither pray, nor love, nor glorify God, as I ought." This is a deep and painful experience; but it is also right and good. The conclusion is quite correct. The individual is, in himself, nothing but sin. And it is an unspeakable mercy to be so led of God as to have made the discovery. The stirring of the pool does not originate, but only manifests, its corruption. What you now feel is only a bringing to light that which otherwise you would not have believed. It is no new thing. To God it was known long before. Even now the Holy One discerns, in the dark depth of the heart, far more than the most desponding mind can detect. What then is the intention of the good Spirit in opening the eye upon the depravity within? It is to lead the Christian from self to Christ. We are long in the school of the Gospel before we learn our utter nothingness. Doctrinally, perhaps, we know it at the very commencement. But there is a wide difference between theoretical and practical knowledge. It is easy to say, "I am a sinner, and can do nothing good of myself." Even while we so speak, there often lurks within us a secret expectation and desire, to find somewhat good in our own nature. We trust that after some years passed in a religious course, we may perceive such an increase of religious feeling as shall preclude wandering thoughts, unuly desires, coldness of affection, and forgetfulness of God. But we forget that the "old man," is so essentially evil, that it cannot be made fruitful of good; that therefore Scripture speaks of it as "crucified;" and that we cannot get rid of it altogether while we live, and can only keep it in check—mortify it. We ought to remember that we are but as waste land, which is being brought into cultivation by the great Husbandman; and that it is alone by his unceasing care, and continual implanting of good seed, that we can yield any increase. Leave the finest garden alone, it soon becomes a wilderness. Who would suppose that in its clean and fruitful beds, lie countless seeds of noxious weeds? The heart of man is as a garden. Should it boast, let the gardener leave it for a time, that it may learn what it is in itself. This the all-wise God sees it often necessary to do. Then the Christian discovers that the seeds of innumerable evils are in his heart, and after many years of wholesome culture and extended usefulness, he is astonished and grieved, to find that nothing but sin is in its native produce. All goodness in man is implanted. His righteousness is a reflection of that of Christ. To be at all pure and bright, we must revolve around the great Sun. The moon derives her light from the superior orb. In herself she is a dark ball. So the Christian. He is fair through the comeliness which Christ puts upon him; but still he is black in his own nature. When he first discovers this, he feels confounded and paralyzed. Yet he ought to have known, and remembered, that he was always so. He never should have expected

to have found it otherwise. It is good that he should be no longer self-deceived. His eye must be opened to the reality of his natural state, that so he may learn to reckon it as "dead," and never expect from it the living fruits of holiness.—Christ on the Cross, by the Rev. John Stevenson.

THE RIGHT SORT OF FASTING.

From the 16th Homily of the Church.

Good works are not all of one sort. For some are of themselves, and of their own proper nature, always good; as to love God above all things, to love thy neighbour as thyself, to honour thy father and mother, to honour the higher powers, to give to every man that which is his due, and such like. Other works there be which, considered in themselves without further respect, are of their own nature merely indifferent; that is, neither good nor evil, but take their denomination of the use or end whereunto they serve. Which works having a good end, are called good works, and are so indeed; but yet that cometh not of themselves, but of the good end whereunto they are referred. On the other side, if the end that they serve unto be evil, it cannot then otherwise be but that they must needs be evil also.

Of this sort of works is fasting; which itself is a thing merely indifferent, but is made better or worse by the end that it serveth unto. For when it respecteth a good end, it is a good work; but, the end of it being evil, the work itself is also evil.

To fast, then, with this persuasion of mind, that our fasting and other good works can make us good, perfect, and just men, and finally bring us to heaven, is a devilish persuasion; and that fast is so far off from pleasing of God, that it refuseth his mercy, and is altogether derogatory to the merits of Christ's death, and his precious blood-shedding. This doth the parable of the pharisee and the publican teach. Two men, saith Christ, went up together into the temple to pray: the one a pharisee, the other a publican. The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: I thank thee, O God, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, and as this publican is: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. The publican stood afar off, and would not lift up his eyes to heaven; but smote his breast, and said, God be merciful to me a sinner. In the person of this pharisee, our Saviour Christ setteth out to the eye and to the judgment of the world, a perfect, just, and righteous man; such a one as is not spotted with these vices that men commonly are infected with; extortion, bribery, polling and pilling their neighbours, robbers and spoilers of commonwealths, crafty, and subtil in chopping and changing, using false weights and detestable perjury in their buying and selling, fornicators, adulterers, and vicious livers. The pharisee was no such man, neither faulty in any such like notorious crime. But where other transgressed by leaving things undone, which the Law required, this man did more than was requisite by the Law: for he fasted twice in the week, and gave tithes of all that he had. What could the world then justly blame in this man? Yea, what outward thing more could be desired to be in him, to make him a perfect and a more just man? Truly, nothing by man's judgment; and yet our Saviour Christ preferred the poor publican without fasting, before him with the fast. The cause why he doth so is manifest: for the publican having no good works at all to trust to, yielded up himself unto God, confessing his sins, and hoped certainly to be saved by God's free mercy only. The pharisee gloried and trusted so much to his works, that he thought himself sure enough without mercy, and that he should come to heaven by his fasting and other deeds. To this end serveth that parable: for it is spoken to them that trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Now, because the pharisee directed his works to an evil end, seeking by them justification—which indeed is the proper work of God without our merits—his fasting twice in the week, and all his other works, though they were never so many, and seemed to the world never so good and holy, yet in very deed before God they are altogether evil and abominable.

The mark also, that the hypocrites shoot at with their fast, is, to appear holy in the eye of the world, and so to win commendation and praise of men. But our Saviour Christ saith of them, They have their reward; that is, they have praise and commendation of men, but of God they have none at all. For whatsoever tendeth to an evil end, is itself, by that evil end, made evil also.

Again, so long as we keep ungodliness in our hearts, and suffer wicked thoughts to tarry there, though we fast as often as did either St. Paul or John Baptist, and keep it as strictly as did the Ninevites, yet shall it be not only unprofitable to us, but also a thing that greatly displeaseth Almighty God. For he saith that his soul abhorreth and hateth such fastings, yea, they are a burthen unto him, and he is weary of bearing them. And therefore, he inveigheth most sharply against them, saying by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, Behold, when you fast, your lust remaineth still, for ye do no less violence to your debtors. Lo, ye fast to strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Now ye shall not fast thus, that you make your voice to be heard above. Think ye this fast pleaseth me, that a man should chasten himself for a day? Should that be called a fasting, or a day that pleaseth the Lord? Now, dearly beloved, seeing that Almighty God alloweth not our fast for the work's sake, but chiefly respecteth our heart, how it is affected; and then esteemeth our fast either good or evil, by the end that it serveth for; it is our part to rend our hearts, and not our garments, as we are

advertised by the Prophet Joel: that is, our sorrow and mourning must be inward in heart, and not in outward show only; yea, it is requisite that first, before all things, we cleanse our hearts from sin, and then direct our fast to such an end as God will allow to be good.

There be three ends, whereunto if our fast be directed, it is then a work profitable to us, and accepted of God.

The first is, to chastise the flesh, that it be not too wanton, but tamed and brought in subjection to the spirit. This respect had St. Paul in his fast, when he said, I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means it cometh to pass, that when I have preached to others, I myself be found a cast-away.

The second, that the spirit may be more earnest and fervent to prayer. To this end fasted the Prophets and Teachers that were at Antioch, before they sent forth Paul and Barnabas to preach the Gospel. The same two Apostles fasted for the like purpose, when they commended to God, by their earnest prayers, the congregations that were at Antioch, Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra; as we read in the Acts of the Apostles.

The third, that our fast be a testimony and witness with us before God, of our humble submission to his high Majesty, when we confess and acknowledge our sins unto him, and are inwardly touched with sorrow, fullness of heart, bewailing the same in the afflictions of our bodies. These are the three ends or right uses of fasting. The first becometh most properly to private fasts: the other two are common, as well to public fasts, as to private; and thus much for the use of fasting. Lord, have mercy upon us, and give us grace, that while we live in this miserable world, we may through thy help bring forth this and such other fruits of the Spirit, commended and commanded in thy holy word to the glory of thy name, and to our comforts, that, after the race of this wretched life, we may live everlastingly with thee in thy heavenly kingdom, not for thy mercies' sake and the merits of thy dear Son Jesus Christ: to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all laud, honour, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

ABSTINENCE IN LENT.

A PLEDGE TO HABITUAL ABSTINENCE THE YEAR ROUND.

Another particular generally included in Lent observances, and much relied on, is abstinence, in a greater or less degree, from customary worldly pleasures, and worldly gratifications; nay, the renunciation of worldly intercourse, and social visiting, and comparative seclusion, during this season, is insisted on by some as highly conducive, if not essential to the welfare of the soul! But if this be the case, why, I would ask, limit such salutary restraints, such wholesome regulations to Lent? If such abstinence, such retirement, be really conducive to godly growth at one time, why not equally so at another? Is the soul, then, in peculiar jeopardy during Lent, so that watchings, and fastings, and self-denials are then especially needful, which may, with perfect security, or without damage, be dispensed with during the rest of the year? Or are gaieties, and vanities, and worldly amusements, and worldly conformities, less injurious to the spiritual life, less inconsistent with Gospel principles, less prejudicial to heavenly-mindedness, during the rest of the year than during Lent? Or is it that the Gospel itself prescribes, or sanctions, these periodical seasons of self-denial and spiritual exertion in the Divine life, to be relaxed and intermitted by protracted intervals of worldliness and self-gratification—a month, for instance, of fasting and seclusion, to be succeeded by eleven of worldly conformity, and fashionable folly? Did our blessed Saviour then, when, in his last supplication for his disciples, he characterized them as "not of the world, even as he was not of the world," really mean this—that they were not to be of the world during Lent, or at any other particular period, as distinct from the rest of their time, so that during the rest of their time they might, with propriety, and Christian consistency, be of "the world"? Judging from his own character, here proposed as their example, and exhibited, indeed, as their pattern, can the shadow of a foundation be shown for such a supposition? Look at the Saviour's character: examine it throughout; mark well his life on all its incidents, in all its bearings, from Bethlehem to Calvary; where, or when, was seen on him the impress of the world? A man he was, devoted to the world's interest—aye, devoted unto the death! A man he was, to be found often amidst the world, labouring in its behalf, ministering to its necessities, re-proving its iniquities, bearing its griefs! A man in the world frequent, but of the world never! Where, then, or what the Christian's warrant to be of the world ever, at one time more than another? Or what the foundation for the vain distinction attempted to be drawn, in reference to the lawfulness of worldly conformity betwixt one season and another—betwixt Lent, and the rest of the year? Alas! the history, as to the cause of all this delusion and self-deception—of the complacency in periodical abstinence from worldliness and self-gratification, with the full purpose of a speedy and joyous return of it, is to be traced to utterly mistaken views of religion from first to last; to the miserably erroneous notion so commonly and readily adopted, that religion consists in a kind of periodical effort, or separate practice—practice separate from the general habits, experience, occupations, and pleasures of life—practice involving a detached service of so much time, and so much work; a something to be done, now and then, at certain times, and seasons, and under certain circumstances,—on Sun-

days and Lent-days, and on certain hours of other days, and by certain exercises at these times, and during these hours! Instead of being what alone it is, the very life of God in the soul of man; a high, holy, heavenly principle, drawing the soul with all its affections to God, as the God of its salvation; inducing a cordial, delightful, voluntary surrender of itself at all times, and in all circumstances to his will; and constraining an effort, not periodical and partial, but universal, unvarying, determined to be by grace conformed daily, hourly, momentarily, more and more after the image of Him, who is himself the image of God, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." This is the mistake, the fatal, melancholy mistake; no marvel, then, at the consequences that flow from it; they follow of course. Since religion is only a partial thing, worldly renunciation need only be partial too. The season of Lent rigidly observed, with its fastings and severities, its retirements and duties, will go far towards meeting the requirements. It will satisfy the demand of conscience on this head, and be, at least, a satisfactory set-off against the habitual follies and worldly conformity of the rest of the year!

But, it may be asked, may not periodical seasons of religious retirement be profitably adopted? May not the Christian advantageously set apart certain times in the year for special attention to his spiritual interests; and, in order to this, prescribe to himself at such times more than ordinary seclusion from secular concerns, and worldly associations? Men of business, for instance: is not such a course highly beneficial, and desirable in their case at least? To this I reply at once,—that, however cases and circumstances may occur, wherein the desirableness of such a course may be admitted, still at last, be the cases and circumstances what they may, it will infallibly be found, that not the yearly, nor the monthly, nor even the weekly alone, but the daily recurring periods of religious retirement are the periods, on the observance of which the soul's health and interest really depend; that it is the habit of daily intercourse and communion with God, the appointment of daily seasons for holy exercises and serious meditation, regularly adhered to and diligently improved, that effectually secure growth in grace, and final maturity in the Divine life! Alone with God in the chamber, deliberately, calmly, thoughtfully,—once, twice, thrice in the day; the door shut, the Bible open; the world with its business as well as its pleasures excluded; the presence of the Saviour realized, the Spirit's influence sought! This is the system of retirement, these the seasons which will really be found profitable to the soul; and if a man's business be such,—so various and extended, so overwhelming and engrossing—that he cannot arrange for these, nothing remains that I can suggest, but that he diminish that business and the sooner the better! for otherwise he is endangering his soul for this world's gain; and assuredly no periodical seasons of supposed devotion, be they yearly, monthly, or weekly, will serve to remedy the evil, or prevent the catastrophe he is hurrying upon himself.

In regard to renunciation of the world, the same principle must be maintained. It is not the temporary separation from its customary follies; it is not the periodical abandonment of its pleasures, and seclusion from its society; but it is the habitual renunciation of worldliness itself, by the systematic relinquishment of all those things, at all times, which tend to engender its spirit, and foster its practice, which stamps with reality the Christian's profession, and invests with certainty the Christian's hope! Where this is practised, little else is wanting, and little else need, I believe, be added, in the way of periodical seclusion; while, where this is not practised, nothing else in the way of periodical seclusion will be found to supply the deficiency; or to involve ought to the soul, save lamentable delusion in this world, and still more lamentable ruin in that to come.—From Lent Usages, by the Rev. Capel Molyneux, B. A.

GENIUS OF THE ORDER OF THE JESUITS.

Unhappily for mankind, the vast influence which the order of Jesuits acquired by all these different means, has been often asserted with the most pernicious effect. Such was the tendency of that discipline observed by the society in forming its members, and such the fundamental maxims in its constitution, that every Jesuit was taught to regard the interest of the order as the capital object to which every consideration was to be sacrificed. The spirit of attachment to their order, the most ardent perhaps that ever influenced any body of men, is the characteristic principle of the Jesuits, and serves as a key to the genius of their policy as well as the peculiarities in their sentiments and conduct.

As it was for the honour and advantage of the society that its members should possess an ascendancy over persons in high rank or of great power; the desire of acquiring and preserving such a direction of their conduct with greater facility, has led the Jesuits to propagate a system of relaxed and pliant morality, which accommodates itself to the passions of men, which justifies their vices, which tolerates their perfections, which authorizes almost every action that the most audacious or crafty politician would wish to perpetrate.

As the prosperity of the order was intimately connected with the preservation of the papal authority, the Jesuits, influenced by the same principle of attachment to the interests of their society, have been the most zealous patrons of those doctrines which tend to exalt ecclesiastical power on the ruins of civil government. They have attributed to the court of Rome a jurisdiction as extensive and abso-