

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### TRUTH THE MEASURE OF VITALITY.

However it be as to the survival of the fittest in the animal kingdom, the survival of the truest in human society and in human philosophy is a sound maxim. We must believe that God is not false, and that the Judge of all the earth will do right. All rightly-constituted minds have at least that much faith in the order of the universe. Hence the common saying, "Truth is mighty, and it will prevail." None but the incurably vicious believe that the Devil will triumph, and even they do not believe it; they are only unwilling to concede victory to Righteousness and Holiness because they feel that they have thrown in their lot with the fortunes of the Prince of the Power of the Air. These thoughts were suggested by observing a paragraph in a newspaper about Turkey a letter describing the fearful disorganization which exists in that country. After the capture of Constantinople in 1453 by Mahmoud II., the Turks, not content with the capital of the Greek Empire, and Selim, the grandson of Mahmoud, added Syria and Egypt to their dominions; and yet later Solyman the Magnificent, the most accomplished of all the Ottoman princes, conquered the greater part of Hungary, and extended his sway in Asia to the Euphrates. This was about the middle of the sixteenth century, and at that period the Turkish Empire was unquestionably the most powerful in the world. "If you consider," says the historian Knolles, who wrote about two centuries since, "its beginning, its progress, and uninterrupted success, there is nothing in the world more admirable and strange; if the greatness and lustre thereof, nothing more magnificent and glorious; if the power and strength thereof, nothing more dreadful and dangerous, which wondering at nothing but the beauty of itself, and drunk with the pleasant wine of perpetual felicity, holdeth all the rest of the world in scorn." They were the terror of Europe, and in 1683 had pushed their arms to the walls of Vienna, where they were defeated by John Sobieski, from which time their power began to decline.

Charles V. was the contemporary of Solyman the Magnificent. The power of the Italian Church was at its acme, and the bugles of the Reformation had just been sounded. Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Titian were adorning the churches of Rome, Florence, and Venice with their paintings. John de Medicis, Pope Leo X., made Italy the centre of literature and the arts. It was in 1519 that the building of St. Peter's was commenced carried on subsequently by Michael Angelo, who, speaking of the grand dome which he had conceived in his mind, remarked that "he would suspend the Pantheon in the air."

Where are Constantinople and Spain and the Church of Rome now? "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" "Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee." Judgment appears about to be visited on the Beast and the False Prophet alike.

Mohammedanism has had a wonderful career in the world. It penetrated into Europe; it took possession of North Africa; it spread itself into India, Persia, Tartary, and among the islands of the Malay Archipelago. It has lived as a powerful system through 1,200 years. It could not have lived so long except on the principle of the survival of the fittest—it was truer than anything else with which it came in contact. There are some fine features about the religion of Islam—its unrelenting monotheism and its intense earnestness. The Turk may be very wrong in his religious ideas, but he at least believes them; there is no scepticism in Islamism—no indifferentism. It is a downright positive thing; it is among false religions like Calvinism among the true. Before it inferior types of religion disappeared.

The Roman Catholic form of Christianity—despite its great corruptions—has run a parallel career. They commenced about the same time—and they are likely to end about the same time. Romanism was better than Paganism; it announced many glorious truths; and the truth which it held has imparted to it its wonderful vitality.

But strong as were Islamism and Romanism, overlaid with error they carried in themselves the seeds of decay. They shone like luminaries in a dark age; they paled before a pure form of Christianity as did

the old light-houses on our coasts as compared with the calcium electric lights. The history of Europe since the Reformation continues to illustrate our argument. Those nationalities which embraced the Truth are precisely those which constitute to-day the powers of Europe. The little realm of Scotland has grown under its stern Presbyterian convictions to be one of the most notable communities in the world. England, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, have completely overshadowed Spain, Portugal, Italy, Austria. France is a powerful and prosperous nation, but even here the elements of strength are derived from the weakening of the power of Ultramontane thought, and the elements of weakness are due to the absence of strong religious conviction.

And now, surveying the whole field of history and philosophy from the beginning, what system is it which has, in comparison with all others, exhibited the greatest amount of vitality? has held its own and continued to grow amid the wreck and decay of all other systems? Friend and foe will at once recognize that that great ENDURING system has been CHRISTIANITY. In three hundred years Paganism—all the culture and philosophy of the Roman world fell before it. Gradually even in a corrupted form it pushed its way over the entire continent of Europe, and made that continent what we see it to-day without any parallel as an example of civilization in the history of the world. The same Christianity in its Protestant form has created a similar civilization in this western world, and is building up another highly civilized community in Australia—not to speak of the influence it begins to exert in India. Every other form of religion vanishes before its touch. It is plain to see that Mohammedanism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Tao-ism, venerable as they are, and though counting their adherents by scores of millions, will succumb to its impact. The most stubborn resistance it has ever encountered has been from its elder brother Judaism. Note the vitality that lay in the revelation of the Old Testament, maintaining itself from the days of the Pharaohs against Assyrian, Greek, Roman, through the Middle Ages, down to the present time, in every country on the face of the globe. Prophecy assures us that it will nevertheless be merged in the higher revelation.\*

If Christianity manifests this indestructibility—and this conquering power—assailed as it has been too by every form of philosophical speculation as well as by the sword and the power of the State for eighteen centuries—is it not because it is impossible to extinguish the torch of truth?

It is engaged in a great conflict now, with Infidelity. Suppose the sceptical philosophers like Huxley and Haeckel should triumph, do we not all know that we should have Chaos? Is not this a guarantee that Infidelity will not triumph? Can the mother of Chaos devour the child of Mary, whose precepts are the bond of modern society, and whose faith has awakened the sweetest affections that ever melted with charity the human heart? Can LOVE be banished from the world? and shall the Pure in Heart be driven away as a lie from the bosom of society? *Central Presbyterian.*

### CAN WE FEEL SURE?

It was said of a certain magnificent speech of Daniel Webster that "every word weighed a pound." But there is a line in the thirty-fifth psalm—mostly made up of monosyllables—in which every word weighs a ton. David uttered it in a season of despondency, when he cried out: "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." The old monarch was in trouble. His own throne was assailed, and so he went to the Everlasting Throne. His own heart was assailed by doubts, and so he sought for a fresh and full assurance of salvation. Whatever David's own experiences may have been, he furnished a golden prayer for universal use in these pregnant, pithy words: "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

The salvation which all of us most need is a deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin. We need to be liberated from the bondage of that great slaveholder, the Devil. Beset with temptations, we need succour when we are tempted. The only salvation "under Heaven given among men" is by the atoning blood of Jesus and the regenerating power of the Holy

\*Three religions have been founded in whole or in part on the Old Testament; Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism; and how strong each one has been. Christianity has this for its background.

Spirit. This is a full salvation, a complete salvation; it is God's masterpiece of mercy to us guilty, depraved, and dying sinners. Can this salvation be made *sure* to a man, and can he be *sure* that he possesses it?

We answer, unhesitatingly. Yes. David did not ask for impossibilities when he asked God to assure him of his salvation. Paul knew what he was about when he said, "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" There is no perhaps about the salvation of a true follower of Christ, any more than there is about the rising of to-morrow's sun. It does not depend upon my say, or your say, or any man's say. Only God can give the decisive and infallible assurance to us that we are safe for this world and for eternity.

Let it be carefully noted that the prayer is that God would say unto the *soul*. "I am thy salvation." There is no audible voice addressed to the ear; in fact, multitudes hear the offer of salvation every Sabbath by the ear, and yet their hearts are as deaf as adders. What God says can only be heard by the heart. We would define faith to be *heart-hearing*. And unto the docile, believing soul God says wonderful things, and things to make the soul leap for joy. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I open the ivory chamber of John's Gospel, and read these words. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation." Again, Jesus says, "This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one who believeth on the Son may have everlasting life." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." He does not affirm that we may never, in a fit of waywardness and pride, throw ourselves out of that almighty and loving hand. But He does declare that while we stay there we are safe. And, being safe, we have a right to know it, and to feel all the serenity and satisfaction which this ownership by the Lord Jesus can inspire.

Faith is the soul's trust in Jesus as our salvation. It ought to bring a delightful sense of security. But it does not always do so, because it is too weak and doubting to produce assurance. Faith is the milk, and assurance is the cream which rises on it. The richer the milk the more abundant will be the cream. Assurance is not essential to salvation, as faith is; for God will let a great many people into heaven who had a very feeble faith here on earth. Faith is life, though it be sometimes a very weak, anxious, burdened, and uncomfortable life. Assurance marks a higher degree of health, vigour, joy, and power to overcome. Peter possessed some faith when he screamed to his Master, from the waves: "Lord, save me!" He had reached a much higher attainment by the Spirit when he exclaimed in the market-place of Jerusalem: "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." Saul of Tarsus had an infant faith born in his soul when he was groping about in the house of Ananias at Damascus. The infant had grown into a giant when Paul had reached up to the eighth chapter to the Romans, and could shout: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him." Jesus had really said to Paul, "I am thy salvation."

Paul had the witness of the Spirit that he was Christ's. There was an inward conviction and an outward life, and the two corresponded with each other. They both corresponded also to the Spirit's description of true piety in the Bible. When a tree produces the leaves of a pear and the fruit of the pear, we are sure that it is a pear tree. When a man feels the love of Jesus in his soul and keeps the commandments of Jesus in his life, he has the witness of the Holy Spirit that he is in Christ. Being in Christ, he is safe. There is no condemnation to such a man. He has passed from death unto life. The Lord has already said unto such a consistent believer: "I am thy salvation." But when an oily-tongued dissembler, who cheats his creditors or lives a life of secret uncleanness, rises in a prayer meeting and prates glibly about his holiness or his sanctified attainments, he simply unmask his own hypocrisy.

We have just said that assurance is not a positive essential of faith; but yet it is the privilege and the duty of a genuine Christian to possess the assurance of Christ's love and protection. Old Latimer used to