

Pastor and People.

(For the Presbyterian.)

Dr. Witherspoon.

BY REV. R. F. BURNS, D.D., HALIFAX.

In a highly complimentary notice of my sainted father's visit to Princeton along with Principal Cunningham, of Edinburgh, in February 1844, (the first Deputation sent out by the Free Church of Scotland to the American churches), the late Dr. James W. Alexander, writing to his friend Dr. Hall, of Trenton, says: "Burns, you know is in Witherspoon's pulpit at Paisley; he has been settled there thirty-three years." This circumstance has made Witherspoon's name to me "familiar as household words." During my father's visit, he sought out very diligently the surviving relatives of his illustrious predecessor, and brought away interesting memorials of him. He loved to meet with the fathers who knew him, and to linger in the hallowed "God's Acre," that Presbyterian Mecca where he sleeps till the resurrection morn, by the side of the other "giants of those days," Edwards, Davies, Smith, Finlay, Burr. How much of precious dust that old burying ground hold!

A month ago one of the sons of the present distinguished President led me thither, and the impression will never fade. Acknowledging receipt from my father of a contribution to Dr. Sprague's "Annals," in the shape of sketches of Dr. Codman, of Dorchester, an old college chum, that "man greatly beloved," who has so recently gone to his rest and reward, writing from Albany on the 10th Dec., 1860, asks him for similar sketches of Witherspoon. "I think it of great importance," (writes Dr. Sprague), "that your hereditary reminiscences of Dr. Witherspoon should become the property of our Presbyterian Church, and I venture earnestly to request, that you will write them out at your leisure, and let me secure their publication,—if not, immediately in my own work, yet in the "Presbyterian" or some of our Monthlies or Quarterly. I am sure that, by doing this, you will place our church under great obligation to you, for, if there is any one among the fathers, whom we all delight to honor, and whose history, even in its minutest details, we cannot permit to let perish, it is Dr. Witherspoon."

This request seems not to have been complied with. I have not, unfortunately, Dr. Sprague's book before me, but from an article which appeared in the Edinburgh Christian Instructor in October, 1820, you may perhaps permit me to cull a few particulars which may be of interest during this Centennial year, and especially in this month, which is to witness at Philadelphia the dedication of the Witherspoon monument. The Instructor was started in 1811 by the renowned Dr. Andrew Thomson, the pioneer and associate of Chalmers, and conducted by him till his death, and was for long the leading organ of the rising evangelical party in the Church of Scotland. For three years my father filled the editorial chair. Dr. John Witherspoon was born Feb. 5, 1722, in the Parish of Yester, in the Presbytery of Haddington. His father was minister of the Parish, and was a lineal descendant of the great Scottish Reformer, John Knox. At the age of fourteen he left the Haddington Parish School and entered the Edinburgh University. Dr. Carlyle, of Inveresk, who became one of the leaders in the ecclesiastical party of which Mr. Witherspoon afterwards was one of the most formidable opponents, entered at the same time and occupied the same lodgings. In his famous "Autobiography," written as an octogenarian, the old "Moderate" shows his animus, when referring to his fellow-boarders he says, "John Witherspoon, the celebrated Doctor, was also in the house. At the time I speak of, he was a good scholar, far advanced for his age, very sensible and shrewd, but of a disagreeable temper, which was irritated by a flat voice and awkward manner which prevented his making an impression on his companions of either sex that was at all equal to his ability. This defect, when he was a lad, stuck to him when he grew up to manhood, and roused his envy and jealousy, and made him take a road to distinction very different from that of his more successful companions." (Autobiography p. 26.)

Just the estimate we would expect from this jovial representative of a party "Moderate" in their piety, but the reverse of "Moderate" in their potations, respecting the Scottish Pascal, whose scathing satire published nigh a score of years after their boyish intercourse, was to prove a raking fire in the "Moderate" like the "Provincial Letters" of the great Portroyals in the Jesuit ranks. Witherspoon received license at the age of twenty-one, and soon after was chosen assistant and successor to his worthy father at Yester, but the parish of Both, in the West of Scotland (some twenty miles from Glasgow), having become vacant through the translation of Dr. Leechman to a Theological chair in Glasgow College, he received the presentation in 1744 from the Patron, the Earl of Eglinton, with the full approval of the people, and was settled early the following year. This was the year of the Prince Charles Rebellion, when Scotland was convulsed. In January, 1746, the battle of Falkirk was fought, when victory leaned to the side of "the Pretender." Many, from patriotism or curiosity, flocked to the battlefield. Among the rest, the Minister of Both, who was a strong Royalist, accompanied by "the Minister's Men." Witherspoon was taken prisoner and immured within the Castle of Doune, from which, at great risk, he effected his escape. Mr. Home, in his History of the Rebellion, mentions "the place of their abode was a large gloomy room, in the highest part of the castle, and next the battlements. In one end of this room there were two small vaults or cells, in one of which the volunteers passed the night with three other persons, one of whom was Mr. John Witherspoon, then a clergyman of the Church of Scotland, and afterwards President of the College of New Jersey, in America." It was in 1758 that he published his

celebrated "Ecclesiastical Characteristics or the Aroma of Church Polity." It went through five editions and roused the ire of the party in power (the Moderates), whose features and failings were taken off with a satirical sarcasm and clever banter worthy of Swift, without the coarseness of the rollicking Dean. Hetherington in his well-known "History of the Church of Scotland," says, "Among the pamphlets which this contest between the two parties drew forth, by far the most remarkable was 'Witherspoon's Ecclesiastical Characteristics.' This was published in Sept. 1758, and immediately acquired great celebrity both in Scotland and England. The wrath of the Moderate party, whose maxims of ecclesiastical polity it so keenly satirized, was excessive, but they wisely abstained from attempting to answer it." (Vol. II, page 223.) It mirrors to the life that iron age of Scottish Church History, when the star of the historian Robertson was in the ascendant, when Blair revived "the morals of Epictetus," and apologized for the infidel teachings of Hume; when Gillespie was deposed for refusing to countenance the abominations of patronage, and founded the Relief, which nigh a century after, merged into the Secession, and when Patrick Grant "was settled to the walls of the Kirk of Nigg," in spite of the warning from the apparition which startled out of their propriety the four orator members of the intruding Presbytery. Complimentary letters poured in on the author from all quarters, save of course from that which had been the object of his attack. Among his warmest eulogists were three prelates of the Church of England, the Bishops of London, Oxford, and Gloucester, the last of whom describes the work as "a fine piece of railery against a party to which we are no strangers in England."

His Presbytery brought him to account, and the case went as far as the Synod and then dropped. His speech before the latter court was a masterpiece of ingenious eloquence. He rapidly reached the front rank in what was contemptuously called the "wild party," and displayed a tact and sagacity, a shrewdness of policy which often surprised and confounded his adversaries. It happened one day in the General Assembly, after the Doctor had baffled in some most important points the great Moderate leader, Robertson said to him in his blandest tones, "I think, Sir, you have had your men better disciplined than formerly." "Yes," replied Dr. Witherspoon, "by urging your politics too far, you have compelled us to beat you with your own weapons." In 1756 appeared his Essay (which attained quite a celebrity in its day) on the "Connection between the doctrine of Justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and holiness of life." It was dedicated to James Hervey, the author of the "Meditations" and of the essays of Theron and Aspasio, once so famous, who, in one of his letters published of date 7 November, 1758, speaks of it most highly. Being written only a few weeks before his death, a peculiar interest attaches to the closing words of this letter, "I am now reduced to a state of infant weakness, and given over by my physician, and my grand consolation is to meditate on Christ. This is probably the last time you will ever hear from me, for indeed, it is with some difficulty I have now written you, but I shall not fail to remember you in my intercessions for my friends at the Throne of Grace."

Early in 1757 another Essay appeared from Witherspoon's prolific pen, entitled "A serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage." It has been referred to by the most approved writers on the subject, since, as a standard production. It was called forth by what he calls the "new and very extraordinary event" of Mr. John Home, Minister of the Parish of Athelstaneford, having published the Tragedy of Douglas, which was acted frequently in the Edinburgh Theatre, on which occasions several of his clerical brethren thought it no impropriety to be present.

Dr. Robert Findlay having been translated from the "Laigh Kirk," (Low Church) Paisley, to the chair of Divinity in Glasgow University, Dr. Witherspoon received and accepted a call to be his successor, and was installed in charge on the 16th June, 1757, after a faithful and honored Ministry of thirteen years at Both. His Paisley Pastorate brought into yet greater prominence the qualities that won him fame in his more retired charge.

Many of his discourses were published. Amongst them one (in 1762) entitled, "Seasonable Advice to Young Persons," occasioned by an unseemly disturbance in the Church on the night before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which issued in an unhappy law suit, causing him much expense and annoyance. In 1761 he received the Doctorial degree from one of the Scottish universities. During the year he went to London and published in three volumes his "Essays on Important Subjects," including the principal of his previous productions and others in addition, his Treatise on Regeneration of the number, which is deemed by competent judges the best that has appeared in the English language on the important subject.

During his Paisley incumbency, by literary correspondence and otherwise, Dr. Witherspoon was brought into contact with the most eminent divines at home and abroad. He received numerous invitations elsewhere, such as to Dundee, in Scotland, to Dublin, in Ireland, and to Rotterdam, in Holland, but declined them all. The first invitation presented to him by the Trustees of the college of New Jersey seems also to have been declined, but the persistent urging of it, backed by strong representations from influential quarters, made his resolution waver. Many considerations worked on the other side. When in a state of great mental perplexity, a wealthy relative promised to make him his heir if he would not go. So soon as the path of duty was made plain, none of these things moved him. He resolved what to do, and proceeded at once to put his resolution into effect. On the 16th April, 1768, he preached his farewell sermon in Paisley, closing a ministry there of nigh eleven years. Before leaving Scotland he published two volumes of Practical Sermons, which received the special imprimatur of William Wilberforce in his "Practical View."

"The Voice of thy Brother's Blood."

GENESIS IV. 10.

Over the dark blue sea,
Over the trackless flood,
The little hand is gone
In the service of their God.
The lonely waste of waters
They traverse to proclaim
In the distant land of Sinim
Immortal's saving name!
They have heard from the far off East
The voice of the heathen's blood;
A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

For many an anxious day
On England's shore they stood;
As the eagle's longing eye
Looks to the distant cloud,
They gazed across the sea,
Their hearts with sorrow heaving;
O China! all for thee
Their homes and loved ones leaving;
For they heard the countless cry,
The voice of their brother's blood!
O China! all for thee
Who are dying without God!

No help have they but God,
Alone to their Father's hand
They look for the hourly supply
Of their wants in that distant land;
For the fulness of the world is His
And all power in Earth and Heaven,
They are strong tho' weak, and rich tho' poor
In the promise He has given.
'Tis enough they hear the cry,
The voice of the heathen's blood;
A million a month in China
Are dying without God.

And now o'er the mighty deep
The heralds of mercy speed:
Can we wonder that they weep
As they bear the precious seed?
But no labor in the Lord
Shall ever be in vain;
Laden with sheaves of precious souls
They shall doubtless come again.
They must weep, for they hear the cry—
The voice of their brother's blood;
A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

O! church of the living God!
Awake from thy sinful sleep!
Dost thou not hear our awful cry
Still sounding o'er the deep?
Is it nought that one out of every three,
Of all the human race,
Should in China die, having never heard
The gospel of God's grace?
Canst thou shut thine ears to the awful sound,
The voice of thy brother's blood?
A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

O ye ambassadors for Christ,
Who hear your Lord's command,
"Go, go ye into all the world,"
Why linger in this land?
Say, do ye well to tarry
Where thousands preach the word;
While China's millions never yet
Its blessed sound have heard?
Should it still stand unheeded
The cry of your brother's blood?
A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

Oh, speak not of the noble few
Who the gospel's sickle wield,
And reap some sheaves with weary hand
On the edge of its harvest field;
For beyond their utmost efforts
Four hundred millions lie,
And a thousand preachers were all too few
To reach them ere they die!
But hear, oh! hear ye, for yourselves
The voice of your brother's blood!
A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

Four hundred millions! Lo, I see
The long procession pass:
It takes full three and twenty years—
Yet scarce two hours, alas!
Mine eye need gaze to count the saints
Amid that mighty host;
So few, so very few, the saved,
So numbers the lost!
The lost! ah does no righteous voice
Accuse us of their blood?
A million a month in China
Are dying without God.

But do these perish? Let the word
Of God which cannot lie
Give to this great enquiry,
Its solemn solo reply!
"All those who sin beneath the law
Judged by that law shall be,
Who sin besides, shall without law
Perish" eternally.
O ye perishing neglected souls!
Are ye guilty of your blood?
A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

They perish for their sins against
The light which God has given;
They need not perish! Christ has died,
The message sounds from heaven:
"He that believeth shall be saved,"
Faith cometh by the Word;
But how shall these believe on Him
Of whom they never heard?
And how without a preacher here?
Our ships are full of blood!
A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

Think not the heathen shall be saved!
'Tis a vain and guilty dream;
Idolaters shall never dwell
In the New Jerusalem!
But "without" that golden city,
Among the lost must be,
In the lake of the second death, whose flames
Burneth unquenchably!
Wee to the heathen and to those
Who are guilty of their blood!
A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

O watchman of God! thou seest
The sword of destruction come,
Why soundest thou not the warning
Mid the hosts of heathendom?
God says, that if thou warnest not
The wicked at His command,
He shall perish—but his blood shall be
Required at thy hand!

Oh! cleanse thy hands from murder,
From the stain of thy brother's blood;
A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

Go, for the Saviour sends thee,
To call from the distant East
The idolaters for whom He died,
To His heavenly marriage feast.
The gospel that thou hearest
The power of God shall prove,
To triumph o'er the souls of men
By the omnipotence of love
And remember, while thou lingerest,
The voice of thy brother's blood;

A million a month in China
Are dying without God!

And ye who cannot go, oh! help
With the wondrous weapon, prayer;
While ye uplift your hands at home,
The word shall triumph there
And give ye freely from your store
To the warriors in the field
The more you give, to you the more
Barrel and ounce shall yield
So only can you cleanse your hands
From the guiltiness of blood,
For a million a month in China
Are dying without God.
H. Grettan Guinness.

A Card for Vacant Churches Seeking for a Pastor.

At the present time, when there are so many vacancies in our church, the prayerful consideration of the following points may not be without profit:

1. Invoke the aid and direction of the Great Head of the Church.
2. Determine what kind of a man you want, or ought to have, and what the church needs.
3. Call a man, not to rent the pews, nor to pay the debt, nor to gratify your pride, nor to produce a sensation.
4. Call a man not for the young exclusively, nor for the intellectual only, nor for the rich, but for all—for the whole church.
5. Call a man who is holy and humble—who will do the work for the Master—a man devoted to the work of the ministry. A man of experience and prudence, if the church be important, who will build up the church in the faith.
6. Call a man who attends to his own business, and does not meddle with others.
7. Beware of a buffoon.
8. Do not be afraid of a man who has reached the meridian of life, for then he is best qualified for the work of the ministry, rich in experience and ripe in knowledge.
9. Be united in your call. Consede much for the sake of unity.
10. Having called a pastor, rally around him; support him; cheer him; co-operate with him; respect him; honor him; pray for him; be careful of his reputation.
11. Begin as you expect to continue.
12. Avoid evil surmisings and insinuations.
13. Remember he is God's servant, God's ambassador, to minister to you in holy things—to stand between you and God; and to God you must give account for your treatment of him.
14. Wait upon his ministry faithfully.

Harvest Lessons.

1. Harvest time proclaims God's faithfulness. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. viii. 22.)
2. Harvest time tells of God's goodness. "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; * * * the valleys are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." (Psalm lxxv. 11, 12.)
3. Harvest time is a time for prayer and work. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into His harvest." (Matt. ix. 37, 38.)
4. Harvest time is a time of joy. "They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest." (Isa. ix. 3.) "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seeds, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Psalm cxxvi. 6.)
5. Harvest time is a testing time. "Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in a bundle to burn them; but gather the wheat into My barn." (Matt. xiii. 20.)
6. Harvest time is connected with seed time. " whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.)

Harvest time speaks loudly to the unsaved. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jer. viii. 13.)—Word and Work.

The Prayer Test.

BY A. A. HODGE, D.D.

- 1st. If a human father can answer his children's cry for bread, without violating natural law, why cannot God?
- 2nd. If, as all theists believe, God is an omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, personal spirit, touching every atom in the universe at the same instant, observing and using the laws of nature, preserving the equilibrium of all forces, while directing them to general and special results, how could Professor Tyndall ascertain the fact or its reverse, by any analysis of the general phenomena of physical nature as it lies before him, as a student of physical science?
- 3rd. If God does answer prayer, which is a personal question between Himself and those who pray, and which has been affirmed as true to their personal experience, for thousands of years, by millions of the best and most intelligent inhabitants of the globe, what is to prevent any man of common sense, who submits in spirit and act to the conditions upon which the promise is made, from reaching absolute and rational certainty of the fact, through the intimate correspondencies of his inward and outward life?
- 4th. If, as we admit with all our heart, preachers ought to keep silence on questions of pure science until they attain some clear ideas on the subject, why ought not men of science also to keep silence on questions of philosophy and religion until they possess some clear ideas of the matters upon which they are ambitious to speak?

The heart not ballasted with renewing grace, may hold out in the calm of life and shallows of time; but when it meets with the storm of death, and launcheth into the ocean of eternity, it suffereth a desperate and everlasting shipwreck.

Random Readings.

To watch without prayer is to presume upon our own strength; to pray without watching is to presume upon the grace of God.

There is an excellent rule—Say nothing respecting yourself, either good, bad or indifferent; nothing good, for that is vanity; nothing bad, for that is affectation; nothing indifferent, for that is silly.

A STREAM preserves its crystal cleanness by continual running; if its course be stopped, it will stagnate and putrify. The purity of the soul is preserved by the constant exercise of habitual grace.—Lutes.

KEEP us in everlasting fellowship with our brethren and our sisters who have entered into the joy of our Lord, and with the whole Church triumphant; and let us rest together in Thy presence from our labors.

WHAT am I to be hereafter I must be becoming now. For, day by day, I am growing fixedly into the attitude which I bear my sorrows in, and from under them my look heavenward, whatever it is, is becoming eternal.—Mountford.

THE most natural beauty in the world is honest and moral truth. True features make the beauty of a face, and true proportions the beauty of architecture, as true measure that of harmony and music. In poetry which is all fable, truth is still the perfection.—Shafestary.

A FARMER went with his son into a wheat field to see if it was ready for harvest. "See, father," exclaimed the boy, "how straight these stems hold up their heads! They must be the best ones. Those that hang their heads down I am sure cannot be good for much." The farmer plucked a stalk of each kind and said, "See here, foolish child! This stalk that stood so straight is light headed, and almost good for nothing, while this that lung its head so modestly is full of the most beautiful grain."

By what means may we always retain the joy which is designed to be the privilege of the justified? Only one answer can be given to this enquiry, and it is simply this: by keeping at all times near to the cross. Calvary's fountain is a fountain that is ever open; and as often as our peace is disturbed by the consciousness of sin, or our joy impaired by the prevalence of unbelief, the remedy lies there. We are not to live on spiritual attainments, nor on past experiences. Our comfort is not to be derived from personal virtues, nor our confidence to be built on the fervency of religious affections. To lean on these, is to lean on a broken reed.

It is very hard to stand with our Saviour at the grave of loved ones, and say, "Father, I thank Thee!" Yet how many rounded graves will appear in the light of eternity, not as Bochim, places for weeping, but mounts of Beatitudes, whereon God has laid a blessing. Children saved from the paw of the lion, and gathered through the grave with the Shepherd's arm, to be laid away safe on His bosom! Saved ones, bitterly mourned for, sheltered from the storms that would have wrecked them, in the peaceful tomb! But even if not so, how very much there is over which, through our tears, we can say at many grave-sides, "Father, I thank thee!"

EXTENSION, we know, is a very imperfect measure of things; and the length of the sun's journeying can no more tell us how far life has advanced than the acreage of a field can tell us what growths may be active within it. A man may go south, and, stumbling over a bone, may meditate upon it till he has found a new starting-point for anatomy; or eastward, and discover a new key to language telling a new story of races; or he may head an expedition that opens new continental pathways, get himself maimed in body, and go through a whole heroic poem of resolve and endurance; and at the end of a few months he may come back to find his neighbors grumbling at the same parish grievance as before, or to see the same elderly gentleman treading the pavement in discourse with himself, shaking his head after the same perussive butcher's boy, and pausing at the same shop window to look at the same prints. If the swiftest thinking has about the pace of a greyhound, the slowest must be supposed to move, like the limpet, by an apparent staking, which after a good while is discerned to be a slight progression. Such differences are manifest in the variable intensity which we call human experience, from the revolutionary rush of change which makes a new inner and outer life, to that quiet recurrence of the familiar which has no other epochs than those of hunger and the heavens.—From GEORGE ELIOT'S "Daniel Deronda," in Harper's Magazine for October.

ALMOST any one can endure a word of encouragement. There is nothing more depressing in a commercial or mechanical establishment, where a young man is trying to do his duty, than to meet with entire silence on the part of his employers, save when he has done something wrong or failed in a specific undertaking. And if men need encouragement in secular service, how much more do they need it in the service of God. Let Christian men tell all the joyous things they know, and recite the most exhilarant promises of the Gospel, and breathe out of their own life anything by the way of encouragement into the hearts of those who may be depressed and despondent. The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is the grandest practical encouragement any man can have. It is not a mere sentiment, or whim, or phantasy, it is something that a man may enter with his entire physical, mental, and moral nature. The religion of Jesus Christ is illumination. There are a thousand things in life that are very dark to us. There are many things in our constitution that need explanation. We are coming across a hundred things in life that are beyond our capacity of solution. How grand to come back from all the mysteries and the unsuccessful soundings in life to God's work, and to the glorious Gospel, and find there an explanation for everything. The religion of Jesus Christ is never in all the Bible once represented as darkness. It is a lamp. It is a lantern. It is a daybreak. It is a moonlight glory. It is an illumination.