

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### HOW BELIEF TRANSFORMS MEN.

Abraham was the head of a wandering tribe, with probably only such small ambitions as were common to his station: a man of purer life, of higher purposes, perhaps, than his neighbour chiefs, and yet with nothing very marked to distinguish him from them. God calls this man, instructs him, leads him, and as he hears, believes, obeys, he becomes quite another man.

In this is the whole source of Abraham's greatness. It was not in his natural gifts that he was distinguished above all other men of his day; others may have been as intelligent and as forceful as he. Nor was it in his great opportunities that he excelled. There is nothing very wonderful in his history, if you take away from it his faith and its influence on his life. He wandered farther than many of the men of his day; but they were all wanderers. He fought his petty battles; so did they. But the one thing which raised him above them all, the thing which makes us know that there was such a man at all, is only this, that he believed God.

Now, his journeyings with family and flock are no mere vulgar wanderings after fat feeding-places for his sheep and cows, but a sacred pilgrimage from the land of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan; a march of faith, with the Lord for his leader, and the land of promise for his destination, and an unknown generation for his sure successors. So he goes on, this friend of God, and He who spake to him is ever in his thoughts. Life has a new meaning to him, daily duty a new dignity. There is nothing small in such a life, for its whole business is to follow God's call.

The same transformation is wrought to day over the man who, like Abraham, believes God. It does not come from believing that God is, or believing in God, or on God, but by simply, lovingly, believing God; believing what He says, and all He says, and because He says it. It makes a man a saint, if you look at him from the side of personal purity of character and life. It puts him under the holiest influence which can move a mortal man. God has said, "Without holiness no man can see the Lord," and he believes God; and having "this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." It makes a man a hero, if you look at him from the side of his daring or endurance. He believes God. It makes no difference to him what any man, what all men, say. What are men's words against the Word of God? What is mere human breath against the inspiration of the Almighty, which hath given him understanding?

Here is a sense in which "all things are new to him that is in Christ Jesus," for it is all illumined by the Word of God. All things are seen in the light of His declarations. The promises of God! why, they are the very pavement upon which he treads, not things far off, visionary, unreal, but just at hand, more real to him than anything beside, than daily bread, or home, or solidest possessions. His hopes, his fears are altogether other than those of the world around him.

Perhaps men mock him openly or covertly. They did Noah; but he believed God and toiled on under the clear sky, year after year, and decade after decade, preparing for the flood. Doubtless they did at Abraham. Even his wife laughed at the promise as absurd, on which depended all the rest. But he believed, he journeyed, he made covenants, he was ready even to slay the child of promise if God said so. They laugh at any one to-day who says that God answers prayers, says it as though he meant it. "The prayer of faith shall cure the sick." Nonsense! "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Preposterous! But he who believes God is not moved. He only remembers with a sigh, a shudder, as he sees their unbelief, "I will laugh in the day of their calamity," saith the Lord.

There is nothing which can make this life so sacred as to have it thus penetrated with the voice of God. How it gives life to the Bible to believe God in it absolutely; not unreasonably, but using reason to see what God says, not to question it, to weigh its meaning, not to rend it out of the record. In this light these are real men, and this is a living God. Now we are come to the secret of these lives; the patience of Noah, the faith of Abraham, the daring of Daniel, the

endurance of his companions in the fiery furnace, the dying prayer of Stephen, the missionary work of Paul, the strength and sweetness of John. They believed God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, with the heart. His words were "Yea and Amen" to them, and the life which they lived in the flesh they lived by the faith of the Son of God.

Is your life dull and purposeless and unsatisfying? Believe God. That will transform and glorify it.—*Rev. Geo. M. Beynton, in "Ill. Christian Weekly."*

### THE CITY OF GOD.

We stand to-day in the quarry,  
Hewing with anxious care,  
The blocks with which, to-morrow,  
We would build life's mansion fair.

Stately and grand in proportion,  
It rises with pillar and dome,—  
Its walls of the snow-white marble,  
Its base of the solid stone.

Fretted each marble column  
With devices so cunningly wrought;  
The marble speaks for the builder,  
And utters his glowing thought.

It breathes of our life's fulfilment;  
Of the ill we will conquer, not bear;  
Of the paths of joy we shall walk in,  
Of the lays that our brows shall wear.

We forget that "the days are evil,"  
That the way at best is long;  
That the bravest heart grows weary,  
And silent the gladdest song.

That wisdom, and strength, and honour,  
Must fade like the far sea-foam;  
And nothing hath walls enduring  
But our far-off beautiful home.

There "our elder brother" waiteth,  
His streets his feet have trod,—  
'Tis "the City which hath foundations,  
Whose maker and builder is God."

### OUR WORK FOR GOD.

The errand on which God sends is always a practicable errand, provided there be a sincere desire on our part to accomplish the errand—to do the work; and in proportion to the effort demanded, to the self-denial required, His authorship of the message concerning the work becomes more evident to the thoughtful and reflective Christian mind. We usually judge in exactly the opposite way. We say, "That is a good work, and I can do it in a minute; therefore I will do it, that is God's errand for me. It is a good work, and I can help it by a little gift which I never shall miss. That is evidently God's plan for me." Thus we reason; ah! but God's plan exactly reverses that. He makes duty the more obligatory the more difficult it is, because for the development of Christian energy in us, Christian generosity, Christian patience, He gives us the work to be done by us. God can do His own work without us, and when one by one the great teachers of the Church have passed away, and the Christian Church tarrying behind has felt that the horsemen and chariots of Israel had gone from its sight forever, and there was no more guardianship and no more inspiration, God has raised up others to take their places, or has carried on His work without such signal and illustrious spirits to be leaders in it, to show that He never depended upon any one human soul, upon any twenty, upon any million human souls for the accomplishment of His plan. He carries them forward by His own might, as the ocean carries the log—because of its own majesty and buoyancy. God does not need our help. Why, then, does He ask for it? Why put us to the trouble of working for Him, why put us to the strain of giving for Him, why put us to the long endurance of patiently planning and waiting that we may accomplish His design? Because thus He develops us. This is His spiritual university in the world. Thus He applies not tests merely, but incitements, stimulants, means of instruction, to whatever is best in us. The man who has given himself to his country loves it better, the man who has fought for his friend honors him more, the man who has labored for his community values more highly the interests he has sought to conserve. The man who has wrought and planned and endured for the accomplishment of God's plan in the world sees the greatness of it, the divinity and glory of it, and is himself more perfectly assimilated to it.—*From a sermon by Dr. Storrs in "The Complete Preacher."*

### WHY I GIVE.

1st. I give, because it does me good to do so. I am conscious of the worldliness of my nature. But giving helps to soften and break down that worldliness, and quickens somewhat the latent sympathies and emotions of my being. And this I know is in the direction of a higher tone of this earthly life.

2nd. I give, because giving is the very genius and spirit of the world. The sun gives. The cloud gives. The air gives. The flower gives. The day gives. The night gives. All nature, indeed, is a ministry, ever serving, ever giving, and shall I withhold?

3rd. I give, because I am always receiving. God is giving to me every hour of every day in a thousand different ways and forms, and surely it is a small matter, indeed, that I should give back a little again to Him.

4th. I give, because in so doing I set a useful example to others. I feel that every Christian is bound to be a pattern to others around him. Liberality for Christ is a grace sadly lacking in the religious community. If, by my example, I can help to enlarge it, I am bound to do so. Therefore I give.

5th. I give, because giving brings a blessing. Even in this life it does so. The liberal soul shall be made fat. And in the life to come, who can tell the splendor of its reward!

6th. I give, because it is the injunction of the Bible. God enjoins it. Christ taught it. The apostles commended it. Let two sentences suffice: "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

Finally, I shall give systematically, because it is rational so to give; because it will help to secure a more intelligent estimate of the claims for which I give; and, because, were systematic giving the practice of the Church, its financial operations would be vastly more easily conducted.

### "HIGHER."

"Higher" cries the impatient bulb, as the earth rises and opens for its entrance into the fair, bright world above. "Higher" says the clambering vine, as it daily strives to wind one more tendril around its supporter. How gracefully line after line is twined around till the summit is reached, and how tenaciously it clings, as if not to lose the position it has gained! "Higher" laughs the gay, gorgeous butterfly, as it seeks to warm itself into life in the sun's genial rays.

And "Higher" sings the lark in his morning song, as he sails through the fleecy clouds to his airy home. "Higher" sings the school boy, as he daily marks his height upon the wall and half despairs of growth. "Higher" says the youth, when he first beholds the broad fields of intellectual greatness spread out before him, and finds there is work for him to perform.

This word "Higher" is a noble one, a glorious incentive to action. The Christian owns and feels its influence, and it is easy to imagine that he hears it softly breathed in his ear, as he is about to take the last look of earthly objects. "Higher" it was that prompted him to clasp his parent's knee when endeavoring to rise in his infancy. "Higher" was his motto in childhood; in youth he felt its influence; in manhood it urged him to noble deeds and generous actions. And now, as the light of his mental vision is going out, this cheering word comes to guide him safely to that region of eternal bliss where he will find the realization of his motto fully exemplified and personified even in the "Most High."

RUSSIA'S system of suppression looks as if torpedoes were under it, and may blow it up. The outbreak of the students, and the closing of the universities, produces a dead-lock between the authorities and the revolutionists.

AT a parlor gathering of liberal and orthodox worthies at the home of Joseph Cook, lately, the subject of discussion was "the Character of Dr. Channing." Mr. Cook, in closing the discussion spoke as follows:—"Because I am a radical of the radicals, I have the greatest admiration for Dr. Channing's saintliness as a literary and philanthropic power. But my first feeling is the utter insufficiency of his theological views to give me peace. I hope that I am a free thinker. And yet I cannot get away from three things—God, myself, and my record. Herbert Spencer says truly that I must be in harmony with my environment. Unitarianism doesn't give it to me. Only when I behold a Mediator am I in harmony with my past, my God, myself. Only so do I find myself at peace."