

## The Christian.

ST. JOHN, N. B. . . . AUGUST, 1889

## EDITORIAL.

He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. — Acts ix. 15.

The history of Saul's conversion is full of the richest instruction. He was an honest man, and only such can be saved. God's truth will neither grow nor take root in a dishonest heart. But God requires more than honesty. Many imagine that if a man does in religion what he really thinks is right it is right to him, and that God will accept him; while another who honestly does the opposite is also acceptable to God. There can be no greater mistake.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus shows the good and fruitful ground to be the "good and honest heart" where the word of God is received and kept, so that God's seed and an honest heart are both essential to salvation. Saul verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, and shut up many of the saints in prison for calling on this name, and when they were put to death he gave his voice against them. He was one of those whom Jesus said would think they did God's service when they killed His people. All this time he had a good conscience before God. The Jews who expected a Messiah had no idea He would be the Son of God to be honored and worshipped as the Father, and Saul regarded those who determinedly worshipped Jesus as idolaters. He had on his side the religious rulers, and thought that the God of his fathers required him to crush out idolatry wherever found, and so he compelled them to blaspheme the name of Jesus or suffer death. There was at least a plausibility in his mad persecution. Saul's case teaches us

## THE BLINDING AND BINDING POWER OF PREJUDICE

even over honest minds, and while it warns us against its deceitful chains, it also points out the danger of judging or imputing dishonesty to those we consider to be in error. God only knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, and what allowance to make on the ground of ignorance, and He alone will judge in righteousness. Sin is sin by whomsoever committed. A death-blow is the same to us whether it come from the hand of a mistaken friend or an intentional assassin. But the guilt of the parties is not the same. Saul always abhorred intensely his crimes, but adored that wonderful grace through which he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Jesus implored pardon for His murderers, for they knew not what they did. Saul was

## NOT AN ORDINARY CHRISTIAN

when converted, and although the Lord convinced and saved him by the same truth which saved others, He used different means in bringing that truth to his mind. Saul's was not the common faith but the faith of God's elect (compare Titus i. 1, with i. 4). He was born out of due time and out of the common course. No apostle nor evangelist preached Christ to him, but Jesus himself appeared and spoke to him. He saw the Just One and heard the voice of His mouth, for he was to be His witness unto all men of all he had seen and heard. (Acts xxii. 14, 15.) When he told Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel that the crucified Jesus was now alive he could say, "I saw Him. I heard His voice, and He sent me to offer salvation on His own terms to all." He proved to the people the truth of all this by signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to the will of God (Heb. ii. 4). He was not dependant on other apostles, but was equal to the every chief.

The light brighter than the noonday sun was seen by Saul and also by them that were with him. The voice, too, was heard by all, and the same effect was produced on all (except that Saul lost his sight). They all fell to the ground. Hearing a voice miraculously or seeing such a light does not change a man's heart. Nothing is said of Saul's men having any saving change. Wherein did Saul's case differ from the rest? All saw the light and heard the voice and fell to the ground. Saul was converted, the rest were not. Saul understood what was spoken, the rest did not understand. It is hearing and understanding the truth that makes a man a believer, and he is justified by faith.

Had Saul witnessed such a sight and heard such a voice as once came from the burning mount he would not dare reply, but would have greater reason than Moses "to exceedingly fear and quake." (Heb. xii. 21); but a voice coming from the Crucified One had such majestic sweetness as not only to convince him of his terrible guilt but to inspire the hope of a full pardon. He called him several times by his familiar name, and asked *why* he persecuted Him? Saul felt utterly unable to answer, but asked Who art Thou, Lord? The loving answer came back, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," as if He answered—I am the Son of God, the divine Saviour, who came not to condemn the world, but save the guilty; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks—cruel to your Saviour who died for you, ruinous to yourself to kick against the spikes. It is wonderful that so few words had power to completely change Saul's view of Jesus, his view of his own life, his heart's purpose for the future, and inspire him with a confident expectation of a full forgiveness of his past sins; all of which is signified in the question

## WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO, LORD?

which is not the question of a criminal expecting punishment but an expression of a sense of divine goodness and of firm resolution to spend the future in His service, whom, till then, he had been persecuting. He had just told Saul that He was Jesus or the divine Saviour, and Saul believed it with all his heart and now he wished to know how he could have the assurance of pardon and enter with all his heart into His service. Jesus had already made the law of pardon and sent it by His apostles into all the world. (Mark xvi. 15-16). And that law He would not alter even in the extraordinary conversion of one chosen to be an apostle. "He abideth faithful, he cannot deny Himself." Saul had heard the Gospel from the Lord Himself, believed with all his heart on Jesus and truly repented of his sins, and still there was something for him to do. The Lord did not tell him what he was to do but sent him into the city where he would be told.

There was no apostle there to tell Saul the law of Jesus Christ. The Lord did not send for an apostle to come to Damascus nor send Saul to an apostle but he chose an apostle for the occasion and sent him to Saul with apostolic powers and credentials. Ananias told Saul among other things what he was to do. Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts xxii. 16). Nothing further is recorded of Ananias. He was an apostle of Christ for that time and work. He laid his hands on Saul and he received his sight and also received the Holy Spirit. This was the work of an apostle. Saul believed the same gospel that others believed, he repented as others repented, he was baptized as others were baptized, and the man who came to bind and carry away from Damascus all that called on the name of Jesus, called on that same name before he entered the city, and after he entered it was baptized, calling on that very name.

But Saul's whole state and life was changed from a bitter persecutor of Jesus to be His great apostle to the Gentile world without even the

knowledge of one of the twelve apostles. This fact left on all his labors and all his preaching and writings the stamp of divinity and met with crushing power the malicious cavils of the enemies of the cross. He could certify of the gospel. I neither received of man neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. i. 12). He daily proved by the miracles he wrought that he had seen the risen Lord and was sent by Him with the treasure of eternal life to a dying world. What he preached to the unconverted was the word of God, the Gospel of their salvation, and what he wrote to the saved are the instructions and commandments of the Lord.

But his question: "What wilt thou have me to do, Lord?" He asked the Lord. Before this he asked the chief priests and Pharisees, but now he asks the Lord. It is our privilege to do the same, because "God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." (Heb. i. 1-2). Saul asked the Lord for himself and the Lord answered him. He had not read the commission of Jesus and did not know the will of Jesus. When men now ask the Lord His answer is in that last commission, and they may feel certain that He wants those who turn to Him to do what He therein said to them. When men believe Jesus and do what He there commanded them they are happy. After people enter into Christ or put on Christ they need to ask what He will have them to do, and He graciously tells them all along the heavenly road what He will have them to do, and sets the example. If we ask how we are to treat our neighbor, He tells and has set the example. How are we to do to men in general. He says just as you would have them to do to you. What shall we do to them that hate us? "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." He tells us how to pray in secret and in public. He shows us what day to meet by meeting with His Disciples on His rising day.

## Original Contributions.

## EXPERIENCE AND OTHER THINGS.

## No. II.

When I finished my article on Experience, I expected I should be able to furnish one regularly for each month until I should finish what I have to say on the state of the cause of Christ under the great restoration movement of the nineteenth century, forty-five and fifty years ago and now, but the infirmities of age and indisposition compelled me to lay everything by until a more healthy tone should set in. Even now I find it hard to get down to the work as I should like to. My life's labors will soon be over, both temporal and spiritual, and I feel the burden and responsibility I am under, in view of the judgment day, keenly. I always had a great fear of saying or doing something that would not be in accordance with the word of God, which might lead the mind of some one in a wrong direction, and finally carry such an one down to eternal ruin. The times in which we live are very ominous, and I am quite sure it is really harder to live a devout Christian life than in the age of persecutions. There are so many charming, fancy things gotten up to decoy the unwary from the true worship of the living God, that very many are influenced to accept them to their own ruin. God will not cater to the notions and whims of the people, but will do it according to His law. The books will be opened and every one will be judged according to what is written therein, whether it be good or bad.

When I took that long step out of the slough of sectarian nonsense I began to see the value of the