

and exclusive spirit of young devotion. Well then may we bear with the rebukes which this earnest temper is sometimes impelled to administer: for by a mental necessity, all strong feeling must be exclusive, till wisdom and experience have trained it; till the worth of many things has been ascertained; till God is seen, not sitting aloof from his creation to show how contemptible it is, but pervading it to give it sanctity; till it is found how much that is human is also divine. None learned this so soon or so profoundly as Jesus. And even now, the very sight of home restored his household sympathies again; for when he went to Nazareth with his parents, "he was obedient unto them; and increased in favor" with man as well as God.—James Martineau.

NECESSITY OF A DEFINITE FAITH.

The present age, especially in the most liberal quarters, seems inclined to devote chief attention to that part of religion which is called its more spiritual and freer part—to the neglect of that which is doctrinal. There is a strong reaction against the prescriptions and dogmas of preceding ages. There is a weariness of formularies, whether of language or observances. The tendency is to cast into the lowest degree of esteem all articles of confession, all modes of describing what is to be believed. To define a faith, however largely, is imagined by many to imprison it, and to abridge unjustly the scope of thought. And to urge the importance of so defining it is looked upon with jealousy, as if one would thus turn dogmatist, and undertake to dictate to others' convictions. Now this feeling may easily be carried too far, and often is. It may take a mistaken direction, and often does. Can anything be more evident than that religion is a doctrine, as well as a sentiment, and must take some shape as such? Will any one deny that the Gospel is a belief, as well as an influence, and therefore presents some shape of what is to be believed? This shape, whether more or less comprehensive, whether of one or another outline, is precisely what we mean when we speak of a creed. It will be different to different minds. We cannot all see it in the same light or the same proportions. But there it must be, if we would profess anything, if we would discern anything. It is an intellectual necessity, and they who think the least of it cannot dispense with it. Just so far as you depart from it you are in skepticism. The individual that has it not, holds nothing that he can with any propriety call Christian truth; and the church or denomination that has it not may as well break up, for it has nothing to maintain, or to be maintained by.

Let us have a belief, therefore. How can we otherwise have any portion in the believer's rest or hope? Let us have a creed also. For who else can we tell or know what we believe? Only let it be held with humility, and seriousness, and charity. We need not ask too curiously how much there is of it, nor of what precise kind it is. We will not ask this of others at all, for it is their concern and not ours. But if their doctrine jostle or attack us, it may impose upon us an obligation to keep it aloof from our fellowship, and to be able to give to the world a reason for the different faith that we are attached to. A creed! It has been unreasonable. It has been despotic. It has canonized error. It has prolonged abuses. Who doubts this? And certainly the fact is repeated often enough to bring it within every one's knowledge. But we are not so often reminded that it is not necessarily connected either with a superstition or a tyranny;—that it has its foundation in the human mind, and not in arbitrary impositions; and that it has great uses still to subserve among the uneasy movements of both thoughtless and reflecting minds. It need not be formally propounded, and it cannot be compelled, but it should be able to speak itself out to the private conscience, and even to the ears of others when suitable occasion comes. We know that it makes nothing the truer; but it may help to impress us the more with what we acknowledge to be true. We know that it cannot hold within the articles that are the most carefully prepared the faith of a single human being. But we do not want it for that. Its aid is called in, not to restrain but to express the thought. One may not admit it; and then it is for others and not for him. Or he may admit it, but not honestly, evading it by some subterfuge of interpretation; and then it is for those who are less ingenious and more sincere. According to the view we are now taking of it, there is nothing in it implying that it must be narrow, minute, rigorous; that it must be technical

in its form, or abstruse and theological in its substance. It may leave all art to sectarian devisers, and all abstraction to the schools. Let it be as simple as it will, and as unincumbered, and as large in spirit. Only give it some existence. Allow it a place. Do not cast out its name as evil, on account of the mischiefs that have sprung up by the side of it and the hypocrisies to which it has been made to minister. Let it have a hand that can write. Let it have a tongue that can speak. Let it have something, however short, that it is willing to say and means to abide by.

The word creed takes its origin, as has been supposed, from the first one in that summary of doctrine which has been styled the Apostles' Creed; "Credo," I believe. Why should we be scrupulous about repeating it? "I believe" in the law that binds and the goodness that preserves me. "I believe" in the holy Providence of God that embraces me with all. "I believe" in a Divine Spirit, breathing through and governing a material world. "I believe" in the Gospel of a Redeemer, with its wonderful story, its grace and authority, its revelations of mercy and its promises of life. "I believe." Help, Lord, mine unbelief. We may be doubtful about many things, and sore perplexed. We may have but dim views before us sometimes, and carry drooping thoughts in our breasts. Be it so. This is nature's weakness. I could never prize a man's faith any the more for his rigid precision or his boastful confidence. But one thing at least is as clear as the light—that the Gospel can be of service only so far as it is accredited. If it have no sanction for us, it has no comforting trust for us. What it had no commission to teach, we need not thank it for telling. What it had no right to promise, we can have no reason to expect from it. Wherein it confers its salvation, it must do it through "belief and truth." Let us define that truth, each one for himself. Not too sharply and noways ungraciously. But that we may see it with greater distinctness, and imprint it with deeper strength upon our minds. We will not cramp it with any of our contractions. We will not affront so vast a principle by artificial distinctions and illiberal devices. But let us not be liberalized out of its pale and covenant. Let us mark where we stand, and stand there with a modest but firm persuasion, with a free yet a subject spirit. And may God bless to us his word, and make it a rule as well as a light, and include you and me among those who are "chosen to its salvation."—N. L. Frothingham.

CHRISTIANITY AND NATURE—POTENT IN SECRECY, SIMPLE IN INTRICACY.

From DeQuincey in Tait's Edinburg Magazine.

Forces, which are illimitable in their compass of affect, are often, for the same reason, obscure and untraceable in the steps of their movement. Growth, for instance, animal or vegetable, what eye can arrest its eternal increments? The hour hand of a watch, who can detect the separate fluxions of its advance? Judging by the past, and the change which is registered between that and the present, we know that it must awake; judging by the immediate appearances, we should say that it was always asleep. Gravitation, again, that works without holiday for ever, and searches every corner of the universe, what intellect can follow it to its fountains? And yet, slyer than gravitation, less to be counted than the fluxions of sun-dials, stealthier, than the growth of a forest, are the footsteps of Christianity amongst the political workings of man. Nothing, that the heart of man values, is so secret; nothing is so potent.

It is because Christianity works so secretly, that it works so potently; it is because Christianity burrows and hides itself, that it towers above the clouds; and hence partly it is that its working comes to be misapprehended, or even lost out of sight. It is dark to eyes touched with the films of human frailty; but it is "dark with excessive bright." Hence it has happened sometimes that minds of the highest order have entered into enmity with the Christian faith, have arraigned it as a curse to man, and have fought against it even upon Christian impulses, (impulses of benignity that could not have had a birth, except in Christianity.) All comes from the labyrinthine intricacy in which the social action of Christianity involves itself to the eye of a contemporary. Simplicity the most absolute, is reconcilable with intricacy the most elaborate. The weather—how simple would appear the laws of its oscillations, if we stood at their centre!

and yet, because we do not, to this hour the weather is a mystery. Human health—how transparent is its economy under ordinary circumstances! Abstinence and cleanliness, labor and rest, these simple laws, observed in just proportions, laws that may be engrossed upon a finger nail, are sufficient, on the whole, to maintain the equilibrium of pleasurable existence. Yet if once that equilibrium is disturbed, where is the science oftentimes deep enough to rectify the unfathomable watch-work? Even the simplicities of planetary motions do not escape distortion; nor is it easy to be convinced that the distortion is in the eye which beholds, not in the object beheld. Let a planet be wheeling with heavenly science, upon arches of divine geometry; suddenly, to us, it shall appear unaccountably retrograde; flying when none pursues; and unweaving its own work. Let this planet in its utmost elongations travel out of sight, and for us its course will become incoherent; because our sight is feeble, the beautiful curve of the planet shall be dislocated into segments, by a parenthesis of darkness; because our earth is in no true centre, the disorder of parallax shall trouble the laws of light; and, because we ourselves are wandering, the heavens shall seem fickle.

Exactly in the predicament of such a planet is Christianity; its motions are intermingled with other motions; crossed and thwarted, eclipsed and disguised, by counter-motions in man himself, and by disturbances that man cannot overrule. Upon lines that are direct, upon curves that are circuitous, Christianity is advancing for ever; but from our imperfect vision, or from our imperfect opportunities for applying even such a vision, we cannot trace it continuously. We lose it, we regain it; we see it doubtfully, we see it interruptedly; we see it in collision, we see it in combination; in collision with darkness that confounds, in combination with cross lights that perplex. And this in part is irremediable; so that no finite intellect will ever retrace the total curve upon which Christianity has moved, any more than eyes that are incarnate will ever see God.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO MINISTERS.

Encourage your own pastor by your regular and constant attendance upon his ministry.

This is a duty of much greater moment to the usefulness and happiness of a pastor, than Christians generally imagine. When a church and congregation regularly attend on the ministry of a pastor, it cheers and elevates him. He considers it as an assurance that he shares their affection, esteem and confidence. He goes to his pulpit, feeling that he shall not preach in vain, nor spend his strength for nought. He pursues his studies with greater diligence, and goes to the house of God with greater pleasure. And when he stands in the presence of a serious and soberly listening throng, whose eyes are fastened upon him, he is animated and encouraged. A new impulse is given to his feelings—his thoughts are quickened—his imagination soars with a truer and bolder wing—his appeals are more earnest—his sympathies well up and pervade his whole nature; he feels strong in argument, and there is a concentration both of mind and heart, followed by an earnest and ready utterance, that he can never have who is doomed to preach to listless hearers or to empty pews. When the people with one consent come together to hear God's minister, his words come from his lips with facility, strength and attractiveness; chaining the attention of his hearers to the close. To the minister so situated, the pulpit is more than a throne. It is the pleasantest, as it is the most honorable place in which he ever stands. And the ministry is preferred by him to any other service on earth.

But when a pastor perceives that his ministry is neglected—when the absence of some is occasioned by their love of the world, or by their dislike of the plain and faithful preaching of God's word—when one service is deemed better than two, and none better than one, even by some church members, the pious pastor returns from his scene of labor disquieted and cast down. In the bitterness of his soul he is ready to relinquish his work; to remove to some other station—and to doubt whether the ministry can be his province. He is discouraged in his studies. The energies of his mind are palsied. He knows not what subject to select, nor how to illustrate it, for he fears there will be but few to hear him. He goes bound in spirit, and is both thought-tied and tongue-tied.

See this discouraged pastor. In his visits among his people, he has found some of his brethren in affliction—some in temptation—

some in despondency—some it may be, self-confident. They need consolation, counsel, warning. He goes prepared to be a minister of consolation; a preacher of righteousness; a guide to wanderers. He hopes to do some good, because he draws his bow not at a venture. But when he has announced his text, and his lips are ready to pour forth words of consolation, the afflicted are not there to hear the words of comfort; the weak are not there to be strengthened; the bowed down are not there, that their minister may lift them up; the wanderer is not there that he may reclaim him. What discouraging sensations must a minister feel, to be thus disappointed in his benevolent aims. Encourage your minister then, by your habitual attendance on his ministry. Let neither the weather, nor worldliness, nor indolence cause you to leave your own seat vacant in the house of God.—Dr. Sharp.

POWER OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

There is a power, then, in the character of Christ—a power which is not merely as the power of a precept, that forces the assent of the reason, and through that slowly filtrates a moral influence upon the will; nor as the power of a miracle, which takes captive the senses, and overawes our opposition. But it is a power which silently works upon us, and absorbs us. It impresses us, it sinks into us, it purifies and elevates us, we know not how, perhaps—but we feel that a virtue goes out in it and heals us all; penetrates with conviction at once the brain and the heart, and wins our intellect through our affections. There is no power so akin to it, though it is far below it, as that of some great work of Art, upon which we gaze and gaze, and feel that it draws and lifts us the longer we gaze. Or, perhaps it is better to say, some grand form of Nature, whose majesty thrills us with an overmastering influence, wakes up all that is good and sublime in us, and makes us feel that we stand very near God. Or, better still, we will say a good man—a man whose power is what we call "the power of character"—who, from the silent virtue of his single life, sends a holy influence through a community, leavens a whole era it may be, and influences the progress of the race.—Such a man has, in a degree, the kind of power to which I refer in Christ, and the more he is like Christ, the more such power he has. It is the mightiest force in the universe. It is the great reforming power that operates upon mind and wins souls. Men are converted and elevated from their low estate, not by denunciation, or by fear; but by a contact with a higher ideal; and the highest agency of this kind is the agency of character. This combines thought and deed, and is moral power in its largest manifestation. Let a good man appear in a base and sensual community; let him live a life of righteousness and of heavenly-mindedness; and he shall rebuke and purify that corrupt generation more than any teaching can. The dew of a blessed influence shall distil from his life, and make all green and fresh around him. A living virtue shall go forth from his presence. Have not some of us felt rebuked and afraid to sin, nay, restrained and won from our sin, in the presence of some good and holy man? Have we not felt that no power is like that power, to purify us and make us better? Like this is the power of Christ's character. In this way he saves the world.—Rev. E. H. Chapin.

ENTHUSIASM.—It is very possible that I am too sanguine. I remember what Charles James Fox said in the House of Commons, when the friends of the Slave-merchants within those walls, charged the Abolitionists with enthusiasm; turning to the speaker, he exclaimed, "Enthusiasm! why there never was any good done in the world without enthusiasm." We must feel warm upon our projects, otherwise, from the discouragements we are sure to meet with here, they will drop through.—William Allen.

BE GENTLE.—"I walked," said Henry Martyn, "into the village where the boats stopped for the night, and found the worshippers of Gali by the sound of their drums and cymbals. I did not speak to them, on account of their being Bengalese. But being invited to walk in by the Brahmins, I walked within the railing, and asked a few questions about the idol. The Brahmin, who spoke bad Hindostan, disputed with great heat, and his tongue ran faster than I could follow, and the people, who were about one hundred, shouted applause. But I continued to ask my questions without making any remark upon the answers. I asked, among other things, whether what I had heard of