

THE  
PACIFIC EXPOSITOR.

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NO. 2.—AUGUST, 1860.—VOL. II.

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JESUS CHRIST A LIVING FOUNDATION.

[Concluded.]

III.

JESUS CHRIST is a sufficient foundation. He is a living stone, one with God. No line of demarcation can be found between Him and God. In him we have a foundation infinite, circumscribed only by the immensity of the Godhead. In building the temple of Jerusalem, the first thing was to make the foundation sufficiently spacious and strong. As this could not be made of living stone, the solid rock,—stones were brought together of a size that would seem fabulous were they not existing; these were fused into one mass, as well as possible, by iron bands. Man could do nothing more. This foundation was very greatly superior to one of ordinary blocks of stone. How much better had the foundation been an entire rock; better still a mountain grand as Lebanon; better still a rock stretching its roots downwards wide as the world. Jesus Christ is our rock. Trace out the limits; tell us the extent. This foundation is not formed of fragments cut from a quarry; here are no masses welded, fused together, liable at some future time to be shaken to pieces by the convulsions of a judgment day. Here all is a living rock. Here is no vein or fissure; no patchwork like the righteousness which man's exertions would spread for the support of the soul; all like the "vesture that was without seam, woven from the top throughout,"

## READ THE SCRIPTURES.

IN Mohammedan countries where the Arabic language is not spoken, educated persons are obliged to learn to read the Koran in the original Arabic. Yet in Christian countries, not only will intelligent persons ask what benefit results from a knowledge of the Greek language, but even those who have had advantages of liberal education, will allow the knowledge already gained to ooze away through sheer neglect. Every pious man must feel that he is abundantly rewarded for years of study spent on the dead languages, by the ability to read the Scriptures in the original Greek and Hebrew. No liberally educated man is pardonable for allowing knowledge thus got and capable of so precious a use as that of studying God's truth at the fountain-head, to lie useless and slip away from his grasp.

A little study daily will in time surprise us with the additions it makes to our attainments. Any person who will persistently read a single verse of the Greek testament a day, will in no great length of time find himself familiar with its greatest difficulties and turning to the original with pleasure no less than profit. No study pays better. It is a more precious soil for the laborer than that of the patriarch, when "Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundred fold: and the Lord blessed him." *Gen. xxvi: 12.* No Christian desirous of growing in grace can take such effective means for this end, as thorough reading of the Scriptures. The common English Bible with the marginal references and marginal readings, put there by the translators and found in the editions of the Bible Society, should never be superseded even by the originals. It should always be read and studied in connection with them. Its marginal readings throw great light on the meaning. They were put there because the translators were almost at a loss to choose between them and the corresponding words in the text, though they preferred on the whole that which they placed in the text. These readings with the references form a most valuable commentary. They are indeed the foundation of all commentaries. They lead us on to do what our Saviour enjoined when he said, "Search the Scriptures." *Jno. v: 39.*

Were men to search here as for hid treasures, as our miners in the mountains search for gold, they would find that which is better than thousands of gold and silver. *Ps. cxix: 72.* The veins of this

mine teem with that "which cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold." *Job xxviii: 16.* Here we can gather durable riches and righteousness. Here we can amass that which will enable us to realize "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." Compare the self-denial and toil of the miner, with the self-denial and toil of the student of God's truth in delving among the roots of the original tongues, and say which is greater? Put in contrast the results of their respective labors,—the character, the enduring nature of those results,—and say which is more desirable?

The study of the Scriptures with the originals obliges us to thorough investigation and closer thought. The same remark will hold true of reading in connection with the English Bible, any version, such as the Spanish, German, or French. In the Hebrew or Greek, a single new shade of meaning in a single word may open a train of thought which will prove a blessing and a joy through life. In *Ps. xxv: 14*, we read "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." But when we find the word "secret" in the Hebrew to suggest more properly "confidential friendship," and read, "The confidential friendship of the Lord is with them that fear him;"—how precious the thought. We learn that the believer is permitted to have God as his confidential friend.

When we read in the Greek of *1 Cor. 13th chap.*, the word rendered "charity" is that answering truly to our word "love," the significance and beauty of this passage are immeasurably enhanced. Not alms-giving, but love is the essential grace. In *Luke xxi: 2*, how much is the instructiveness of the account of the widow's mite increased, when we find the word "poor" to suggest she was so poor as to be obliged to work for her bread, and the two mites were together worth less than half a cent.

Thus the force of *2 Cor. viii: 9*, is beautifully increased when the word "grace" is found to mean "liberality," and we see that the apostle in enforcing the duty of giving, clenches his argument by saying, "Ye know the liberality of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

There is a very beautiful idea suggested by the Greek word in

*Eph.* v : 19, that is not seen in the English: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." The words "making melody" in your heart mean — singing, and your heart as a stringed instrument, as a harp, accompanying your song.

The heart in trouble feels its energies additionally strengthened by the promise in *Heb.* xiii : 5, when looking into the Greek we find it to read literally, "I will never, never leave thee ; I will never, never forsake thee."

These instances which are given for illustration, might be indefinitely multiplied. No labor, however great, is spent in vain, that adds a single idea to our knowledge of the Scriptures. Those who can study the originals, or the Greek alone, in however moderate a way at first, cannot be excusable for neglecting to improve this gift. They hold in their hand a key which though rusty and hard to work, may be made by care and polishing, to open the way for them into a treasury of illimitable delights and eternal blessings. Those who cannot command this privilege may be comforted by knowing that the more a scholar studies the Greek and Hebrew, the more strongly are his affections entwined around our precious English version. Its truths and memories are associated with all that is most touching and endearing to the heart, from the lisping veneration of infancy to the deepest devotion of age,—from the first tear of penitential sorrow to the brightest visions of the soul longing to pass away to glory. In sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy, in prosperity and in adversity, in brokenness of heart and in deepest gladness of spirit, in the chamber of sickness, by the grave wherein lie our blighted prospects and blasted hopes,—in all the scenes of a checkered pilgrimage, this old, precious English version is identified with the deepest affections and most touching remembrances of the soul.

No relic more affecting than the worn  
And well used Bible of a friend in heaven.  
Of earthly things this nearest lay the heart.  
Through all the fortunes of a checkered life ;  
In joy and grief, in sunshine and in gloom ;  
When friends were numerous, and when friends decayed ;  
When the lone heart lay crushed, a bleeding wreck,  
In silent anguish, by life's desert road ;  
When sins distressed, when heavenly visions smiled ;  
In spiritual gloom, and when our Lord  
Walked in close converse with our burning hearts ;  
This precious volume was the only joy ;

These truths the gloomy spirit's only light,  
The crushed and wounded spirit's only balm.  
Here, with the wintry dawn of early day,  
Our straining vision searched for living truths ;  
And here in summer-twilight's gathering shades  
This page of love our aching eyes perused.  
And when mid falling chill-dews of the grave,  
The hand grew cold and nerveless, and forgot  
Each earthly touch, it wandered still to find  
This page of words of Jesus ; and the heart,  
When other loves grew cold, its tendrils warm,  
In darkening death, strong round this volume drew,  
Loved next to Jesus, the pure amulet  
Filled with the living perfume of his love.  
There, cold and still the hand yet faithful lay,  
True to its latest love, on the old book  
Left now when faith is turned to sight in heaven.  
These pencilled passages, these places worn,  
These pages blotted with the frequent tear  
Burst from contrition's eye of longing love,  
Speak of a weary pilgrim's heavenward love,  
Speak of a weary pilgrim soul at rest.

G. B.

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A PRAYING PREACHER.—And who needs prayer more than a preacher of the Gospel? Chalmers was right: "A minister has no ground of hope for fruits from his exertions until in himself he has no hope; but he has learned to put no faith in the point and energy of sentences, until he feels that a man may be mighty to compel attention, and mighty to regale the imagination, and mighty to silence the gainsayer, and yet not mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." The apostles felt at liberty to devolve the distribution of the Church's alms on others chosen for the purpose. But they did not dare to quit praying and preaching.

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LOOKING TO CHRIST.—Let this thought, that God cannot lie, keep in conscious safety the heart of every one who looketh to Jesus. They who look shall be saved. The sun in the firmament is often faintly seen through a cloud, but the spectator may be no less looking at him than when he is seen in full and undiminished effulgence. It is not to him who sees Christ brightly, that the promises are made, but to him who looks. A bright view may minister comfort but it is looking (to Christ) which ministers safety.—*Chalmers*.