

Lutheran Observer.

Unless with proof of Holy Writ, or with manifest, clear and distinct principles and arguments, I am refuted and convinced, I can and will recant nothing.—Luther.

In Essentials, Unity; in Non-Essentials, Liberty; in all Things, Charity.

Vol. LXXII. No. 6 LANCASTER AND PHILADELPHIA, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1904. Whole Number 3804

Poetry.

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

BY HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

Life's mystery—deep, restless as the ocean—
Hath surged and wailed for ages to and fro;
Earth's generations watch its ceaseless motion
As in and out its hollow moanings flow;
Shivering and yearning by that unknown sea,
Let my soul calm itself, O Christ, in Thee!

Life's sorrows, with inexorable power,
Sweep desolation o'er this mortal plain;
And human loves and hopes fly as the chaff
Borne by the whirlwind from the ripened grain:—
Ah, when before that blast my hopes all flee,
Let my soul calm itself, O Christ, in Thee!

Between the mysteries of death and life
Thou suest, loving, guiding,—not explaining;
We ask, and thou art silent,—yet we gaze,
And our charmed hearts forget their drear complaining!
No crushing fate, no stony destiny?
Thou Lamb that hast been slain, we rest in Thee!

The many waves of thought, the mighty tides,
The ground-swell that rolls up from other lands,
From far-off worlds, from dim eternal shores
Whose echo dashes on life's wave-worn strands,—
This vague, dark tumult of the inner sea
Grows calm, grows bright, O risen Lord, in Thee!

Thy pierced hand hides the mysterious wheels;
Thy thorn-crowned brow now wears the crown of power;
And when the dark enigma presseth sore,
Thy patient voice saith, "Watch with me one hour!"
As sinks the moaning river in the sea
In silver peace, so sinks my soul in Thee!

MY CREED.

BY ALICE CARY.

I do not think the Providence unkind
That gives its bad things to this life of ours,
They are the thorns whereby we travelers blind
Feel out our flowers.

I think hate shows the quality of love,
That wrong attests that somewhere there is right:
Do not the darkest shadows serve to prove
The power of light?

On tyrannous ways the feet of Freedom press—
The green bough broken off lets sunshine in;
And where sin is, aboundeth righteousness,
Much more than sin.

THE HAPPY WARRIOR.

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Whose high endeavors are an inward light
That makes the path before him always bright.
Who comprehends his trust, and to the same
Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim;
And therefore does not stoop, nor lie in wait
For wealth or honors, or for worldly state;
Whom they must follow; on whose head must fall
Like showers of manna, if they come at all:
Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
A constant influence, a peculiar grace.

Contributions.

WOULD YOU BE A CHRISTIAN?

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

I wish to say a few plain and affectionate words to those who are agitating the vital questions: "Ought I to become a Christian? And if so, how shall I become one?"

Yes, you ought to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and for three good reasons.

It is your duty; for God both commands and invites you. It is for your interest; if you choose Jesus Christ as your Savior and guide, you will be better, stronger, happier and more useful in this world. You will secure the salvation of your immortal soul.

Whether you become a Christian or not depends upon your own choice; no one else can decide for you.

A loving God says to you in his Word, "I set before you life and death; choose life." When Joshua submitted the alternative, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," he addressed his hearers as free moral agents, and such are you. When Christ said to James and John, "Follow me," he talked to them as rational beings; for if they could not follow him, why did he ask them?

You have the power of choice; choose life! By that expressive word, in the Bible, is meant—the favor of God, the pardon of your sins, the sustaining strength to do right; it is the union of your heart with Jesus in this world and an unending heaven beyond the grave. "Death" is the absence of all these; it means the dominion of sin in this world, and the punishment of sin in the world to come.

But you may say, "I am not choosing death; it is inconceivable that any sane person should deliberately decide to be eternally wretched when he or she might be eternally happy." I admit that people do not usually set success and happiness on the one hand, and ruin on the other hand, and then deliberately choose to be ruined. Yet it is equally true that multitudes are selecting and pursuing courses that inevitably lead to ruin.

Here is a young man setting out in life. Of course his preference would be to become rich and prosperous. But he chooses to lead a career of indolence and thriftlessness, which inevitably brings him to poverty and keeps him there.

In like manner, my friend, when you decide to refuse that loving Savior who is even now knocking at the door of your heart, you choose to risk the consequences. When you choose to continue on in sin, to follow the devices and desires of an unconverted heart, to refuse to be all that Christ would make you, and to grieve away the Holy Spirit of love, you are deliberately choosing eternal death; for you choose the path that leads to death.

You are not, and you cannot be in a position of neutrality. Not to accept Jesus Christ is to reject Jesus Christ, and thus throw away all the infinite advantages and blessings which he offers you. Instead of asking

yourself the question, "Ought I to become a Christian?" you had better face the other question, "Have I refused to be a Christian?"

It is no unkindness to say to you that the only effectual hindrance to your becoming a Christian and securing eternal life, is your own sins. Until you break off from them, you cannot lay hold on Christ by faith, and come into heart-union with him and obedience to his commandments. No man can serve two masters; you cannot go in two opposite directions at the same time. Every day you spend away from Christ is a lost day. The longer you live as you are, the harder will it be to become a strong, happy and useful follower of Jesus. Your habits of thought and action will become the more deeply rooted. You will have just so many more weeds to pull up; sin is terribly self-propagating.

Some persons may tell you that it is a very easy thing to become a Christian—as easy as lifting your hand. Yes; it is an infinitely easy thing for the omnipotent Spirit of God to renew your heart in answer to honest prayer; and it will be a very simple and possible thing for you to become a Christian if you are willing to cut loose from your old sinful self and to fasten your heart hold on the Divine Savior.

Do not ask for any easier salvation than that; it will not be worth the having if it does not bring you a new character and a new style of daily conduct. Thorough weed-pulling and thorough plowing are essential to a good crop. "Some people," said quaint Scotch Rutherford, "want to have Christ for about nothing and never have had a sick night over their own sins. This maketh loose work." It is just such loose work that produces the half-converted Christians; and it takes a great many half Christians to make a single whole one. The gate into the path of purity and peace and power is too narrow for you to smuggle in a whole back load of sins, even if conscience would let you attempt it.

Repentance and cutting loose from the dominion of sin must be attended with a cleaving to Jesus Christ. A single contact of the soul with Christ has made many an one a Christian. The first honest approach to him—the first sincere prayer for pardon—the first act to obey and please him—these have been like the touch of that woman who had the long malady; they have brought the blessing.

A man who had shamefully wronged a neighbor was brought under conviction of sin and could find no peace. Attending a religious service where he espied his neighbor, he called him out into the vestibule and begged his pardon for the wrong committed. That was the beginning with him of a Christian life.

Conversion is the act of turning to Jesus as the only Savior—the Savior who died to redeem you. As soon as you begin to trust him and to obey him the healing comes. You must understand that faith is vastly more than an opinion or a right feeling. It is a transaction—it is the contact of a person with a Divine Person, of a weak, sinful, penitent soul with an all-sufficient Redeemer. You need to be shut up to this one tremendous truth—either Jesus Christ must save me, or I am lost!

Attendance upon church service, Bible reading, or the best of sermons, or an "inquirer's meeting," or prayer, or any other good thing will be useless if you attempt to put them in the place of a personal grasp on Jesus Christ. Faith is indispensable just as the bucket is indispensable if you wish to draw up water from a deep well; but it is the water that you are after.

True faith puts your soul into living contact with the loving Son of God. A touch is enough to begin with; it must be followed by a strong and constant cleaving. The graft that is inserted in the cleft bough of an apple tree must become united to the tree before it yields fruit. Abiding in Christ, and only

through that abiding, will you be a vigorous, fruitful and joyful Christian.

And if you become such a Christian, your wonder and your sorrow will be that you never became one before. Men have lived to regret almost every conceivable step; but I never heard of a person who repented of loving, obeying and serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

THE WARRANT, THE PRIVILEGE, THE POWER, AND THE NEED OF PRAYER.

BY REV. H. D. HAYES, B. D.

The heading of this article will be recognized as one of the topics of the Evangelical Alliance for the week of prayer, and indeed it was in studying it in this connection that these thoughts were evolved. In considering the objective side of prayer, that is, in viewing it as intercession, four questions arise: Is it reasonable to pray? What right have we to pray? What will it amount to if we do pray? What is the need of prayer? And the answer to these will give us the warrant, the privilege, the power, and the need of praying.

Have we any warrant that requests made known to a Supreme Being will receive any notice? There have been some of the world's thinkers who have said that it was not reasonable to expect this. God rules by laws—laws that have been made from eternity; everything is working out for the purposes of God as he devised them before the world was created, and it cannot be that he is so undecided and wavering in his management of the universe that every little desire of an individual will change it. We are ignorant of the best thing, and have no reason to think that we know what God should do. If we fall from a tower, we do not pray to God to hold us in mid-air and save us. We know that we will fall by law 16½ feet the first second, and increase the speed until we are dashed to the pavement below. So all life is regulated by law, and there is no reason to pray. But we go to the Bible for our answer. And we find our warrant for prayer in John xx. 17: "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." If God be the God of Herbert Spencer, then there is no warrant to pray; but if God be the God that Jesus Christ revealed, then there is every warrant to go to him with requests, confident of being both heard and answered. There is no warrant to pray to "the Absolute Force;" but to pray to the Being that the divine Christ called "Our Father, who art in heaven," is the most reasonable thing on earth.

But have we any right to pray? There are those who say that even granted that a perfect child of God, such as Jesus was, could be heard and answered by him, we have lost the right. If prayer ever was a privilege of the human race, that privilege has been forfeited and lost. Considering the great gulf between us and Jehovah, in power, in authority, in majesty, and in purity, does it not appear impertinence, if not absurdity, for us to go to him with requests that we expect him to answer? Shall we then give up praying? Not till we see what the Book tells us about it. And where is the Scriptural privilege of prayer? John xv. 16: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will do it." The great sacrificial work of Jesus has given us the right to pray, and now God has morally bound himself to hear prayer that is offered "in Jesus' name." In myself, by virtue of my own character and works, I have no prayer privilege, but since "Jesus paid it all," I can pray and God will answer.

And now what of the power of prayer? What will