

Sermonettes on the Golden Texts.

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The Mind of Christ.

'Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.'
—PHIL. ii. 5.

IF one were to translate this freely into modern English it would read, Make it your care to think as Jesus Christ thought. Be humble as He was humble. Hence we see how suitable this Golden Text is for a lesson on humility.

I. CHRIST IS CONCERNED RATHER WITH OUR THOUGHTS THAN OUR CONDUCT.—Not that any disparagement of right conduct is implied. The object of the watchmaker in his work is to produce an instrument which will indicate accurately the time of day, but he does not devote his attention exclusively to the face and fingers. He knows that the action of the fingers depends on the arrangement and condition of the works. So outward conformity to the standard set by Christ can only be effectually secured by inward sympathy. The outer conduct is but the index of the inner working: 'As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.' Thus the object of the Christian's attainment is not to bring his outward life into likeness with the outward life of Christ. The mendicant friars attempted this, and became, in consequence, more notorious for shamelessness than for Christlikeness. Were Christ to appear in nineteenth-century England, His life would be very different in its circumstances from what it was in Palestine in the first century. To be like Christ, we must be actuated by like thoughts, and moved by similar sympathies: 'If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.'

II. THE TRUE STANDARD OF ALL THINKING IS THE THOUGHT OF CHRIST.—His thoughts about all things are the truest and best. It does not always seem so, for His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. So different are they, that men can seldom understand them; they often seem the maddest of all thoughts. His estimate of the poor widow's gift, the value of a cup of cold water, of the comparative powers of the Roman Empire and His own kingdom led the common people to think Him mad, while priests thought Him a blasphemer, and Pilate looked

upon Him as an ignorant, simple-minded enthusiast. But events have proved that Jesus thought aright. How perplexed and puzzled we are by events happening around us, and what a help it would be if we could look at these things through the eyes of Christ, and think about them as He thinks! There always have been some simple, pious, childlike souls, deficient perhaps in this world's wisdom, to whom are revealed secrets that are hidden from the wise and prudent. They have a calm confidence in their decisions which is unshaken by contrary appearances. Their sureness is based on this, that they know they have the mind of Christ.

III. SUCH THINKING IS THE SUREST PRESERVATIVE OF HUMILITY.—The context tells us that the mind of Christ was a humble one. He who enjoyed as a right the highest rank in heaven voluntarily stooped to the lowest humiliation which earth could provide. While disciples disputed who should be the greatest, He reminded them that He was amongst them as One who served. When He washed their feet, He said He was leaving them an example of the spirit in which they were to serve one another. Yet the mind of Christ does not forbid us to strive after excellence; it prevents us from striving to put another lower than ourselves. It seeks greatness by the blessing of others, not at the expense of their humiliation. We may estimate how far we are from the mind of Christ by seeing how envious we are of the success of others in those things in which we have failed. With all our eagerness to work for Christ, we are especially anxious that *our* share of service shall be known and appreciated, and we can view with comparative satisfaction the failure of other branches of service so long as that which reflects honour upon *our* efforts is a great and glorious success. The higher our virtue is to be built the deeper must be the humility on which the foundations are laid. The first lesson in the school of Christ is, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly.'

IV. THIS INJUNCTION IS ONE WHICH CAN BE OBEYED.—To humility all things are possible, and humility comes from sympathy with Christ. Watch how His humility kept pace with the unfolding of

His mind to His high dignity. Learn how prayer brought Him into nearer sympathy with His Father. Study His words until you get to understand the workings of His mind. Cultivate the habit of asking, What would Christ think of this? What would He do in my circumstances? Let the answer guide your conduct, and you will learn that he who does the will shall know the mind of Christ.

The First Truth.

'Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.'—
I COR. xv. 3.

IN this passage Pauls tells the Corinthians what are his beliefs, and the chief topics of his preaching. 'I declare unto you the gospel which I preached.' His brief creed includes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the benefits which accrue therefrom, and Christ's final triumph over all opposition.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S DEATH DECLARED.—'Christ died for our sins.' That Christ died is not, and never was, matter for serious dispute. It was not Paul's purpose to assure the Corinthians of the reality of Christ's death, but rather to explain to them wherein its significance lay. This is the gospel standard, and around it the fight is always the most severe. In ignorance or in malice some would rob us of the precious teaching of this and kindred texts. It is suggested that because Christ's faithfulness to conscience brought Him into conflict with the representatives of religion, arousing their evil passions, that therefore we may say He died *because of* men's sins, and that thus He was a martyr, but not a Saviour. But this is not what the New Testament says, and we have no other authority. Not merely grammatical usage, but the whole tenor of Paul's writings shows that by the preposition 'for' he means 'for the sake of'—*i.e.* that Christ died for our sake, to save us from our sins. 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,' as he elsewhere expresses it. He tells Timothy, almost in Christ's own words, that Christ 'gave Himself a ransom for many.' Christ's disciples had a firm, united, and consistent conviction that He need not have died but for our sins, and that the purpose of His death was to save us from them, and their penal effects, and that His death had

actually accomplished for them these results. The acceptance of the New Testament as in any sense an authority involves the acceptance of this teaching.

II. THE PRE-EMINENT IMPORTANCE OF THIS TRUTH.—Paul says, 'I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received,' meaning by 'first of all' a truth of first magnitude. Though this chapter is devoted chiefly to the glory of the resurrection, Paul first acknowledges the incomparable glory of the Crucifixion. The popular conception is that of the words—

Show me not my Saviour dying,
As on the cross He bled.

Then bid me not that form extended
For my Redeemer own.

Yet it was that death which redeemed us from sin rather than the resurrection. Being dead it would have been wonderful if He had not risen. It was at the Crucifixion that nature shuddered. The resurrection confirmed Christ's ministry, but the Crucifixion revealed the love which saved us from sin. So Paul at Corinth preached Christ Jesus, *and Him crucified*. Hence Paul puts this doctrine at the head and forefront of his teaching. Our teaching and preaching will lose the power Paul's possessed if we allow the glory of this to be overshadowed.

III. ANTICIPATIONS OF THIS TRUTH IN REVELATION.—'According to the Scriptures,' *i.e.* the Old Testament Scriptures, since at this time there were probably no New Testament writings recognised as scripture. The death of Christ was not an unforeseen event due to the cleverness of His enemies, but was in accordance with an eternally-conceived divine plan. Paul shows the Corinthians, as Christ showed the two disciples, that the Messiah 'ought to have suffered these things' since 'thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.' This awful bereavement was but a part of the divine plan for their blessing. It had not come unawares; it was not a defeat of God's purposes.

Not only was Christ's death and its purpose foreseen, it was also foretold. Prophets had spoken of it, and had the disciples studied God's word as diligently as Christ did, they too might have anticipated this event, and have seen beforehand its meaning. This would have saved them from fear in the hour of deepest gloom. Devout

study of the holy writings will enable us better to understand the person of Christ, and the significance of His death. Such study will deliver us also from despondency in the time of our calamity since we shall know that the Father in heaven has foreseen and provided for all.

A Reconstructed Faith.

‘The Lord is risen indeed.’—LUKE xxiv. 34.

THIS confession of a regained faith marks the turning-point in the lives of the disciples. It was brought about by the appearance of the risen Lord to Peter, an event concerning which neither scripture nor tradition gives us any details. Paul mentions that ‘He was seen of Cephas.’ Like many other events, of which we would gladly know more, this is buried in obscurity.

I. FAITH SHATTERED.—The word ‘indeed’ tells of a time when conviction had not been reached. They had been for three days in the deepest gloom. They had loyally followed Christ through His obscurity, convinced that He must eventually become King of Israel. A poor and despised Messiah they could accept, because they knew of His power, and the beauty of His character; but a crucified Messiah was a stubborn fact which shattered their faith. It is not often that the faith of a Christian receives such a blow, yet something similar sometimes happens to thoughtful minds. Their faith has been an unquestioning one, and has included belief in many things which they have erroneously thought to be essential. Then some terribly palpable fact, perhaps a discovery of science, or of their own experience, whose significance cannot be evaded, comes before them, and they are bewildered and stunned. Its effect has been to shatter their faith.

II. FAITH REGAINED.—But the text also tells of doubt dispelled. It contrasts most vividly with their reply to the message brought by the women that same morning. ‘Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.’ Before the day has passed, they are found proclaiming their perfect confidence in the truth of the same tales. Why should Peter’s testimony be believed when that of the women had only provoked contempt? It was different in its nature. They had indeed

‘seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive, *but Him they saw not.*’ But the Lord Himself had appeared to Simon. And then the second testimony confirmed the first. The women brought a message that the Lord would appear to Peter and the eleven, and already a part of it had been fulfilled. It had been a terrible lesson, but needful to convince them that Christ’s kingdom was a spiritual one, and more blessed than a temporal and material one. And our faith needs to suffer trial before our conceptions can be so purified as to bring them into harmony with the thoughts of God. We need to find a Saviour who is revealed to us, not only in outward ceremonies, but who speaks to our hearts. Our faith is not easily shaken when we have heard His voice.

III. FAITH EXULTANT.—The disciples do not speak with timidity and hesitation as men who are only half convinced. They are like unto those that dream. Their mouth is filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing. This exuberance of joy testifies to the intensity of their conviction, and the reality on which it is based. How came they to be so suddenly filled with joy? There is but one satisfactory explanation—they knew that the Lord was risen, and that they were not deserted and friendless. Faith that has passed through this travail is richer, fuller, more assured and more joyous than before.

IV. FAITH PROCLAIMED.—It is said that new gold burns the pockets, and new truth the heart. Certainly it was impossible for the disciples to keep secret the precious truth of which they were possessed. The two at Emmaus had besought the Unknown not to venture farther in the darkness; but they themselves much later returned to Jerusalem, urged on by the good news they had to tell. The disciples began by eagerly proclaiming the truth to each other, and ended by preaching it throughout the world, saying, ‘We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’ And though forgiveness of sins through the redeeming work of Christ was the feature of their preaching on which they laid most stress, yet the resurrection was the feature which aroused most interest. They grieved the Sadducees by ‘teaching through Jesus the resurrection of the dead.’ Paul was called in question concerning ‘the hope and resurrection of the dead.’ He was heard patiently at Athens until he ‘preached Jesus and the resurrection.’ Paul staked everything on the

truth of his message, and his estimate of its significance is the right one. Unless Christ be risen, His words concerning God and the soul are discredited, and we are left in the dark about any other life than this. But the fact is so well attested that we can proclaim with perfect assurance that 'The Lord is risen indeed.'

Gospel Preaching.

'Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations.'—LUKE xxiv. 47.

No other religion exalts preaching so much as does Christianity. Prophecy was the grandest feature of the old religion, and the Church of Christ has magnified the office of the prophet until it has become the Christian ministry. The Church has been prosperous when its preachers have been most zealous, and it has been nigh unto death when preaching has become a forgotten duty. John the Baptist came preaching when he announced the coming of the kingdom. Jesus began His ministry by preaching, and now He commissions His disciples to go forth in continuation of the same work.

I. THE THEME.—'Repentance and remission of sins.' Zacharias had foretold of the child Jesus that He should 'give knowledge of salvation unto His people in the remission of their sins.' The commencement of the public ministry of Christ is announced in the words, 'Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent.' This was the outstanding theme which seemed first to demand His attention; and now at the end He emphasizes more than ever its importance. What else can be preached to sinful men? Repentance is turning the face from night to the sunrise. It is the beginning of new life, the change from hard, cold winter to the soft, warm spring showers. Repentance is a sense of humility born of the new consciousness of sin, a hatred of sin which finds utterance in confession, and a yearning after a better life.

But the preaching of repentance is bound up with the proclamation of the remission of sins. Peter preached Jesus as the 'Saviour whom God had raised up for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.' To denounce sin without holding forth hope of forgiveness is to drive to

hardness or despair. And, moreover, this is the right order in which these truths should be preached. The sinfulness of sin is so little realised that forgiveness will not be valued until the axe has been laid at the root of the tree. And yet remission of sins is a most joy-bringing blessing. Not to have our evil deeds charged against us is the lifting of an awful burden. Remission of sins following the confession of them brings a soothing sense of relief and peace.

II. THE AUTHORITY.—'In His name.' One would not dare to proclaim forgiveness on any less authority, but Christ sends us in His stead to announce His message, and to speak in His name. It is as ambassadors of Christ that His servants urge to repentance, beseeching men in His stead to be reconciled to God. They can boldly repeat a message sanctioned by such a Teacher, knowing that they are not trusting to their own dim light or feeble powers of discrimination. But it is only in Christ's name that such remission is possible. His name was called Jesus because He should save from sin. John writing to his disciples says, 'I write unto you, my little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for His name's sake.' It is by virtue of His redeeming work, signified in His all-powerful name, that sins are remitted; 'for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.' His work makes the remission possible, and His revelation makes the possibility known. The name of Christ thus signifies all that we know of what He has done for us; it is His gospel, and the Christian's privilege is to believe in it, for in believing we "have life in His name." This is the only message, and the only name that can have power to lead the sinful to that repentance which is the gateway to life eternal.

III. THE AUDIENCE.—'Unto all the nations.' How daring a commission, and how calmly enjoined! What band of fishermen could have conceived a project so vast, a dominion so universal? In the company of trembling men gathered in that little room lay the germ of a kingdom destined finally to embrace the world. Christ's daring was based on His knowledge of the needs of all the nations, and the sufficiency of His gospel to satisfy every craving. The story of the Prodigal can be told with equal applicability on the plains of China, in the wilds of Africa, or in our own land. Christ appeals to men as men, and

not as belonging to any particular race or age. Civilisation only deepens our need of Him.

Since so much has been done in fulfilment of Christ's words, we may be confident that all nations will at last be brought under His sway. It is ours

to help on the work. We are included in this charge. Some may have special duties in preaching, but we have each to announce forgiveness on repentance to the classes of the community around us.

Contributions and Comments.

*Anecdota Oxoniensia.*¹

THIS is a most interesting number of the *Anecdota Oxoniensia*. It contains the following fragments of Palestinian Syriac:—Exodus xxviii. 1-12a; Wisdom ix. 8b-x. 2; 3 Kings ii. 10b-15a and ix. 4, 5a; Job xxii. 3b-12; with some fragments of Ancient Homilies. It is accompanied with three Facsimiles. The biblical texts are fragments of the old Palestinian Syriac version of the Holy Scriptures. A full list of the remains of that version as yet known has been given by Mr. Gwilliam in an earlier part (part v.) of these *Anecdota*, issued in 1893, together with an account of the literature on the subject. That part contained five fragments, four of which were New Testament passages, and one containing a few verses of Numbers iv. and v. In the present part there are important 'Additions and Corrections' of the readings adopted in the earlier part. The excursus in question is the work of Mr. Stenning, aided by Mr. Gwilliam. These two scholars have also a valuable excursus on Palestinian Handwriting, and on the dates to which these fragments severally ought to be assigned, which appears to be somewhat about the eighth or ninth centuries.

All the fragments are printed in a splendid Estrangela Syriac type, accompanied by an English translation and critical notes. Forms peculiar to Palestinian Syriac are duly pointed out in the notes, and these notes are likely to prove of considerable importance by and by. They show that the discovery of more of this version will probably

¹ *Anecdota Oxoniensia*. Semitic Series, vol. i. part ix. Biblical and Patristic Relics of the Palestinian Syriac Literature. From MSS. in the Bodleian Library and in the Library of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai. Edited by G. H. Gwilliam, B.D., Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford; F. Crawford Burkitt, M.A., Trinity College, Cambridge; and John F. Stenning, M.A., Senior Demy of Magdalen College, Oxford. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896.

throw not a little light upon both New Testament and Old Testament textual criticism, especially when considered in connexion with the text of the LXX. The Palestinian Syriac version seems to have been translated from the LXX, and not directly from the Hebrew. The influence of the Hebrew original is, however, tolerably clear in some passages, while the text of the LXX, from which the translation was made, appears to have differed considerably from that exhibited in any MS. yet extant. The closeness with which in some places the Lucianic recension of the LXX is adhered to, gives a peculiar value to these fragments.

The passages of Scripture quoted in the 'Ancient Homilies' appear not to have been taken from the Palestinian Version, although the Syriac of those fragments is certainly Palestinian. The author of the 'Homilies' in question seems to have quoted from memory, which may account partially for the fact noticed; and as we do not know whether the 'Homilies' may not have been modified in transmission, we cannot be certain how far the biblical quotations may have been modified by the copyist.

It should be noted that the two first fragments contained in this volume were procured for the Bodleian Library by Professor Sayce. These were discovered with other writings beneath a synagogue in Cairo, when the site was cleared to make room for some new buildings. These fragments are palimpsests, and have been carefully edited by Mr. Gwilliam. The shorter fragments of 3 Kings and Job were found in MSS. in the Library of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai, at the time when the party composed of Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Gibson, Professor Rendell Harris, Mr. Stenning, Mr. Burkitt, with the late Professor R. B. Bensly of Cambridge, and his wife, visited and worked at the Library of that convent.

Mrs. Bensly, though not herself a Syriac scholar, has the merit of having discovered these interesting