

Miscellaneous.

THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

Did little children in the Gospel times really and truly enjoy saving faith in the Saviour? He himself expressly says that they did. Matt. xviii. 2, 6: "And Jesus called a little child unto him and set him in the midst of them, (Mark adds, and when he had taken him in his arms) and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Observe that the Saviour is not speaking of young disciples, but of little children that believe in him, such as the little child whom he then called to him and took up in his arms. How little human nature changes, and how the sins of believers are repeated from age to age. And what a dreadful denunciation is this against every Christian who, like the disciples of old, by his faith and practice causes one of these little children to stumble by doubting his conversion, or discourages him in any way in his Christian course, or who will not receive him as a Christian. Then, after speaking of other offenses or causes of sin, suggested by the preceding passage, our Saviour says, in verse 10th: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." This is the only glimpse into heaven which Christ has given us, and it is at least singular that it relates to children. What does the passage mean? Simply what it plainly declares, that children have guardian angels in heaven, always beholding the face of God, ever watchful and ready to obey his will in regard to them with the speed of lightning, Ezek. i. 14; and the argument is, what right have you to despise one of these little ones: for whom God has such special care?

After introducing and relating the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus a third time refers to the little child, and says, in verse 14th: "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." God forbid that any care of ours should be wanting to save them from perishing! Such was the special and tender regard of the Saviour for children, that in predicting the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, he particularly mentions that her enemies "shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children with thee," Luke xix. 44; and "How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Matt. xxiii. 37. That children were true believers in the days of our Saviour, is also proved by the incident in the temple. Matt. xxi. 15, 16: "And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased. And they said unto him, Hearst thou what these say? and Jesus saith unto them, yea; have ye never read. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Was this crying of the children in the temple the sincere praise of true believers, or did it proceed from the mere sympathy of the children with the popular feeling for the time being in favor of Jesus? He himself regarded it as the former, and declared it to be a fulfillment of a prophecy contained in the eighth Psalm. It is therefore not to be supposed that these children's Hosannas were mere formal declamations, like those which they were taught to recite in praise of the Rabbis, or that David had a thousand years before prophesied these songs of children which meant nothing, or if there had been nothing spiritual in their worship that Jesus would have pronounced it the perfection of praise.

EXAMPLES.

The history of the Church furnishes most abundant proof of the reality of early piety, and it is observable that the conversion of children often has an influence in leading others to the Saviour. The following incident occurred more than a century and a quarter ago. "When Mr. Whitfield was preaching in New England, a lady became the subject of divine grace, and her spirit was peculiarly drawn out in prayer for others. But in her Christian exercises she was alone; she could persuade no one to pray with her but her little daughter, about ten years of age. She took this dear child into her closet from day to day, as a witness of her ories and tears. After a time it pleased God to touch the heart of the child and to give her the hope of salvation by the remission of sin. In a transport of holy joy she then exclaimed: 'O mother, if all the world knew this! I wish I could tell everybody. Pray, mother, let me run to some of the neighbors and tell them, that they may be happy and love my Saviour too.' 'Ah, my dear child,' said the mother, 'that would be useless, for I suppose that were you to tell your experience, there is not one within many miles who would not laugh at you and say it was all delusion.' 'O mother,' replied the girl, 'I think they would believe me; I must go over to the shoemaker and tell him; he will believe me.' She ran over and found him at work in his shop. She began by telling him he must die, and that he was a sinner, and that she was a sinner, but that her blessed Saviour had heard her mother's prayers and had forgiven all her sins, and that she was so happy that she did not know how to tell it. The shoemaker was struck with surprise, his tears began to flow like rain; he laid aside his work, and by prayer and supplication sought for mercy. The neighborhood was awakened, and, within a few months, more than fifty persons were brought to the knowledge of Jesus, and rejoiced in his power and grace." Archbishop Usher was hopefully converted at ten years of age, and it has been said that few men have lived a life so busy and so devoted to God.

Dr. Scott, the commentator, gives an account of the conversion of his little daughter, four years of age, and her happy death six months afterwards. Dr. Jonathan Edwards, the greatest American metaphysician, published an account of the conversion of Phoebe Bartlett, a little girl four years of age, and who afterward lived a consistent Christian life for more than sixty years, the account being first published when she was six years of age.

The converted children do not all die in childhood, although many of them, even but six years of age, have suffered painful sickness and have died the peaceful death of Christians, giving the most abundant evidence of their acceptance of the Saviour. It is the converted who have the most keen observation to discern the true Christian character, and these, unfortunately, are generally the fewer number, therefore many of "these little ones which believe in Me," pass unobserved. But almost every Christian community has some examples of pious children, both among the living and the dead, and they have been found in all ages of the Church.

A book called "Little Ones in the Fold," and other books, by Rev. Edward Payson Hammond, of Connecticut, and now in Europe, contains many accounts of the conversion of children. There is no doubt but that Mr. Hammond has been the means of the conversion of thousands of children, as well as adults.—Evangelical Quarterly Review.

"GOD OF MY MOTHER."

An infidel of talent and outward respectability, under the power of truth, bowed upon his knees, and cried in agony, "God of my mother, have mercy on me!" His mother was a devoted Christian woman. "God of my mother!" How much is revealed in that single word! How conclusively it proves that this man had a mother whose faithfulness left its impression on his soul too deep to be effaced even by time and sin. "Save the son of thy handmaid," cried King David unto God. It was a comfort to him to know that he was the son of a godly mother, who had consecrated him to God in infancy, had prayed for and with him in childhood, and had sought to train him up in ways of piety. Although this godly mother had long been dead, the royal Psalmist pleads with God to remember him in mercy as the child of prayers and covenant engagements. And no doubt every pious man and woman, born of a godly and faithful mother, has experienced something of David's feelings and been in some degree a partaker of his comfort.

What an inestimable blessing is a pious and faithful mother to any one. However unseemly may be the result of her labors, those labors never are without blessed results in the case of every one of her children. Those who may become children of God in after life, will always rejoice to acknowledge her silent and powerful influence as one of God's chief agencies in accomplishing the result. Even those who may never become disciples of Jesus will be restrained by that influence from entering upon courses of vice and transgression, in which they might otherwise have become bold, bad men.

The writer of this article lost his mother at the early age of twelve years, but never can he forget her calling him to sit upon a stool at her feet while he committed to memory the Shorter Catechism or an appointed hymn. Never can he forget kneeling by her side, every evening before he was dismissed to bed, while he repeated aloud his simple prayer to "our Father which art in heaven." Long years passed away after her form was laid in the grave before he was brought to embrace Christ as his Saviour. Through all those years he was nearly without thought or concern about his soul's salvation. He was surrounded by worldly companions, and was tempted to enter various paths of sinful enjoyment. But when once the Spirit of God began to work upon his soul, the memory of his mother came up fresh and strong upon him, and he felt that her happy influence, although unrecognized at the time, had hindered him from many an evil thing.

My young readers, love your mothers and honor them. Your mother is to you one of the most inestimable boons God has ever given you. Perhaps, next to the blessed Saviour, she is one of the best gifts even God could give you.—Sunday-school Visitor.

RIGHTS OF MINISTERS.

Many seem to act as though ministers were an inferior class of persons and had no rights. This, however, does not make it so. On the contrary, no community can well do without them, and they should be respected and rewarded accordingly. In speaking of this subject, Hall's Journal of Health well remarks:— "The clergy of this country are the best men in it; they are the light of the world, the salt of the earth; for literary acquirements, for mental culture, for purity of morals and blameless lives, they have not their equals in any class of civilized society, and when such men devote their whole time to the preparation of books, essays, sermons, and discourses for the instruction of the masses, encouraging them and persuading them to a life of purity, industry and thrift; warning them against whatever may deceive the head, corrupt the heart, debase the intellect, destroy the character, and eventually ruin both body and soul; devoting themselves singly to these things, while others apply all their time, and talents, and energies toward making themselves, their children and their families, comfortable and happy, it is a very small matter that these last shall apply support the men through whose influence, examples, and teaching their possessions are secured to them, and their rights, liberties, and lives are preserved intact, day and night for years together, from the depredations of thieves and burglars and lawless, murderous men; for no man that thought can be so blind as not to see, and if the Bible teachings were to cease, and the Sabbath abolished, the whole foundations of society would be overturned, and anarchy would ensue, and our streets run with human gore. Revolutionary France proved all this; and who does not know that where there is no preaching, and no Sabbath, there spring up drunkenness and profanity, prostitution, social disorganization, and every other evil work? The merchant pays his private watchman for guarding his property every night; the whole of the minister's time is expended in enforcing those precepts which, and which only, can make, not only property, but even life itself, secure in any community. The Broadway merchant, or the Wall street broker, or the South street shipper, would crimson with shame to have it known that his faithful night-watch had starved to death on the pitiful salary which he had accorded him; and yet there are rich men and women, who give so little toward the support of the clergymen of the neighborhood, that they would actually starve if others did no better by them.

is omnipotent to save us, because he is God. He is willing to help us, inasmuch as he is man.

CHRISTIANITY A LIFE.

Remember that Christianity is not a new system of theological reasoning, nor a new assortment of phraseology, nor a new circle of acquaintance, nor even a new line of meditation; but a New Life. Its very being and essence is inward and practical. It is not the likeness or the history of a living thing; it is itself alive! And therefore to examine its evidence is not to try Christianity—to admire its martyrs is not to try Christianity—to compare and estimate its teachers is not to try Christianity—to attend its rites and services with more than Mohammedan punctuality is not to try or know Christianity. But for one week, for one day, to have lived in the pure atmosphere of faith and love to God, and tenderness to man; to rejoice in the felt and realized presence of Him who is described as "coming up from the wilderness," supporting his beloved—to have beheld earth annihilated and heaven opened to the prophetic gaze of hope—to have seen evermore revealed behind the complicated troubles of this strange, mysterious life, the unchanged smile of an Eternal Friend, and everything that is difficult to reason solved by that reposing trust which is higher and better than reason; to have known and felt this not for a life, but for a single, blessed hour, that, indeed, is to have made experiment of Christianity—that is to know the imperishable work of the Spirit in preparing souls for eternity—that is to have a glimpse of the meaning of those mystic words, "Our life is hid with Christ in God."

"I CAN, BECAUSE I OUGHT."

A child's book exists in our Sabbath-school literature, with the simple yet profoundly philosophic title: "I can, because I ought." The fresh mind of childhood never denied the truth expressed in those words. The conscience of a child must be awed down by authority into unnatural contortions, before it will create the feeling or the belief of guilt in that child's heart for that which he did not originate or cannot control. "I can, because I ought." Ability—the necessary inference from obligation; obligation—the measure of ability. The central truth which gives value to the tomes of theological lore on this subject is compressed into those words. It is impossible that reasoning should go below it or around it with the purpose of evasion. It is ultimate; thought can go no further. We reason around and around the immensity of the theme, and an invisible thread conducts us through the labyrinth back to the point at which we started, and at which every child can see as far as the keenest of us. "I can, because I ought." We struggle to go by this truth; we traverse the universe in our philosophic search for something beyond it; but at the circumference of our journey we have not outrun it, any more than we can outrun the evening star in search for the horizon. We plunge into the depths of our own being in quest of something which consciousness may have treasured up beneath it, but at the bottom of all things we find it awaiting us, "a gem of purest ray serene." "I can, because I ought." It is one of those truths which we carry with us because it is part of us. We cannot look into any mirror of truth without seeing the reflection of it. It is like an omnipresent Deity. It is indeed the voice of God within us. We may say of it: "Thou hast beset me behind and before; thou hast laid thy hand upon me. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me: yea, the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. Thou hast possessed my reins: I am fearfully and wonderfully made." "I can, because I ought." This, then, is the conviction with which an inquiring sinner must meet the question of his own salvation. I can obey, because God requires me to obey. I can repent, because I feel guilty for not repenting. God would not demand of me to do what I cannot do. God would never have constituted my being that I must feel guilty for not doing what I cannot do. This is the irresistible reasoning of any unsophisticated mind. The common sense of the world reasons so without hesitation and without exception. Teach your child that he has lied to you because he could not help it, and will he justify your rod? Teach a thief that he stole because the necessity of his avaricious nature was upon him, and will he look up self-condemned to your barred windows and bolted doors and armed sentinels? Teach a murderer that he shed the blood of his victim because he was the victim of an insane malignity over which he had no power, and will he confess the awful excellence of justice on your scaffold? If he does, it will be simply because he knows better than your teachings.

So, proclaim to an inquiring sinner that he is a sinner because he cannot be anything else; that he hates God because it is his nature to hate God; that he is a depraved being and a child of wrath because he was born such; that he does not repent because he is impotent to repent; that he does not obey God because the power is not in him to obey God; that, therefore, if he is not saved, it is because God has not elected him to salvation; and will he feel the damning guilt of his condition, the equity of his doom, the awful righteousness of the coming judgment? If he does so, it will be because conscience and the Holy Ghost are mightier than your theology. Never, never does reason draw such conclusion from such premises. The common sense of the world never reasons so.—Bibliotheca Sacra.

THE GOD-MAN.

When I think of those laws of absolute generality which Nature shows me, I tremble sometimes lest I may be overlooked; but when I remember that in Jesus there is a human nature mingled with the Divine, I feel sure that he is a being who knows what special wants mean, who can be touched with human sensibility, and can remember the woes and temptations of human infirmity. What a blessed and amazing thought! On the throne sits this God-man, within the very shrine of the eternal glory. He has mounted up to plead for sinful men. By the side of the Infinite One, who holds in the compass of his laws of infinite generality the infinity of the visible and invisible creation, is One conscious of our needs and touched with our infirmities. Yes! we know that we are as much the object of that Saviour's mercy as though this universe were empty of all the inhabitants but ourselves. He knows what we need. He cannot be perplexed by multiplicity nor confounded by minuteness. Therefore we may leave all confidently in his hands, committing ourselves to Him in prayer. And though we may have to wait for the dawn of the eternal morning to illumine some of the dark passages of his Providence, yet we may rest confident of his power, his wisdom and his goodness. He

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