

The Gospel Ambassador



In a Beautiful Auckland Garden.

“None can by any means redeem his brother.”

Only a Thistle.

THERE was a thistle of an extraordinary size growing in my garden; it was such a specimen, and so wonderfully well developed, that it became an object of much interest and curiosity. Instead of immediately cutting it down, I gave orders that it should not be interfered with, in fact that it should be encouraged and assisted in its growth in every possible way, to ascertain its utmost capabilities. The place in which it stood was a celebrated spot, being a rich soil of several feet deep. It had thus every chance of striking its roots downwards, and bearing its fruit upwards, of whatever kind and quantity it was wont.

It was an object of no inconsiderable attraction in the neighbourhood. Many came to see it, visitors at the home were invariably invited to pay a visit to our remarkable plant. It stood many feet high, had quite a number of great branches, and its stem resembled the trunk of a young tree. But in spite of all the care bestowed on it and notwithstanding its exceptionally favourable surroundings, alas! alas! it was “Only a Thistle.” We looked in vain for figs or grapes. However, I cannot say that we were sadly disappointed, for we had learned long ago to place no confidence in and to build no hopes upon that which was “Only a Thistle.”

Many years have rolled by since then. The world is making rapid progress, ever increasing in knowledge, science, and culture. Man is said to be improved and improving to such a degree that we are encouraged to hope, by some who are posing as lights of the world, that there is no longer necessity for any change in his nature. On the contrary that he is capable, if only properly trained, cared for, and educated, of attaining the very highest possible ideals, and producing the very choicest possible fruit, even fruit acceptable to God.

However, like the coloured man of the Southern States, I am simple enough to say: “I takes the Bible to be my guide-book in all matters both of faith and practice”; and I venture to think that its Divine Authorship is manifest in the fact that it is ever an up-to-date book. Let us enquire within, and see what saith this Infallible Guide on the subject.

“In due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

The inspired Apostle Paul declared: “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” The Psalmist says: “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.” And He gives the most unqualified verdict, “They are all gone aside . . . there is NONE . . . that doeth good, no, not one.” Educate the unregenerate man as you will, train or cultivate him as you can, you will have to arrive at the same conclusion at last, viz., that he is “Only a Thistle.”

We once heard of a servant girl who was utterly devoid of religion of any kind. A preacher staying in the home set



Hosing the Garden.

himself the task of seeking her spiritual welfare. She was so ignorant he had almost given up in despair, but on leaving the house, and bidding her farewell, he said: “Mary, I am going to give you a little prayer. I want you to pray it every day till I return. It is very short, and won’t take much of your time. Just get down on your knees and say, ‘Lord, show me myself.’”

A month later he returned, and finding Mary, enquired: “Did you pray the little prayer?” She replied, “Indeed I did, sir.” “And have you got an answer?” “Indeed I

"I say unto thee, ye must be born again."

have, sir. I am a miserable sinner." She was now deeply concerned about her soul, but up to the time of his leaving she had found no rest or peace. When saying good-bye, he gave her another little prayer, saying: "Just get down on your knees as before and pray: 'Lord, show me Thyself.'"

After a few weeks he came once more, but had not to seek for Mary. She greeted him on his arrival with a face beaming with joy, so much so that he exclaimed without enquiry: "Mary, I see the Lord has answered your prayer again." To which he received the welcome reply: "Indeed He has, sir. He has shown me Himself—a great Saviour for a great sinner."

Man, moral or immoral, educated or uneducated, religious or irreligious, until he is regenerated by the Holy Ghost, is "Only a Thistle"—a thorny weed in the garden of the Great Husbandman. Nothing can change his nature or make him acceptable to God until he comes as a poor sinner to the feet of Jesus. That moment he receives the touch of the hand of sovereign grace, and hears the voice that speaks from heaven saying: "Thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

Reader, may I ask what about your present condition in the sight of a sin-hating God? Are you born again through faith in Christ? or is it still true of you, in spite of the opportunities you have had, that you are "Only a Thistle"?

—C.W.L.

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Sins Stick.

THERE was a man who was going through a river in a foreign land. When he came out he found that many leeches were hanging to him. They had fastened on him while he was in the river. He started to knock them off.

"Don't do that!" exclaimed his attendant. "You will only make them stick the harder. I will prepare a bath which will bring them off." He then prepared a medicated bath of some sort, which made the leeches release their hold and fall off.

Sins are like leeches—they stick. Knock them off we cannot; or, if we do succeed in some instances, they get hold of us again in other ways. One only way of getting rid of our sins is God's way, and that is by yielding ourselves to the Saviour, and letting Him cleanse us from them by His atoning blood.

"Lean not unto thine own understanding."

Do You Believe in Signs.

THE widespread disrespect for governmental authority, the tottering of thrones, the rise of dictators, the existence of a League of Nations, the expected revival of the Roman Empire, the threatened race-war between the Orient and the Occident, the general unrest of nations, the opening of Palestine as a homeland for the Jews, the apostacy of the churches, the extreme worldliness of the age, and the incorrigibility of "flaming youth" are considered by many thoughtful persons to be signs of the rapidly approaching "end of the age."

Whether these "signs" are correctly interpreted or not, there is an urgent need of preparation for the Lord's return. The Lord Jesus has definitely promised to return. He said: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2-3).

As the Lord Jesus Christ was ascending, this comforting message was given to the awe-struck disciples: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11).

That the return of the Lord Jesus shall be a personal physical return is evident from the following inspired words: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1. Thess. 4:16-17).

The closing chapter of the closing book of the Bible contains the thrice repeated assurance of the speedy return of the Lord Jesus Christ. "I come quickly." (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20). And the last prayer of the Book of God is: "Even so, come Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22:20).

He may come at any time. Are you ready? If not, why not? To be ready at His return will mean—to be caught up and to meet the Lord in the air, and be for ever with Him. What a prospect!

If the Lord Jesus Christ were to come to-day and find you

“There is none that doeth good, no not one.”

unprepared, it would mean that you would be left for the series of unparalleled judgments which shall be poured out on the earth, after the believers have been taken out of the world. What is there about “wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes,” “deceivers,” the “Man of Sin,” the “False Prophet,” the “Great Tribulation,” and the “Lake of Fire” that appeals to you, dear reader? Why expose yourself for one moment of time to eternal doom? “Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation”; and you may be accepted and saved now by placing personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died for our sins, and was buried and rose again. Receive Him, know Him, love Him, serve Him, and wait for Him! —T.M.O.

John Wesley's Personal Testimony.



ON 1st February, 1738, he wrote:—“It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity—but what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I the last of all suspected), that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.

“I am not mad, though I thus speak, but I speak the words of truth and soberness, if haply some of those who still dream may awake and see that as I am so are they. Are they read in philosophy? So was I. In ancient or modern tongues? So was I also. Are they versed in the science of divinity? I, too, have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual things? The very same could I do. Are they plenteous in alms? Behold, I gave all my goods to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour as well as of their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than they all. Are they willing to suffer for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends, reputation,

“God desireth truth in the inward parts.”

ease, country; I have put my life into my hand, wandering into strange lands; I have given my body to be devoured by the deep, parched up with heat, consumed by toil and weariness, or whatsoever God should please to bring upon me.

“But does all this (be it more or less, it matters not) make me acceptable to God? Does all I ever did or can know, say, give, do, or suffer, justify me in His sight? Yea, or the constant use of all the means of grace? Or that I am, as touching outward moral righteousness, blameless? Or, to come closer yet, the having a rational conviction of all the truths of Christianity? Does all this give me a claim to the holy, heavenly, divine character of a Christian? By no means.

“This, then, have I learned in the ends of the earth, that I am fallen short of the glory of God, that my whole heart is altogether corrupt and abominable, and consequently my whole life, seeing that it cannot be that an evil tree should bring forth good fruit; that, alienated as I am from the life of God, I am a child of wrath, an heir of Hell; that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins, which are more in number than the hairs of my head, that the best of them need atonement themselves, or they cannot abide His righteous judgment; that, having the sentence of death in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope but that of being justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus.

“If it be said that I have faith (for many such things have I heard from many miserable comforters), I answer, so have the devils a sort of faith, but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise; the faith I want is a sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God. I want that faith which enables every one that hath it to cry out, “I live not, but Christ liveth in me—and the life which I now live I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

On the 24th of May, nearly four months after the above was written, while sitting listening to one reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, John Wesley trusted in Christ and was saved; his own words are:—“I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone for

"Christ came into the world to save sinners."

salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins—even mine—and saved me from the law of sin and death."

And now, dear reader, how is it with your own soul? Have you thus trusted Christ? Have you the assurance that your sins are taken away? That you are saved from the law of sin and death? The sure word of the Lord says—"All that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:39), and "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). Thus we see every true believer is saved, and knows it, as we read, "The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." (Rom. 8:16). "And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). If you are still unsaved, there is no need that you should spend so much time as John Wesley did, trying to gain salvation by your own works and prayers. God says that you cannot do anything to please Him (Rom. 8:8; Heb. 11:6). Your heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Every imagination of it is only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).

So it is impossible for you to do any thing else but sin; but still God loves you, and if you really believe that you are guilty and worthy of Hell you may be saved as you read, "For God so loved the WORLD that He GAVE His only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). And Jesus says—"Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the end of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22). "He was lifted up on Calvary's Cross, and all our sins were laid upon Him" (Isaiah 53:6). "He suffered the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18). "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

The moment a poor, lost, guilty, undone sinner believes in Him that moment that one is saved, as we read—"He that believeth on the Son HATH everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Soon as my all I ventured
On the atoning Blood,
The Holy Spirit entered,
And I was born of God.
Now Christ is my salvation,
What can I covet more?
I fear no condemnation—
My Father's wrath is o'er.

"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish."

Taken from the Deep Pit.

A MAN said to a Christian, "I am going to lead a better life." He answered him, "You are like a man in a pit, and you see the Saviour at the top, and you are going to climb up to him."

"Yes, that is it, I mean to climb up to Him."

"You never can," he replied.

"Anyway I will try."

The Christian met the man some time after and asked, "Have you got out of the pit yet?"

He replied, "No, but I am trying yet."

Again, after a while he saw him, and he looked quite happy. He said, "The Lord laid His hand on me at the bottom of the pit, and I learned to trust Him, and He pulled me out, and now I have joy and peace in believing."

Salvation is personal trust in a personal Saviour.

"He took me from a fearful pit,
And from the miry clay,
Upon a Rock He set my feet,
Establishing my way."

Are You Ready?

"WITH all your church-going and good works, are you sure of going to Heaven?" Such was the question put by a young man to a friend in course of conversation.

"No," was the reply, "I cannot say that I have that assurance."

"Well," continued the young man, "though there is nothing in my life that I need wish concealed, yet that is not my ground of confidence before God, and if called away this moment I am ready." His ground of confidence was the finished work of Christ—that work accomplished on Calvary, when "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

Shortly after, the same young man was in the house of another acquaintance, and the conversation turning on spiritual subjects, he remarked, "If I were to die to-day, I am ready."

Young, strong, and prosperous, death seemed many years distant; with his cup of earthly happiness soon to be filled

“The Scripture hath concluded all under sin.”

to the brim, life seemed well worth living; but eternity always nearer than we think.

There is but a step between us and death. Just three days after the last recorded conversation he was on top of a high building in course of erection, and as he and another man were about to lower a plank, referring to what they were doing, he called out, “Are you ready?” when just as the words escaped his lips the masonry on which his foot rested gave way, he fell to the ground and was killed instantly.

Well for him that he was ready. While he lived it was well for his friends, and especially his widowed mother, that he was moral, industrious, and kind; but it was well for

THE DIVINE CALL.

Hark! to words of love and mercy,
Wanderer, spoken now to you,
'Tis the voice of Christ the Saviour,
Oh what love, how full, how true!
Jesus calleth, calleth sinners;
Yes, He calls the wide world through.

Soon His calls will cease for ever.
Hearken, sinner, while you may;
Trust the Saviour, rich in mercy,
Rest in Him without delay.
Trust the Saviour, as He calleth
Ere life's season slips away.

himself in the fatal moment that he was resting on Christ alone for salvation.

His last words, though uttered concerning the plank about to be lowered, come home with great solemnity to all who may hear of them. Is it not like a question from the tomb? Are you ready? Are you ready to meet God? This is a solemn question, and should not be shelved until a more convenient season.

The Lord Jesus is God's one and only way of salvation. Trust wholly in Him Whose blood was shed for the remission of sins; in other words, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Then you will know the peace and joy of being ready.
—A.W.P.S.

What More Do You Want?

YOUNG woman lay dying, and, as is usual at such times, friends sent for the clergyman to come and see her. When he arrived he put the following questions to her—Have you been christened? Have you been confirmed? Have you taken the sacrament? Have you come to church regularly? Have you been a good girl?

To all of which she answered “Yes.”

“Well,” said he, “you ought to be satisfied.”

“But,” she replied, “I am not, it does not satisfy me; I want something more.”

“WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?”

he enquired. “I cannot do anything more, and I think you are very unreasonable!” And with these words he went away, leaving the poor girl in distress.

Alas! how many of these miserable comforters are to be found. “Physicians of no value” they are indeed!

Knowing of a Christian woman living nearby, they sent to ask her if she would come and see the dying girl. From her lips she heard of One who had died for sinners on the cross, upon whose holy Head all the judgment due to our sins fell, and from whose blessed lips those words broke forth, “IT IS FINISHED!” telling to all who trust in Him that the work for the putting away of their sins is DONE, and that christening, confirmation, taking the sacrament, etc., are not necessary to salvation.

In that precious Saviour she was led to believe, and shortly after she died, rejoicing in Him.

Reader, one question before we lay down our pen. We ask, not if you have been the round of religious observances, such as was asked of the subject of our narrative, but

HAVE YOU COME TO CHRIST?

for cleansing, forgiveness, and salvation? Remember, sin is against God; and no designs of yours, or anything done by you can ever make you fit for His holy eye. “Without shedding of blood is no remission,” is the testimony of Scripture; there is no “shedding of blood” in sacraments, religious exercises, or deeds of charity.

In company with the dying young woman, what you need is something more, and that “something more” is found in Christ, and His atoning death on Calvary's cross. To Him you must go if you would be blessed. He has done all that was needed to be done, and since God has accepted His sacrifice on our behalf, WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?

“Time Enough.”

FATAL words! by which Satan deludes thousands of victims. Beware, my friend. Eternity is at hand. Your thoughtless “Time enough” might soon be exchanged for the bitter wail of a lost soul!

Delay no longer. The remembrance of past follies and sinful pleasures will increase your terrible remorse for love despised—for opportunities lost.

God loves you, and would make you happy.

Christ died to save sinners. Only trust Him.

He waits to receive you. He said, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.”
Come to Him NOW.