

OUR BANNER.

VOL. VI.

DECEMBER 15, 1879.

No. 12

THE RULE OF FAITH.

BY THE LATE REV. WM. SOMMERVILLE, NOVA SCOTIA.

Concluded from page 335.

We shall now proceed to animadvert upon the use and efficiency of the Scriptures as a Rule of Faith, having premised a single remark upon a current distinction between faith and practice, or the rule of faith and practice. Faith and practice are easily distinguished in idea. The distinction is obvious, yet they cannot be separated. All practice is grounded upon faith of some kind, and faith leads to action. As might be expected, where thorough conviction is introduced, faith and practice are submitted to us in the Divine Word, completely interwoven and mutually dependent. Principles are ever exhibited with reference to their practical results; and the practice which God approves assumes a principle which sustains and regulates it. The faith which is inoperative is represented as dead, being alone; and faith itself is represented as an act of obedience, whilst that conformity to the will of God, which we denominate Christian practice is introduced as an exhibition of faith in God. In fixing the rule of faith, therefore, we fix the rule of practice. They are one. With this anticipatory observation, I remark:

I. This Rule is valuable only as it is applied.

When it has been proved, beyond all rational contradiction, that the Bible is the Word of God, that that word is limited to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; when copies have been multiplied indefinitely, circulated with unwearied diligence, and stored in depots in every city, village, and hamlet, no beneficial results may follow. Men may not be disposed to read—disposed to hear the proclamation of the Word. We cannot persuade them, and our antecedent labor has been against the wind and tide. A grave question arises: How is this evil to be remedied? How is the Divine rule to be brought to bear for the formation of the character and the determination of the destinies of man? The question is, at the present hour, most pressing, not only with reference to the general aspect of society and its interests, but in particular on account of the reduction of Rome, as far as its rulers are able to effect it, to the situation of Jericho, when, alarmed by the gathering of the children of Israel, "it was closely shut up, none went out and none came in."

The Westminster standards are not Presbyterianism; nor are the Thirty-nine Articles and the Liturgy the Church of England; but the approbation, reception and practical embodiment of them

THE CHURCH'S GLORY.

BY THE REV. J. M. FOSTER, CINCINNATI, OHIO.

"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God."—Psalms lxxxvii, 3.

This Psalm was written after the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon—a sack-cloth period. It is true there were a great many things to rejoice over. The shackles of their bondage had been broken, and they were restored to their own land. The temple had been rebuilt, the priesthood restored, and the feasts revived. But still a gloom of sadness hung over them. Their numbers had been depleted, only a remnant returned; the second temple was far inferior to the first, the *sacred fire* had been lost from off the altar, the Shekinah, the visible emblem of God's presence, no longer appeared in the most holy place, and the former zeal for God's worship was gone. On this account they were downcast and hopeless. They said: "The glory has departed, we are cut off for our parts; by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?" The prophet endeavored to revive their drooping spirits by calling their attention to the glorious promises that God had made to His people. He said: "Do not be cast down and forlorn, O Israel! Look at our prospects! God has promised that of the seed of David, according to the flesh, shall come a Deliverer who shall sit upon His throne, and in Him shall all the Gentiles trust. He has promised that princes shall come out of Egypt to do Him homage. Sheba's kings shall offer Him gifts. Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to Him; yea, all the mighty kings on earth shall do Him reverence. He has promised to lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes of Zion; that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains and exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. Courage, ye people of God! *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!*

The prophet here views the Church under the figure of a city. The leading thought is: The glory of the city of God. This city is glorious,

1. *In her Founder.* All great cities boast of their founder. Babylon was founded by Nimrod; Rome was founded by Romulus. But this city of God was founded by the Lord Jesus Christ. "Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious." He laid the first stone in Eden: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He enlarged this foundation in His covenant with Abraham: "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." He strengthened it at Sinai: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." He cemented it in His incarnation: "Lo, I come; to do Thy will I take delight, O my God." He confirmed it in His life: "Upon this *rock* I will build my Church." He completed it in His death: "It is finished." He sealed it in His resurrection: "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye, therefore, unto all nations and preach the Gospel to every creature;" and He dedicated it on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended in the form of cloven tongues of fire and abode upon the disciples. All earthly cities were founded by men and have perished. Babylon

was founded by a man and has gone down. Nineveh was founded by a man and is now a heap of ruins. Tyre was founded by a man and is now in ruins. But this city of God was founded by the Jehovah of Hosts and has survived the wreck of empires; aye, and will live forever. "All the gates of hell can not prevail against her."

2. *In that she is God's organized agent for accomplishing His work.* There are several divine institutions, and each subserves a particular purpose. The Sabbath is a divine institution. It is God's appointed rest for man. It is a crime to alter it. France substituted every tenth day, but it worked *immense* harm. The Sabbath has its necessity in our nature, and its authority in God's word: "Remember the Sabbath day." The family is a divine institution. It is the arrangement, appointment, and contrivance of heaven for man. It is God's appointed method of restraining vice. It is God's appointed method of fostering virtue. It is God's appointed method of multiplying the human race. It is God's appointed method of developing the nobler sentiments of the human heart. Man cannot compass these ends in any other way than through the family and be innocent. Polygamy is a crime. A community of wives is a crime. Free love is a crime. The family has its origin in the very nature of man, and its authority in God's word: "They twain shall be one flesh." The State is a divine institution. It is God's appointed method of governing the masses. Obedience to just and legal authority is obedience to God. Rebellion against just and legal authority is resistance to God. "And they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Patriotism is not a mere sentiment, it is a duty. Rebellion is not mere mistaken political sentiment, it is a crime. Civil society has its origin in the very constitution of our nature. We are, in our normal state, in it, just as much as in the family; and it has its authority in God's word: "The powers that be are ordained of God." The Church is another divine institution. It is God's appointed custodian of the truth: "Unto them were committed the oracles of God." It is His chosen witness to the truth. "Ye are my witnesses." It is God's appointed agent for publishing the truth. "Out of Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." It is God's appointed agent for conducting His worship and administering his ordinances. It is God's appointed and authorized agent for converting the world to Christ. "Go, ye, into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." In these days, we have associations without number; National Reform Associations, Temperance Associations, Young Men's Christian Associations, etc., and in our zeal for these we are, in danger of losing sight of the Church as the *grand organization* of God for doing His work. God forbid that I should say a word in disparagement of the noble work of these Associations. The National Reform Association has its mission, viz.: calling this nation's attention to the mediatorial dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ over nations; a great and good work certainly. The Temperance Associations have their work, going down to the gutters and lifting up our fallen brothers, and leading them to the Church; a very important work. The Young Men's Christian Associations have their work, searching out those who have wandered from the fold, and leading them back. A very good work indeed. But when this

is done their work is accomplished. They are necessarily secondary to the church. They have no right to intrude upon the sacred offices of the Church. They are secular in their nature; and can only do secular work. The Church is sacred, and to her sacred work belongs. It is wrong for them to hold their meetings on the Sabbath day; that is the Church's day. It is wrong for them to set themselves up as soul-saving institutions; that is the Church's work. It is wrong for them to preach the gospel or to conduct public worship; authority to do these has been given only to the Church. It is wrong for Church members to neglect any duty to the Church to wait upon them; for the Church is divine, while these are only human. The Church is the divinely appointed agent for doing God's work upon earth. "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the *people of the saints of the most High.*"

3. *In the presence of God in her midst.* We see evidences of God's presence everywhere. He makes the earth soft with showers of rain. He watereth the hills from His chambers. He thundereth marvelously with His voice. He causes the grass to grow for cattle, and herb for the service of man. He brings His cold out of the chambers of the North, scatters hoar frost like ashes, and gives snow like wool. He cleaves the earth with rivers, and sets bounds to the deep. He spreads the balancing of the clouds in the upper heavens. He leads forth the fleecy vapors in white flocks along the mountain sides. He sends out the heralds of the morning in the eastern sky, directs the diurnal circling of the sun in the heavens, prepares the indescribable glories amid which he often sinks to rest, and over his couch draws a curtain of blue and purple and scarlet, more beautiful than the curtains of God's tabernacle, and all glorious to behold. Go to the most dismal spot on the globe, where no plant vegetates, and where no animal breathes, and there you see Him in the eternal snows that cover it; in the rocks that rear their dark pinnacles to the skies; in the waves that dash against its melancholy shores. Go to the desert, marked by no human footstep, and there you see Him in the blades of grass and in the flowers which waste their sweetness on the desert air; for all things live and move and have their being in Him. We see Him in His chariot of the winds, demolishing mansions and uprooting forests. We see Him in that grand ocean swell, tossing an entire navy to the sky with as much ease as if it was a single cockle-shell. We hear Him in the thunderous roar of that earthquake, that heaves whole continents and ocean-beds, and causes the distant mountain ranges impetuously to shake and tremble and topple. We see Him as He marshals the hosts of heaven on the field of light, stationing the same sentinel star that guarded the throne of the eternal north when God spake to Job out of the whirlwind, guiding Arcturus with his sons, and ordering all their complicated manoeuvres in perfect order and silent harmony. His own words are verily true: "Behold, I fill heaven and earth." The universe is a magnificent temple in which He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, manifests Himself to His intelligent creatures. The divine Inhabitant fills it, and every part shines with His glory. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or 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, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." God is everywhere present.

But while all this is true; *He dwells in His Church by His peculiar, special, and gracious presence.* When the tabernacle was completed in the wilderness, God descended upon it in His shekinah, and "the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." On the occasion of dedicating the temple at Jerusalem, God rested in His shekinah upon the mercy-seat, between the cherubim, in the holy of holies, and "the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud for the glory of God filled the house." This shekinah was the visible emblem of God's presence in His Church. "I have hallowed this house that thou hast built, saith the Lord, to put my name therein forever, and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually." God dwells in His Church. Believers are "builided together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." In some strange, peculiar, and hidden manner God dwells in the believer's heart. "I will dwell in them and will walk in them and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The believer ever lives in soul-nourishing fellowship with God. When you pass a house and see the shutters closed, the doors closed, the gates closed, no children playing in the yard, no smoke rising from the chimney, you say, the master is away. How do you know? Did you go and inquire? No. You know by the evidence. When you pass that same house another day, and see the door standing ajar, the shutters open, the smoke curling up from the chimney, and the children playing in the yard, you say, the master is at home now. Did you go and see? No. Did you inquire? No. How do you know? "I know by the evidence." So when you see the fruit of the Spirit in the heart and life, then you know that the Spirit has taken up His abode. Where love, peace, joy, longsuffering, patience, meekness, and faith are found, there the Spirit dwells. "Hereby we know that He dwelleth in us, by His Spirit that He hath given us." But the Spirit not only dwells in each individual believer's heart, He also dwells in the Church as Christ's organized body. "Where two or three are gathered together *in my name* there am I in the midst of them." The Apostle John saw Jesus walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, trimming and feeding them with the oil of grace. Christ ever dwells in the midst of His living temple, built up of lively, spiritual stones. The true view is this. Each individual believer is a temple in which the Spirit dwells. A number of individuals viewed together form a congregational temple in which the Spirit dwells. A number of congregations viewed together form a denominational temple in which the Spirit dwells. A number of denominations viewed together form a national temple, in which the Spirit dwells. All the national temples viewed together form the world's great temple of the true Catholic Church, beautiful, and grand, and glorious, the joy of the whole earth.

4. *In her protection.* The cities in old time, Rome and Babylon

and Tyre and Jerusalem, were surrounded by great and high walls for protection. So God has surrounded His Church by impregnable walls of defence. "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." When David looked round about and saw the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, the Medes, the Persians, the Egyptians, and the Ethiopians, all thirsting for the blood of God's people, all banding together that they might sweep away the Israel of God, and yet *they* lived and prospered, he broke out in this triumphant language:

"They in the Lord that firmly trust, shall be like Zion Hill,
Which at no time can be removed, but standeth ever still.
As round about Jerusalem the mountains stand alway,
The Lord his folk doth compass so, from henceforth and for aye."

For the last six thousand years Satan has been dashing wave after wave against these walls, but as vainly as the wind-swept waves when they lash their foam against the unyielding rock. In the days of Elijah such a great wave was rolled up that after the shock the prophet thought himself alone as the representative of the faithful. But God had reserved for Himself seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Another great wave was rolled up when that great army of Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem. But the destroying angel went out and in the morning one hundred and eighty-five thousand were slain. Wave after wave of error, the flood of water from the Devil's mouth broke upon the walls of the early Church. First came that great wave of Gnosticism, a wild and extravagant compound of Oriental theosophy, Greek philosophy and Christian ideas; but while it bore down multitudes who were of the world, it broke harmless upon the Church's foundation. Then came that great wave of Manicheism, with its Persian dualism, the eternal conflict of mind and matter, of good and evil; and though it carried down vast numbers who belonged to Satan, it fell harmless at the base of the Church's walls, which were firm as mountains of brass. "All the gates of hell could not prevail against her." The next wave was more formidable. The great Roman Pagan empire, animated by Satan himself, came down upon her like a thundering avalanche, but she shook off the stupendous load as a man shakes off the snow-flakes from his garments. For three centuries Great Imperial Rome cried: "*Christianos ad leones!*" For three centuries the brutal Colliseum devoured Christ's freemen. For three centuries the stake, the scaffold, and the block were busy day and night dispatching God's children. For three centuries the horrors of the cross tried God's saints. But Rome Pagan went down and Christianity ascended the throne of the Cæsars. The wave broke harmless at the base of the Church's walls. The next wave that was rolled up was the Papacy. For ten centuries she practiced the horrors of the Inquisition. For ten centuries she chased the saints like hunted deer among the Alps and through the low countries, "until every mountain became a monument, every valley saw executions, and every village had its roll of martyrs." For ten centuries she soaked the sods of all Europe with the blood of God's people and strewed the mountains and valleys with their bones. But this great wave broke and fell harmless at the base of the walls. In the first Reformation, Martin Luther gave the "Beast with seven heads and

ten horns" a wound unto death, and the Church arose victorious. In the fifty years struggle, from the swearing of the National Covenant in 1638 to the English Revolution in 1688, the great wave of Prelacy dashed against the Church's walls. From the crowning of Charles II. in 1660 to the close, this wave was high and dreadful. It was the "killing time" in Scotland. Twenty-eight years of fines and imprisonments, tests and forfeitures, tortures and banishment and death. Twenty-eight years of wasting their lives in the high places of the fields, rather than abandon the pastors of their choice, or be driven by the soldiery to listen to the soul-starving hirelings of the supremacy. Twenty-eight years their heads and the palms of their hands were affixed in the most conspicuous places of the kingdom, for the purposes of intimidation and disgrace, while their bodies were left to moulder on the mountains. But this wave of blood, in which 18,000 Covenanters fell, did not move the Church's walls. Then the victorious Church sang her great war song:

"We will not be afraid, though hills amidst the seas be cast; though waters roaring
 make,
 And troubled be; yea, though the hills by swelling seas do shake.
 God in the midst of her doth dwell, nothing shall her remove;
 The Lord to her a helper will, and that right early, prove."

The roar of the last wave of blood has long since died away, but when I ascend the walls of Zion and look out upon the deep sea of humanity, I see a double wave, more formidable than any before rolling in mightily upon us. The first swell takes the form of Nihilism in Russia, Communism in France, and Socialism in America. It means the abolition of inheritance; the abolition of the family; the abolition of property; the abolition of the State; the abolition of religion. This fold of the wave means a "reign of terror." Infidelity is the moving power. It carries with it one hundred millions of souls. The other swell is hoary-headed, heaven-blapheming Popery. This means a Jesuitical organization throughout the Old World, and the New, subject to the will of the Pope as much as my hand is subject to the wrist. *Semper eadem* is their motto, and blood their battle-cry. This fold of the wave carries with it two hundred millions of souls; eight millions in the United States. This great double wave is rolling up against the walls of the Church, but will break and fall like those which have gone before. "No weapon that is formed against Zion shall prosper." As I look steadily upon their commotion, I see favorable indications. The triumph of Republican principles in so many of our States in the recent elections is an encouraging omen. It indicates that the truth and honor-loving host are bestirring themselves. It indicates that principles must rise, while error goes down. In Germany the ultramontane power is broken, and Bismarck with his Protestant government is the centripetal power in Europe. The Napoleon dynasty in France is broken up, and that nation with its Republic has started upon a new career of progression, liberty, and civilization. Before Victor Immanuel entered Rome Italy, under the dominion of the Pope, was divided into as many factions as there were cantons in their territory. But now, under the new rule she is a unit from Venice to Naples, from Turin to Ravenna, and from Monte Rosa to the farthest coast that

is washed by the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean. Such a flood of Christianity's calcium light has been thrown upon Russia, that fifty millions of serfs have been liberated; the Czar and his government have been made to feel that they can no longer hold in bondage the souls of men, and a new life of temperance, industry, morality, and virtue is throbbing through every vein and artery of that great empire. The Sultan of Turkey and the Khedive of Egypt have been made to feel that they must keep abreast with the progressive spirit of the nineteenth century, or else abdicate. Through the indefatigable efforts of Livingston and Stanley, the great interior of Africa has been opened up for the gospel messengers; and to-day the gospel trumpet is sounding from the Nile to the Niger; from the Orange to the Congo rivers; from Zanzibar to the Victoria Nyanza. In India there are at the present hour 2,000,000 of professing Christians, and vast multitudes flocking to the standard of the Cross daily. The walls of China have long since been scaled, and from Peking the gospel-light radiates in every direction. Japan and the Fejee Islands exhibit similar wonders of grace. The times are pregnant with great results. The cords of Zion are being lengthened and her stakes strengthened. Soon He whose right it is to reign will take to Himself his great power. Soon the angel will fly forth in the midst of heaven, proclaiming: "The sovereignty of this world has become the sovereignty of our Lord and of his Christ." Then will the language of Pope be realized when he said:

"Rise crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise,
Exalt thy tow'ring head, and lift thine eyes!
See a long race thy spacious courts adorn;
See future sons and daughters, yet unborn,
In crowding ranks on every side arise,
Demanding life, impatient for the skies!
See barbarous nations at thy gates attend,
Walk in the light, and in thy temple bend;
See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings,
And heap'd with products of Sabeian springs!
For thee Idume's spicy forests flow,
And seeds of gold in Ophir's mountains glow.
See heaven its sparkling portals wide display,
And break upon thee in a flood of day!
No more the rising sun shall gild the morn,
Nor evening Cynthia fill her silver horn;
But lost, dissolved in thy superior rays,
One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze
O'erflow thy courts: the Light himself shall shine
Reveal'd, and God's eternal day be thine!
The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;
But fix'd His word, His saving power remains;
Thy realm forever lasts, thine own Messiah reigns!"