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Outspoken Confession.

The profession of religion is an easy and reasonable requirement in the Christian life. It is simply the acknowledgement of our faith in the Lord Jesus, of our devotion to him and his cause, and of our great desire to please and serve him. It cannot take the place of faith or of sincere affection for the Saviour. But it comes after faith, as its outgrowth and evidence. It is the outward expression of the inward act of the soul, as it accepts the precious gift of eternal life. It is the first step in the obedience of the followers of him who has said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Until this step is taken, there is nothing we can do in his service, to any advantage to his cause. It is not to be made rashly or blindly, but intelligently, deliberately and under the eye of the Master.

It should be regarded as a high and blessed privilege of the Christian life, and not a mere duty imposed on us, from which we should escape if possible. Drawn by the love of Christ, it should be the delight of the soul to stand forth on the Lord's side and avow our attachment to him. But it is a duty also, as well as a blessed privilege. The Lord Jesus has made it obligatory on all his disciples to publicly avow their faith in his saving grace and their allegiance to his authority. It is, moreover, a most reasonable thing to acknowledge him, if he is our Saviour. If one has a friend on whom he relies in every emergency, to whom he goes privately for counsel and financial aid, would he refuse to recognize him in public? It is not so among men. Self-respect would not allow it. How can it be, that one can live on the Saviour's bounty and expect salvation from him, and not so much as recognize him publicly as a friend?

Yet plain and reasonable as a public profession of religion is, there are many who shrink from it and neglect it. While great multitudes are added to the Church in various parts of the country, and pastors and people are encouraged, and all who love Christ rejoice in every evidence of success of religion, there is a company outside of those who have now publicly turned to the Lord. It is composed of those who still hold back from a Christian profession. Of many of them, it might be asked, What has hindered you? Some of them could assign no reason. Some are, even in heart, true Christians, but hesitate to avow it. As secret disciples, they are trying to make their way heavenward by stealthy steps, that others shall not hear. Religion would be the gainer, if all such persons would come forward boldly and stand up for Jesus. In almost every congregation some are to be found in this situation, and they need to be earnestly sought for and kindly persuaded to their duty. O, that their eyes could be opened to see their condition! The experience of President James Buchanan in this matter, is not exceptional, and may be profitable to some who have been the objects of pastoral solicitude. Two or three years before his death, Mr. Buchanan came before the session of the Presbyterian church of Lancaster, Pa., where he was a very regular attendant at church services. He said to

the session, that he came to them on special business; he wished to unite with the church. They must not think that any sudden impulse had come upon him, for he believed he had been a Christian many years and had been trying, in a private way, to serve the Lord, but something had been holding him back from a public profession. For many years, he said, he had been in public life, either a candidate for office, or in office, or just out of office, and had been restrained by this fact and had so long neglected his duty. But he wanted, before he died, to place himself on the right side and to publicly acknowledge his Lord and Saviour, if the session would receive him. This was the substance of his words, as reported by his pastor, the Rev. Walter Powell. He was joyfully received and continued in faithful devotion to religion as long as he lived.

There are similar cases found in many of our churches; persons held back by various causes. Many even pass away without giving public evidence of the faith that is in the heart. It is a pity that it should be so. The honor of Christ must be upheld, his Gospel must be preached, his Church must exist on earth, his table must be spread and furnished with guests, and this can be done only by outspoken disciples who profess him on earth. He needs, more and more, faithful and public followers. Those held back by any cause, should seek enough of his grace to break over every barrier, and to stand out fully on the Lord's side.

Church Welcome.

The religion of Jesus, if allowed to work out its legitimate results, develops a sense of brotherhood and of personal responsibility to God and souls. It curbs self and evokes a generous, responsive and helpful spirit. It magnifies grace, ordinance and privilege. It creates due regard for time, place and person.

Not only is each member of the Church to receive and enjoy the brotherly recognition and affection, but the kindly interest and cordial greeting are to go out toward all who happen to wait upon its services. It is the duty of one and all who bear the name of Christ to invite neighbor and friend to the sanctuary dedicated to God's worship. They are to make even the stranger welcome. He who wraps himself up in the mantle of a special goodness and superiority, who acts as if he had the sole proprietary-right to his portion of God's house and clings to his pew as if it would be contaminated by the presence of other than his family or particular friend, may be high up in the synagogue as a patron and factor, but he is low down in the scale of Christian courtesy and Christly conduct. He prejudices the cause of Christ, and helps to drive souls away from benefits which the Master tenders to all. He neutralizes the efforts of pastor and others who invite outsiders to worship temporarily with them, or to find among them a permanent home if circumstances will permit.

Pew-holders have more to do in building up a congregation than they suppose. Visitors form their impres-

A Little While.

A little while He bids us stay
Here where we only know in part;
A little while, but every day
New truths and concepts thrill the heart,
While, moving on and up, we near
The heights of glory, where, with clear,
Immortal vision, we shall see
Most plain what here is mystery.

A little while, and we shall greet
Our loved ones who have gone before;
A little while, their eyes shall meet
Our searching vision toward the shore,
And we our crowns of life shall wear,
Together, through the ages, there,
Where cares and crosses none shall know,
Nor tears, nor death, nor any foe.

A little while, and we shall hear
The voice of Him who died for all.
A little while—perhaps this year—
Your waiting spirit He may call;
And if His blessed "inasmuch"
Or "well done" come to any such,
They'll see, as we would, Jesus' face,
And sing with millions, "Saved by grace!"

—S. W. Young.

Life or Death.

By Rev. Henry Collin Minton, D.D.

It is one of the deep teachings of the apostle, Paul, that the Christian is dead to the world. This idea has prominence, particularly, in his epistles to the Colossians and to the Romans. When Christ died, the Christian died; they were buried together and together they rose again. The believer, therefore, cannot serve sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin. His affections should be set on things above, not on things earthly; "for he is dead and his life is hid with Christ in God."

This is strong language, and yet it is not altogether strange. It is not a mere figure of speech, it is serious, solemn truth. Death is a relative thing and deadness in one sphere often means aliveness in another. To die to the world is to be made alive to God; to die to sin is to live unto righteousness.

A stone is dead to every vital force about it. A horse is likewise dead to the æsthetic qualities of its surroundings. A blind man is dead to the beauties of the enchanting landscape; a deaf man is dead to the rich melodies of music; the untutored savage is dead to the refinements of art and the achievements of a high civilization. In precisely the same sense, the man who is destitute of the faculty of spiritual perception is dead to the spiritual verities of the Kingdom of God. My hand is dead to your touch if it is wholly unresponsive to that touch; my mind is dead to the Chinese language if it is wholly ignorant of the meaning of that language. That soul is "dead in trespasses and in sins" which is utterly unresponsive to every approach and every appeal of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Was it old Shylock who, angered by the elopement of his daughter, Jessica, pronounced that curse upon her memory which only a Shylock could utter, and declared that she should be henceforth "dead" to him? We remember how, in the parable, the old father who had been longing for the return of his wandering boy, exclaimed, in the ecstasies of his joy at the prodigal's return, "This, my son, was dead and is alive again."

The apostle's idea is that, whereas the Christian was once dead to Christ and alive to the world, he is now, on the other hand, alive to Christ and dead to the world. It is impossible at once to be both. The prodigal could not at the same time be serving the citizen out in the far country, and be a son in his father's house. The runaway Jessica could not be Lorenzo's bride and, at the same time, the beloved child of the relentless Shylock.

There is no such thing as being partly alive to the world and partly alive to Christ. Really, life and death are names of an absolute state and they do not admit of degrees of comparison. When we say a man is "half-dead," we mean that he is not dead at all—he is still alive. It must be one or the other, never both.

Is it not true that the attempt, however futile, is often made to shirk this principle, and that in both directions? Do not Christians often act as if they were very much alive to the world from whose "rudiments" they are dead; and do not non-Christians sometimes strive to keep the commandments of Christ as if they were alive to him to whom they are, in reality, absolutely dead? In the former case, it is either life strangely aping death or it is an empty name to live putting forth its true signs of death. In the latter case, it is the artificial galvanizing of a ghastly death-skeleton into a mock-show of a vital energy.

All this goes deep and yet Paul never wavered in carrying it out to its fullest meaning. The Christian character is an organic thing; it is not a mechanical piling up of one virtue upon another, as children build up their houses of blocks on the nursery floor. It is not a mosaic; it is a life, a growth. It may be more than that, but it is that. The root of that life is Christ. If it have not that root, then it is not the Christian life. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

May we not make the mistake of coaxing people too much to be Christians? Are we always careful to remember that there is a far deeper truth than that which is voiced when some one says that he is "trying to be a Christian?" The tree whose root is deep and sound and strong does not wait to be coaxed to grow, nor does it need to try. Only get the conditions right and the new life is the natural consequence.

" 'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue,
'Tis the natural way of living."

It is vain for the rootless tree to try to grow. The Christmas tree in your library had its luscious fruit tied on from without. Christian character, minus Christ, is like that beautiful tree, dying with its fruitless branches.

How the apostle brings out this thought! "As though living in the world and subject to ordinances—Touch not, taste not, handle not." We can almost hear the emphatic sarcastic circumflex with which that great, intense, genuinely consecrated spirit must have spoken of men trying to square their lives by such little, petty, mechanical and prudential precepts as that. Not that total abstinence is not all right; he is saying nothing about that. But that any ordinances, any "commandments and doctrines of men" should be substituted for the living, vital, organic union with the ever-living and life-giving Christ—this was to him the error of all errors; it was the heresy of death.

It is always so. Not that we need argue that the "world," after the forces of Christianity have been working in it and upon it for eighteen hundred years, is as bad as it was then; it is never simply because the world to which we are dead is so wicked and vile; but it is that anything else should be made to take the place of the only root of the Christian life. "The good is the enemy of the best." It is good in its place, but however good it is there, it is bad if it is made a substitute for the best. It was not that abstinence is not a good thing, but it is no basis for Christian living. Honesty is a good thing, but it is not Christianity. The Golden Rule is excellent for ethics, but it is no substitute for the Golden Ruler. And history tallies with this principle. Complete faith in God means reckless regard of the ordinances of the world. They who have been dead to the world are they who have done most for the world to which they were dead. Sophocles said of his great teacher, "Æchylus does what is right without knowing why." Noah disregarded a scoffing world, but he had faith in God. Abram went forth into a land whither he knew not, but he knew that God knew. That Christian or that Church that looks to the world without rather than to God for counsel and for courage has forgotten the great truth of which Paul made so much.

This busy matter-of-fact age needs to call to mind this deep mystical teaching so fundamental to the Christian life. It is only as we have died with Christ to all else, that we are made alive in him.

"Then I am dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me."

Preaching the Word.

By Rev. A. J. Herries.

Paul charged Timothy to "preach the word." It is a charge to which ministers at the present would do well to give heed. The Word of God has lost none of its power with the passing of time. It is as much of a hammer now as it was in the days of Jeremiah; as much of a light unto the feet now as in the days of David; as much the sword of the Spirit now as in the days of Paul. But a hammer does not of itself break rocks; a light under a bushel does not dispel darkness; a sword in its scabbard terrifies no enemies. It is only when the hammer falls with a well-directed blow that the rock is broken. It is only when the light is held forth that the way of the traveler is illuminated. It is only when the sword is dexterously wielded that it becomes an effective weapon in combat. The preaching of the Word of God is striking blows with a hammer; holding forth the light of love and truth; wielding a sword in the conflict against the powers of darkness.

The minister's work, first, last, and all the time, is preaching the Word. His work is not to criticise the Word, but to preach it. His work is not to tell the people what, in his opinion, God should have said, but he is plainly to tell them what God has said. Not by foolish preaching, but by the foolishness of preaching God has ordained that men shall be saved. Earnest, thoughtful men care but little for the opinions that preachers may have about the Word. What they want above all things else is an honest exposition of the Word itself. The man who is always torturing the ears of his hearers with "I

think," with the emphasis always carefully laid on the "perpendicular" pronoun, is doubtless preaching, but he is preaching himself rather than the Word. Such an one may be popular, but his popularity is that of the morning mist.

Paul, in speaking of himself and his companions as preachers, said: "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." By declaring openly and purely the Word of God the Apostles succeeded in attracting men to God. The secret of the Apostles' success lay in the noble candor and the frankness with which they presented the revealed truth of God. Dr. Charles Hodge, commenting on the above passage says: "Paul's opponents endeavored to recommend themselves and to secure the confidence of others by cunning, and by corrupting the Gospel; but he relied simply on the manifestation of the truth. He knew that the truth had such a self-evidencing power that even where it was rejected and hated it commended itself to the conscience as true. And those ministers who are humble and sincere, who are not wise in their own conceit, but simply declare the truth as God has revealed it, commend themselves to the consciences of men. That is, they secure the testimony of the conscience even of wicked men in their favor." Men who are in the habit of preaching something not the Word of God, may not succeed in suppressing the hearers' desire to know what saith the Word, but they will succeed in depressing the thoughts of the hearers by the dead weight of speculative notions. Austin Phelps once wrote: "Sir Isaac Newton believed that he could account for the omniscience and omnipresence of God. He regarded them as necessities of the Divine nature made so by the hypothesis that 'space is the Divine sensorium.'" Does that conjecture add anything to our conception of these attributes? Who knows definitely what it signifies? To the average of popular intelligence does it signify anything which can be comprehended from oral address? Grant it, and what follows? It is dangerous to the force of the pulpit, to reason in a style which prompts blunt hearers to say: "Well, what of it?" When a man goes to the pulpit to feed the people on thoughts concerning the "Divine sensorium," he goes to a fruitless task.

The one who adheres strictly to the Word of God becomes a master preacher. He becomes a luminary to the generation which he serves. He is always dealing with great subjects and consequently can never be commonplace. It is only when he descends from the holy books of Christianity that he becomes a pulpit pettifogger. The one who persistently preaches the Word may not attain to any great commercial value as a preacher, neither may he receive many "loud calls," but he will have the sweet consciousness of being a preacher approved of God. He may often find himself in bonds, but his sermons will never be bound, for the Word of God can never be bound. The one who takes the Word of God as the centre of his preaching will find himself going out over the fields of all sciences, but at the same time will find himself bound to his centre as the planets to the sun. The holy books of Christianity invite deep study and widespread investigation. They inspire a system of thought which is always