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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE PRESENT RELATIONS OF THE FALSE RELIGIONS TO CHRISTIANITY.

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It is difficult to account for the half suspicion which exists in many Christian minds against the study of false systems of religion and philosophy. It is perhaps partly a result of exaggerated ideas of their utter defilement and a disposition to regard them as puerile and trivial, and partly owing to the use which antichristian writers have made of them as rivals of Christianity. It cannot be denied that infidelity in the hope of disparaging the Christian faith has taken the lead in the study of Oriental religions and has put forth their claims for wisdom and moral purity, for charity and superior benevolence with such boldness and persistency, that timid souls seem half afraid of a dangerous rivalry. At least they feel that the less Christian men and women have to do with false religions the better for the simplicity and earnestness of their faith. This timid spirit is groundless and is a half surrender to the enemy: it cannot meet the demands of this age of dauntless inquiry.

One cannot fail to mark the different aspect in which we view the mythologies of Greece and Rome. If the religions of those countries had remained unknown till the present time, if the moral maxims of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius had been kept a secret, if Socrates had just now been presented to the public as the Light of Greece and that in the glowing verse of an acknowledged poet like Sir Edwin Arnold, there would probably be no small commotion in the religious world and the high claims of the Christian faith to an absolute supremacy might seem imperilled.

But simply because we thoroughly understand the religions and the ethics of classic lands, we are without the slightest fear. By common consent they have taken their subordinate place as compared with the Christian faith. They rather add to the lustre of the truth by their contrasts. What is good in them is so frankly and fearlessly acknowledged that our Christian colleges contend for a classical course

vary. It journeys apart from those once loved, and comes to dwell in a strenuous solitude. David found that his own familiar friend lifted up his heel against him. Jesus said: "One of you shall betray me." Such is the gravitation of a selfish nature. We are forced to drink often times the cup of disappointment through the ignorance or malice of those nearest to us. These bands of sin fetter and weaken the soul. To be a true friend is to be put under sacred bonds; for close companionship is a peril. Few can be intimate and really helpful. We are watchful of a foe, a lie, a vice that assails us outside and from afar, but unsuspecting when the peril is at hand, in our very bosom. "A man's foes are those of his own house."

Again, we meet with trial from those on whom we have a claim, but who are unsympathetic and who misinterpret us as we rise up in thought and aspiration and purpose above the level of our environment. It is not an easy thing to think above the plane of one's fellows, to yield to the allurements of a finer life and more exalted feeling. Few congratulate a man who, perchance, has risen above the ordinary level of orthodox thinking. At first he is wondered at, then viewed with suspicion, hated and shot at.

Have you come to cherish a higher and holier ideal of Christian living, trying to get closer to Christ's holy walk and conversation? And have you not been stung by the sneer, or chilled by the icy indifference of others who ought to walk with you? Is it not true sometimes that the just suffer most, and the song of sweetest strain comes from a bosom zoned with pain? "If any man love father or mother more than Me, he is not worthy of Me." Losing our life, however, for His sake is finding it, for though truth has these expulsive forces and will carry on this preparatory, disintegrating process until

evil is cast out, the issue will be perfect unity and triumph under Jesus Christ.

We learn from this study that the great battle is in our own souls. The foes are in our own bosoms, and there the victory is gained. The outcome of life is not measured by what we have done, but by what we are, by that grandest achievement of all—CHARACTER! If the voice of wisdom is "Know thyself," the voice of righteousness is "Rule thyself." Our faculties are untempered and undisciplined. They need to be ennobled and brought under law. The will is imperious, the imagination may be a procuress of hell, and the reign of passions within baleful and fatal to purity and peace. These animalized elements are to be subdued, circumsised. There is to be no evasion or elusion allowed. We must grapple with them and master them.

Finally, you hardly need to be told that this is a conflict in which you without Christ are powerless. In Him, however, you are complete. He will supply all your need. This is the victory which overcometh the world, even your faith. As you rely on Him, God will work in you to will and to do. Enduring as seeing Him who is invisible you become more than conqueror. Christ is your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Out of and after these disciplinary processes of earth comes the eternal weight of glory!

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

BY FRANCIS L. PATTON, D.D. [PRESBYTERIAN], PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, PRINCETON, N. J.

Forgetting the things which are behind, etc.—Phil. iii: 13.

HERE is a frank confession by the apostle of his own imperfection, a recognition of his duty to strive after perfection and a clear indication

of the method by which he would realize this aim. Let us examine these points.

1. There is here an avowal on the part of Paul of his own imperfection. "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect;" "I count not myself yet to have apprehended." Considering the circumstances, this is a remarkable confession. Think who Paul was, an eminent and honored apostle, and what he had done and suffered for the Lord who bought him, and we have, to say the least, a strong presumption, that if he dared not claim sinless perfection, nobody can. Of course it is open for anyone to make the claim and to argue, metaphysically and with logical correctness, that it is no reason for us now to be imperfect, even if Paul were in his day. If any one wishes to press this in substantiating his assertion of personal perfection, he is welcome to all the comfort such an argument may yield. Still we repeat, here is the apostle, declaring his failure to reach the goal. Think, too, that he is Paul the aged, not a youthful convert, but a worn veteran, who has suffered from bonds, from rods, from stoning, shipwreck, hunger, fastings, and from perils at home and abroad; yet, ready to be offered and heaven full in view, the prize near at hand, he declares his shortcomings. He had confessed his Lord many years before; more than that, had practically sealed his faith with his blood, but counted neither his services nor his achievements of any value. They were all as dung in his sight, determined as he was to press forward to what had not been attained. Should we not be slow to say what is out of keeping with our life when Paul takes the position he does? He, too, was one free from gross transgression; "touching the righteousness of the law blameless, a Hebrew of the Hebrews;" free, too, from the more refined and spirit-

ual forms of transgression incident to, indeed indicative of, higher natures. A profession like the ministry shuts out some forms of evil, but invites others. There is peril in pride, ambition, envy and jealousy. One may not be guilty of avarice, for there is little chance to get it even if the preacher covet money, but these other more respectable forms of sin assail even the man of God. Now Paul was singularly free from them. When he by long effort had gathered churches and nourished them in the faith, enemies sometimes came and undid what he had done, divided the people, preached contentiously and questioned the authority of Paul, but he magnanimously says, "notwithstanding I will rejoice," so long as Christ is preached. He was willing to own the superior eloquence of Apollids, and declared that he himself did not, would not use mere "excellency of speech." He rebukes partisanship, even though his own name head the party. He asks indignantly if Paul had been crucified for them and if they had been baptized into the name of Paul. He seems free, then, not only from gross sins but from those petty, paltry, and belittling transgressions that often mar the best characters. Yet, after all, he declares his sinfulness. He has a clear, theological basis of thought. There is nothing vague about his opinions. He is not one who says, "It makes no difference what you believe, if you do right."

To be "perfect" Paul saw it was necessary to be in accord with the law. What law? The law of God which is expressed in the Ten Commandments and in Christ's epitome, where we are told that our whole heart and mind and soul are to be inwardly and outwardly conformed to God. To be "perfect" is to be absolutely free from sin. What is sin? Not only the transgression of, but the want of conformity to, the law

of God. Schemes of perfection, whether declared by the Council of Trent or in more recent creeds or systems, rest on a false basis. The law is inflexible and the rigor of its demands is not to be relaxed. If it were impossible for Paul to claim that he was sinless, it is impossible for us. The Papist shortens the ladder that he may climb quicker. He reduces the area of obligation and says, for example, that if there be no overt act there is no sin in concupiscence, whereas Christ says that the thought of evil, the look even is sin. Ignorance, too, is made an excuse, and so responsibility is still further lessened, whereas even human law declares *Ignorantia juris neminem excusat*, and the demand of divine law is severer still. There is no ground for the Romish idea of merit and of added works of supererogation. We are to refrain from all evil, and we are to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. Who of us has? Try to put love into the heart by an act of volition. You cannot do it. The love of God comes from a new nature.

Paul aims to seek this lofty height, to forget the past and reach after perfection. Consciously imperfect, he seeks the state which imperfection itself suggests. The finite suggests the infinite; the relative, the absolute; down suggests up, imperfection, perfection. To his fullest measure of ability he will seek that which is above. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever or, in other words, to be perfect, even as God is perfect.

3. What is the method that Paul adopts?

He is persistent. It is not a transient resolution. We confess our failures. We make ourselves to be worse than we should be willing our friends to rate us. We determine each new year to do better. In a week the resolutions are apt to be forgotten. Further on we have a

new spasm and then fall back again, but the apostle does not allow himself this thought. Goodness like the early cloud or dew, does not satisfy his ideal. Men of business see the need of resolution, determination and continuity of effort as conditions of success. A young graduate chooses law and says with Webster, "There is room at the top, I will seek that post, for though the profession is crowded, some enter with no idea of being practitioners, and others soon drop out, while still others who near the summit of legal eminence, relax their efforts, cease study and never reach the goal. I will not be like any of these, but will surely reach the top." His zeal carries him on for years. He reaches the point of competence and of influence, looks upward, but sits down with the others and goes no further. So in other pursuits. So in the culture of Christian character. We have not the persistency of Paul. We talk of "the dead line of fifty" and forget that there is no such line drawn, except we draw it ourselves.

Again, Paul was single-eyed. "This one thing I do" was his motto. Holiness was a pursuit. It was his vocation. The industries of life teach us by analogy the value of specialized effort. Druggist, doctor, and nurse were once combined in one man. Then surgery claimed the attention of a second person, pharmacy a third, and nursing a fourth. Then surgeons specialized, one taking the eye or ear, another the throat, and so on, instead of trying to be at home in every department and detail of operative surgery. So if a man is rich enough, he may require the attention and employ the services of a dozen doctors, if his various ailments furnish a field for all these specialists. Paul was the first great specialist. He shut his eye to everything else. One thing he did. He would forget

everything in the effort to become like Christ, that he might be found at last to be not clothed in his own righteousness, but that Christ might be his righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Is not this worth living for? How feeble our endeavor. We think it is enough to go to church once on the Lord's day, to read a few verses of Scripture in the afternoon and have family worship, perhaps, once a day, and occasionally to attend the prayer meeting. This is not Paul. He is the picture of fervent zeal, his eyes ablaze, his nerves tense, pressing forward to the prize of the Lord Jesus. "Forgetting the things which are behind." I read, twenty-five years ago, a sermon by F. W. Robertson on Christian progress by forgetting the past. You had better read it and see if there is any similarity between it and this discourse.

(a) We are to forget our past sins. God has forgotten them, why should we continually recall them? He has buried them in oblivion, we feel, as it were in the sea. Shall we lament them continually? I would not extenuate or lighten the significance of transgression, but only rebuke what is morbid and unreasonable. Let every day be a new departure, handicapped, indeed, by the past, but yet awake to the new, superb possibilities which still invite us onward. Forget your own sins.

(b) Forget the sins of your neighbors. Our memory of them is sometimes more vivid than the memory of our own. Do not allow such remembered transgressions to spoil the peace and purity of your soul.

(c) Forget your attainments and your services in the past. Some are ever looking back, telling of the revivals in which long ago they labored, of the friends, the work and happiness of early days. All this is very well once in a while, say once a year, but be rather anxious for fresh conquests and achievements. Let

the zeal of the man of the world stimulate you in the nobler work of accumulating durable riches. As his horizon broadens and possibilities of increasing his wealth appear, he wishes "a little more." This gained, new chances present themselves, and "a little more" he seeks, though his stores are already large. The apostle says, "Add to your faith virtue; to virtue knowledge; to knowledge temperance; to temperance patience; to patience godliness; to godliness brotherly kindness; to brotherly kindness charity."

In closing, I may remind you that this unrest of the apostle, this spiritual disquiet of every zealous follower after perfection, hints at something yet to be revealed. This life is rudimentary. Our appetites are not fully met. The eye is not satisfied by what it sees, or the ear or any faculty in the scope of its earthly function. "I shall be satisfied," says the enraptured psalmist, "when I awake with Thy likeness!" This, sublime experience, this victory of faith is a prize, not for one, but for all who faithfully, strenuously follow Christ with persistent, single-eyed purpose. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!"

SINS, OPEN AND HIDDEN, TRAVELLING TO THE JUDGMENT.

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Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some they follow after.—1 Tim. v: 24.

THIS passage presents to our contemplation two impressive pictures. In each, a traveller is seen moving forward on the journey of life toward the Great White Throne and Him who sits upon it as the Omniscient Judge. But, in the one, the