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SERMONIC.

THE REVISION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

By H. C. POTTER, D.D., IN GRACE [EPISCOPAL] CHURCH, NEW YORK.

Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken?—1 Cor. xiv: 9.

In the letter in which these words occur a good deal is said about what the writer calls the "gift" of "tongues." It seems tolerably plain that that gift was not the mere ability to speak several languages, but something else, and more exceptional. Feeling, we say, has a language of its own; and, of all sounds, inarticulate sounds are often the most expressive. Under a sudden infliction of pain one will utter a cry, which is no more than a mere inflection of the voice, and which can be neither spelled nor written nor accurately reproduced. But it is often more expressive than a score of words, and more intensely moving. And, as in the case of some sudden experience of pain, so with one of joy, terror, apprehension, grief, remorse. Each of these passions has its own language, which yet no man has ever written.

It was such a language that the apos-

tle called the gift of tongues. The first days of the Christian Church were often days of keen and passionate ecstasy; that new evangel broke on the ear of paganism with thrilling and electric power. As men passed under its sway, stepping in a moment almost from the darkness of despair to the glory of a redeemed humanity, dumb nature in them burst into a cry of intense feeling. It was no written or *writable* language; it was no composite dialect, as some have imagined—part Hellenistic, and part Aramaic—it was the swift enthusiasm of the soul stopping for no mere words, but uttering itself in tones and outbreathings that were more expressive than any words. Such a characteristic of religious enthusiasm has not been wanting in other and later ages. The revival of religion in England under Wesley was attended by it, and something of the same thing is to be traced in that remarkable religious movement whose center was Edward Irving.

But, at best, this language—if language it can be called—was that of emotion, and not of edification. It taught nobody anything, save as it showed that he who uttered it was deeply moved;

[The first several sermons are reported in full; the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another, of his discourse.]

PETER'S ADMONITION TO SIMON THE SORCERER.

By H. R. RAYMOND, D.D., IN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARION, ALA.

Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.—Acts viii:22.

SIMON had been a notorious sorcerer. So successfully had he managed his artifices in Samaria that men of high position pronounced him "the great power of God." When Philip came thither preaching and working miracles, Simon followed the crowd and professed the Christian religion. Peter and John subsequently visited those parts, and through the laying on of their hands believers received the Holy Ghost. Simon, witnessing these results, was seized with the desire of exercising the sacred gifts as did the two apostles. It is clear enough from the whole account that his former profession of faith was not from a changed heart, but from some temporary and selfish influence. True to this unsound beginning, he offers the apostles money to confer on him the spiritual gift, hoping, no doubt, to regain his former celebrity as a worker of wonders, and to add still more to that renown. Peter answered the corrupt proposition by charging his flagrant crime upon him, and admonishing him to take steps for the removal of his guilt. Here are three lessons:—

I. THE WICKED INTENTIONS OF MEN REQUIRE PARDON.—"The thought of thine heart," sinner, may of itself record thy guilt in the sight of Him who knoweth all hearts. Simon did not obtain his vile wish. But it was in his heart, not only to gain preferment in the Church with money, but to purchase the gifts of God's free Spirit. The sin, the very essence of the sin, was there. He laid the plan, and began its execution, but was foiled. Hence Peter lays stress upon what was in the man's heart: "Thy money perisheth with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." He had been received into the fellow-

ship of the saints on a public profession of faith and by baptism; but this availed nothing so long as he was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Something was out of order in the man, and that the main thing: "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." The apostle would not allow him to console his conscience with the mere circumstance that he had failed in his attempt.

In Simon's case there was an overt act—the bribe offered; but Peter scarcely notices it, so blasphemous was the offense of the heart. Simon needed pardon, not so much for what had shocked the ears of the apostles, as for the criminality cherished in the soul.

In the new creation the Holy Ghost, therefore, makes the heart His first care. This is the citadel, which having been captured by divine grace, the whole man is gained for Christ. It is not claimed that God cares nothing for our words and acts. "He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person: the thought of foolishness is sin." To be clean, we must be cleansed from *secret* faults; and not until the thoughts of our hearts are forgiven shall we stand justified before the Lord.

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THE WICKED ARE TO SEEK PEACE WITH GOD ARE REPENTANCE AND PRAYER.—"Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God," etc. Each word, "repent" and "pray," is the symbol of a vast field of doctrinal and practical truth centering in Jesus Christ.

The foundation of duty and privilege in the spiritual kingdom is the blood of the Lamb. Christ "is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." What He has done constitutes an effective plea for pardon that each one may adopt. "By Him all that believe are justified." Such is the wonderful potency of grace that "God can be just, and the justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus."

There is another vital fact, however,

involved in our rescue from sin : it is a moral being who has sinned, and who requires the sovereign remedy of grace. The activity of his moral nature must assert itself. Though only willing in the day of God's power, he must not expect to be dragged like a stone to the fountain of cleansing, or like a brute to the altar of mercy. God's Spirit meets him in the path of sin, and this is his charge : "Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness." The sacrifice of Christ has made an open door for penitence. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins." The simple fact is this, the sinner must come to Christ.

"Repent!" was Peter's injunction to Simon. If the sinner does that in an evangelical manner, he will be found in Christ, and clothed in Christ's righteousness. If you seek life, wait for nothing ; not for feeling—not even for faith. The heart is not improved by lingering. The safe and true attitude is represented as we sing :—

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Though you are bidden to wait for nothing, yet you may be sure you have repented when you rest on Christ alone for salvation as He is offered unto you in the Gospel.

III. THE BARE POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESS SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE SINNER TO USE THIS MEANS OF GRACE.—"Pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." We will not discuss the inquiry why Peter employed this mode of entreaty. No doubt he sincerely admonished Simon to repent and pray. He speaks to you in the same faithful and serious tone, whatever be the nature or magnitude of your offenses. He tells you to use diligently the means of salvation, "if perhaps" you may be saved. In what are called worldly adventures, men are not only willing, but eager, to take their chances. If men of the world have what they

consider a bare chance of reaching the coveted prize, though a thousand chances are against it, they bend every energy toward its attainment. Can it be that the soul is not worth a venture? If your chance is but one in a myriad, seize that with all the vigor of your nature. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Though Peter said to Simon, "If perhaps," he did not intend to deny the validity of the promises, or to cast a shade of doubt over the effectiveness of faith, repentance or prayer, when properly exercised. His misgiving must have been confined to Simon's own state. He may have thought it highly improbable that Simon would ever become as hearty a better man. In accordance with the text we sing, "Venture on Him"; but, as Spurgeon has justly said, "we imply no venture of risk, but one of courage." The uncertainty of your salvation is, indeed, alarming, but it lies in your neglect of the means of grace.

If there were but the slightest possibility of Christ's being able to save you, it would be amazing stupidity in you to slight Him. It is not a possibility, but a certainty. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." He is always ready to welcome the sinner who approaches Him with true repentance and prayer.

THE CALL OF MOSES.

BY REV. EDWARD JUDSON, IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, NEWTON CENTER, MASS.

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.—Ex. iii:4.

INTRODUCTION.—Moses a conservative man. Most great men are conservative. It is the small nature that loves agitation; the great soul is calm, cautious, retiring. But beware of getting him in a corner. He will prove a dangerous antagonist. Luther did not start out with the idea of convulsing Europe with