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The power of Christianity

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The Power of Christianity.

There is a wonderful transforming power in the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. It softens the hardest heart; it subdues the most obstinate and perverse will; it enlarges the narrow selfish soul, so that the man brought fully under its precious influences is made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things pass away, and all things become new. This is true when applied to bodies of men, as well as to individuals; to nations as well as to communities. What a world we would have if the purifying & elevating influences of Christianity should permeate society; go into families and rule parents & children, go into the body politic and govern rulers and subjects, go into

the whole world and save all peoples.

In the older times when the Seers of Jehovah looked down the line of the future, they saw no vision so glorious as the reign of the Messiah, when "wars should cease," and when there should be "nothing to hunt in all God's holy mountain." The most glowing terms were employed and the most striking and expressive symbols were used to depict the glories of that

1. The blood thirsty wolf shall be folded with the harmless lamb; the confiding kid shall repose beside the ravenous leopard; the gentle cow and the cruel bear shall feed at the same pail. Who would not be on earth when this reign of peace and goodwill shall be established.

How abundantly is this confirmed by the declarations of the New Testament Scriptures! "Peace on earth goodwill to men," was

no empty announcement to usher in the reign of the Messiah. The whole history of Christianity, - when rightly understood & practised, is a record of such grand results. The change is wonderful. Men are brought from "darkness to light"; they are won away from the "power of Satan to the power of God"; they are made "new creatures in Christ Jesus". They were once the servants of sin, - dead in sin but are now alive unto God. But are these testimonies sustained by the facts? Has this been the blessed fruit of the religion of Christ on earth? It is a very clear case that no one can be produced who has ever been made worse by Christianity. - It has never made a drunkard out of a sober man; it has never made a villain out of an honest man; it has never made a brute of a father and husband out of a kind and provident one.

I do not know that a skeptic or scoffer has ever attempted to produce such a witness against Christianity: "By their fruits ye shall know them." And while it is true that many bad men have assumed the livery of Christ to accomplish some selfish wicked purpose, it is not true that the heavenly "vine" has ever borne the poisonous fruit of hell.

But what multitudes of men and women have been picked up by the hand of grace and made new creatures! Christianity - has gone down to the very bottom of society - and lifted up the degraded and wretched; has put upon them the garb of respectability, - has made them honored members of society - and a blessing to their race. In no way perhaps has this friend of man exhibited its power for good more than in softening down the harshness of the human heart,

and infusing a kindly loving, ^{and} forgiving Spirit. And if the religion of Christ fails to reclaim the brutish cruel nature then the case may be set down to be utterly hopeless.

Perhaps no instance is on record in which this transforming power is more forcibly manifested than ~~in~~ that of Paul. Before his conversion he seems to have been the most bitter persecutor that Christianity had. He stood by and hissed on the rabble who stoned the heavenly minded Stephen to death. He went about from house to house hunting up innocent men and women who had never said a harmful word of him, and brought them to prison and to death. Not satisfied with this harmful work at home, he sought authority - to go abroad to strange cities - tearing parents away from their children.

and friend from friend that his appetite for blood may be satiated. And when they were put to death "he gave his voice against them" and stood by and smiled on his bloody work. This was Paul before his conversion. What kind of man was he afterward? He had his enemies, hard hearted and cruel as he had been himself. They swore vengeance against him. Forty of them took a secret oath that they would neither eat nor drink till they murdered him. He was stoned, beat with rods, imprisoned, and chained. He suffered at the hands of his enemies all that hellish malice could employ. This was after his conversion — after he had been renewed in the spirit of his mind. Do you ever hear of his plotting harm of his enemies now? Does he at any time breathe a spirit of revenge

Does he wish these persecutors harm?

Far from it. He says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Like the dying Jesus he would pray "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do". But did not Paul manifest a spirit when he prayed against the troubles of the Church? — "I would that they were cut off that trouble you." Some think this prayer that they might be cut off means that they might be destroyed or removed out of the way as God might determine. If this be the sense then it only teaches that it is right for Christians to pray that those who are standing in the way of the truth, & who are leading others astray, if they will or be converted

or cease from their evil doings, may
 to by Providence taken out of the way.
 But it is thought by others that all this
 apostle meant is that they might
 be cut off from Church fellowship.
 He felt that he would rather have
 them out of the Church than in it
 doing harm. And he was right.
 In either case there was no
 personal ill will. These men
 did say hard things of Paul; but
 that was nothing to him. It was the
 injury they were doing to the
 cause of Christ and those in
 whose welfare he was so much
 interested, which promoted
 his feeling and his prayer to
 have them "cut off."

What a curse is a quarrel-
 some schismatic man still in
 the family of the faithful! It be-
 comes sometimes necessary to deal

with these offenders; yet like Paul
 we must be careful to indulge
 no personal ill will, but rather
 have regrets that it must be
 done. The teachings of our Lord
 Jesus lifted the apostle above
 those feelings of hate & cruelty
 that he had cherished before
 his conversion. He now taught
 and practiced "If thine enemy
 hunger, feed him; if he thirst
 give him drink; And when he
 was reviled he reviled not
 again but like his Lord com-
 mitted himself to Him who judges
 righteously. We have only looked
 at the power of this soul conquer-
 ing Christianity as it is seen in
 the subjugation of the passions
 of "anger, wrath and malice"

Our thought may be carried into
other fields of struggle & triumph.
May the spirit of the Master so
possess & influence us that we
too, will seek the good of those
who hate & despisefully use us.