Psalms 14:1 (J.H.S.) 51593

Things New and Old: Volume 31, Infidelity a Rotten Plank: How the Righteous Judgment of God ... (14:1)

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 14:1); or rather, “No God;” in other words, it is not want of understanding, but moral corruption, the state of the affections, that leads to atheism. The impenitent sinner desires that there should be no God to bring him into judgment, and thus seeks to persuade himself that there is none. He “that doeth evil hateth the light; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (margin, discovered). He loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. And hence Psalm 14 goes on to describe the moral condition of the man who has succeeded in persuading himself that there is “no God.” “They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.” I have been led to these reflections by the perusal of an article bearing the title at the head of this paper, and which was itself extracted from “A Narrative of Parish Work.”

The above title is given, as the expression was used by a christian woman in conversation with an atheist, to whom she said, “You will find infidelity a rotten plank some day.”

This man had accosted her in very offensive language, interlarded with oaths and curses. He had formerly been a religious professor, and was well acquainted with the “letter” of scripture. The woman whom he had addressed, having seriously expostulated with him on his profanity, added a solemn reference to the name of God. He replied, first by a denial of His existence, and then with an impious challenge to his Creator to prove His existence by “smashing himself to pieces.” These words were deliberately repeated; and in louder tones, as the woman whom he addressed fled in terror from his presence, whilst the blasphemer called upon her to take his message to “her God.”

On the very next morning, which was Sunday, this wicked man was with some of his infidel companions, on his way to a neighboring town, in his usual health and spirits, when he suddenly fell to the ground with a shriek. It was afterward ascertained that the whole of one side of his body was completely powerless, which of course accounted for his sudden fall, the attack being one of hemiplegia, or palsy of one half of the voluntary muscles of the body—a disease well known to physicians.

Although no word was spoken, divine power was as really in exercise as in the case of the impotent man in John 5, whom Jesus cured by a word, and told to take up his bed and walk. Each of these acts of divine power, testify to the mercy of God, though the one apparently resulted only in restoring to bodily health, and the other, though at first judicial in its character, resulted in spiritual and eternal blessing.

To return to our narrative. The poor stricken blasphemer was carried home, and on reaching it, immediately requested that an evangelical clergyman, whom he had formerly known, might be sent for. On the arrival of the minister, his first words were, “Oh! there is a God—there is a God—the Lord be merciful to me a sinner.’ The christian minister spoke to him of the grace of the Lord Jesus, and before he left his bedside the poor penitent found peace. The passages of scripture especially used by the Spirit of God for blessing to his soul, were 1 John 1:7, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,” and John 6:37, “ Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” He died in a few days, constantly rejoicing in the Lord, but none of his infidel friends came near him.

I omitted to mention above that, in the impious message to the Almighty, he had defied Him to strike him down as the woman’s “old Bible” said He had Saul of Tarsus; and there were certainly some points of resemblance between the cases—sudden and overwhelming judgment in each, followed by a marvelous display of “sovereign grace o’er sin abounding.”

May the Lord graciously grant that the striking exemplification of the truth which this narrative affords, that His all-seeing eye marks the footsteps of the transgressor, and that “there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves,” may not be without fruit for His glory, and the conviction and conversion of sinners.

J. H. S.