

# THE PULPIT TREASURY.

AN EVANGELICAL MONTHLY.

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VOL. III.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY, 1886.

NO. 10.

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## → SERMONS ←

### THE CHRISTIAN'S COMPLETED LIFE.

BY REV. G. M. MATHEWS, PASTOR OF SUMMIT STREET UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH,  
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*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.—Ps. xvii., 15.*

MEN often speak and live better than they know.

It is not probable that the author of these words fully comprehended the import of his own language. It is prophetic and far-reaching in significance. When interpreted in the light of the New Testament, it brings blessed assurance and consolation to all who are in Christ.

The text suggests:

I. The source and nature of Christian contentment. Soul-rest comes from God alone. "Come unto Me," said Jesus, "and I will give you rest." Nothing can afford the soul repose save its union with Christ in God. In vain do we look to the world for satisfaction. Do we seek riches? They serve to intensify our discontent by increasing our longing for more. Do we court earthly honors? They are but empty bubbles that rapidly vanish and leave the seeker in cruel disappointment. Do we depend upon earthly wisdom? Though it yield great pleasure to its possessor, yet each acquisition of knowledge opens to the student a larger field for exploration and awakens in him an insatiable thirst for the unknown.

Says Swinnoek, "Men that are in the valley think if they were at the top of such a hill they should touch the heavens. Men that are in the bottom of poverty or disgrace or pain, think, if they could get up to such a mountain,

## THE CONFESSIONS OF AUGUSTINE.

BY PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., LL.D.

Few books have exerted a greater influence than the Confessions of Augustine, the greatest and best of the Latin fathers, who is held in equal esteem and affection by the Catholic and Protestant Churches. Among religious autobiographies they hold the first rank. In them this remarkable man, endowed with a lofty genius and a burning heart, lays open his inner life before God and the world, and at the same time the life of God in his own soul, which struggled for the mastery and at last obtained it. A more honest book was never written. He conceals nothing, he palliates nothing. Like a faithful witness against himself, standing at the bar of the omniscient Judge, he tells the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Like King David in the fifty-first Psalm, he confesses the aberrations of his youth with unfeigned sorrow and grief, yet in the joyous consciousness of forgiveness. To his sense of sin corresponds his sense of grace; they are the controlling ideas of his spiritual life and of his system of theology. The deeper the descent into the hell of self-knowledge, the higher the ascent to the knowledge of God.

Augustine might have kept the secret of his youthful aberrations; posterity knows them only from his pen. He committed no murder nor adultery, like the King of Israel; he never denied his Saviour like Peter; he was no persecutor of the Church like Paul; his sins preceded his conversion and baptism, and they were compatible with the highest honor in heathen society. But his Christian experience quickened his sense of guilt, and he told the story for his own humiliation and for the glory of God's redeeming grace.

The Confessions are a solemn soliloquy before the throne of the Searcher of hearts within the hearing of the world. They take us into the deepest recesses of religious experience, and rise to the lofty summit of theological thought. They exhibit a mind intensely religious and at the same

time intensely speculative. His prayers are meditations, and his meditations are prayers; and both shine and burn like Africa's tropical sun. They reflect, as Guizot says, "a unique mixture of passion and gentleness, of authority and sympathy, of largeness of mind and logical rigor." Dr. Shedd ranks them among those rare autobiographies in which "the ordinary experiences of human life attain to such a pitch of intensity, and such a breadth, range and depth as to strike the reader with both a sense of familiarity and a sense of strangeness. It is his own human thought and human feeling that he finds expressed; and yet it is spoken with so much greater clearness, depth and energy than he is himself capable of, or than is characteristic of the mass of men, that it seems like the experience of another sphere and another race of beings."

Even in a psychological and literary point of view the Confessions of Augustine rank among the most interesting of autobiographies, and are not inferior to Rousseau's "Confessions" and Goethe's "Truth and Fiction"; while in religious value there is no comparison between them. For while the French philosopher and the German poet are absorbed in the analysis of their own self, and dwell upon it with satisfaction, the African father goes into the minute details of his sins and follies with intense abhorrence of sin, and rises beyond himself to the contemplation of divine mercy which delivered him from its degrading slavery. The former wrote for the glory of man, the latter for the glory of God. Augustine lived in an age when the Western Roman empire was fast approaching dissolution, and the Christian Church, the true city of God, was being built on its ruins. He was not free from the defects of an artificial and degenerate rhetoric; nevertheless he rises not seldom to the height of passionate eloquence, and scatters gems of the rarest beauty. He was master of the antithetical power, the

majesty, and melody of the language of imperial Rome. Many of his sentences have passed into proverbial use and become commonplaces in theological literature.

Next to Augustine himself, his mother attracts the attention and excites the sympathy of the reader. She walks like a guardian angel from heaven through his book until her translation to that sphere. How pure and strong and enduring her devotion to him and his devotion to her! It is impossible to read of Monnica without a profounder regard for women and a feeling of gratitude for Christianity, which raised her to so high a position.

The Confessions were written about A. D. 397, ten years after Augustine's conversion.

The historical part closes with his conversion and with the death of his mother. The book contains much that can be fully understood only by the theologian and the student of history; and the last four of the thirteen chapters are devoted to subtle speculations about the nature of memory, eternity, time, and creation, which far transcend the grasp of the ordinary reader. Nevertheless it was read with great interest and profit in the time of the writer, and ever since in the original Latin and numerous translations in various languages. In all that belongs to elevation, depth and emotion, there are few books so edifying and inspiring, and so well worthy of careful study, as Augustine's Confessions.—*Sel.*

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## KEY TO BIBLE UNITY.

### SUMMARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PLAN.

BY PRESIDENT D. S. GREGORY, D.D., LAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY, ILLINOIS.

#### No. V.

#### B. THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The Divine Religion in its completed form, given in *two stages* which present God's twofold work of making ready the Gospel and of giving it to the world.

##### FIRST STAGE.

The Historical Introduction of the Gospel into the World—by the Advent, Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ, related in *the four Gospels*, which present Redemption for all mankind.

1. MATTHEW—the Gospel for the Jew, the chosen man of the Old Dispensation.

2. MARK—the Gospel for the Roman, the man of law, action and universal empire.

3. LUKE—the Gospel for the Greek, the man of reason and taste and of universal humanity.

The three Missionary Gospels, preached to the three great races that made up the world, called out the Christians (so-called first at Antioch), Jewish, Roman and Greek, who made up the early Church. Hence:

4. JOHN—the Gospel for the Christian, the man of faith in Christ.

##### SECOND STAGE.

The Development and Embodiment of the principles of the Gospel, or Divine Religion, in the history, doctrinal belief, and hopes of the Christian Church. This gives *three Phases*.

##### FIRST PHASE.

The providential unfolding of the Gospel in the early history of the Apostolic Church—contained in *the Acts of the Apostles*.

It relates the history of the spread of the Gospel from the three great Centres—Jerusalem, Antioch and Rome—of the three great Races—Jews, Greeks and Romans.

1st. From the Centre at Jerusalem—under the Twelve, but especially Peter and John. (Chapters i.—xii.)

2d. From the Centre at Antioch—under Paul and Barnabas, aided by Mark and Luke. (Chapters xiii.—xx.)

3d. From the Centre at Rome—under Paul. (Chapters xxi.—xxviii.)

##### SECOND PHASE.

The doctrinal unfolding of the prin-