

“BECAUSE I LOVE IT SO.”



ONE evening William Hone said to an excellent Christian lady, from whose memoirs of him we extract the story, “I have spent a delightful day in Norwood” (then retaining many of its wild wood-walks, and much of its lovely beauty), “and I have stood humbled before a child. I saw a little girl sitting on a low stool at a cottage door, reading a book which lay in her lap. I said to her, ‘My little girl, what are you reading?’ ‘My Bible, sir.’ ‘What, are you getting your lesson for your Sunday-school?’ ‘No, sir.’ ‘Why are you reading it, then?’ ‘Because I love it so.’ I stood humbled before that child.”

The story derives special interest from William Hone’s character and history. For the greater part of his life he was an avowed infidel, full, as he him-

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self most humbly says, of bitter enmity to the religion of Christ. He was an able writer; and in the days of his unbelief he published several works, which had a large circulation, with the intention of bringing the Bible into contempt.

The incident we have narrated is a significant token of his altered state of mind. His subsequent life, we may add, was in perfect keeping with what he said that evening. He had become a sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and shortly afterwards he avowed his faith by union with a Christian church. Thenceforward till his death he maintained a consistent profession; and to the last he was sustained and gladdened by the hopes of the gospel. Some lines which he wrote on the fly-leaf of his Bible, one birthday, will serve as a further illustration of his altered sentiments:—

"The proudest heart that ever beat
Has been subdued in me;
The wildest will that ever rose,
To scorn Thy Word or aid Thy foes,
Is quelled, my God, by Thee!
Thy will, and not my will, be done:
My heart be ever Thine!
Confessing Thee, the mighty 'Word,'
I hail Thee, Christ, my God, my Lord,
And make Thy name my sign."

Of all books in the world, there is none which has won for itself such deep and ardent love as the Bible. Little children and grey-headed men, poor and rich, people who were only just able to read it and men of the largest culture, have all loved the Bible, and have read it because they loved it. Men too, like William Hone, who once hated it, have learnt to regard it with loving admiration. Thousands have even loved it so dearly that they were willing to die rather than give up reading it.

They were right. No book has such claims on men's warmest love. Suffer us, reader, to ask for it yours.

We might speak of the light it sheds on man's early history, of its wonderful incidents, of its striking delineations of character, and of its beautiful poetry; and on these accounts we might insist that it deserves to be praised most highly.

But here is its great claim on your affection: it is a message of infinite love to lost men, and therefore to you. It tells you how God loved a lost world—so loved it as to give for its salvation His only-begotten Son. It tells you of the surpassing love of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful life is that of Jesus! What mighty works He wrought! what wise and loving words He spoke! How tenderly pitiful He was to the distressed and the broken-hearted! And with what unwearying self-denial He went about doing good! But here is something more wonderful still: in order that He might do all this—though He was God's own Son—He, of His own free-will, took our nature; and at the last—still of His own free-will—He endured for us the shameful death of the cross.

Again, the Bible tells you what a "great salvation" it is which the Lord Jesus thus accomplished; that it includes free forgiveness, the renewal of the heart by the power of God's Holy Spirit, the enjoyment of God's fatherly love, strength to overcome all evil, a glorious resurrection, an everlasting home in heaven.

Then what "exceeding great and precious promises" it contains—promises meeting all our need, for life, and death, and eternity.

Is there any book, then, respecting which you should say with such deep feeling, "I love it so"?

If you thus love it, you will read it. If a man really loves any book whatever, he will not lock it up in his chest or lay it on his shelf, and leave it there unread: it will lie on his table or somewhere else close at hand; and its well-worn pages will testify that it is often read. Let this be the proof that you

love your Bible, that you read it every day, diligently, and with earnest prayer. The more you thus read it, the more you will love it.

If you love it, you will obey it. David loved it, and because he loved it he took it for the guide of his life. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." "If ye know these things," said the Lord Jesus, "happy are ye if ye do them."

If a man really loves a book, he will talk about it, and praise it, and defend it when others speak lightly of it, and try to persuade men to read it for themselves. Thus show that you love your Bible. The world needs it. No book besides can guide lost men to heaven. Talk about it with your children, and neighbours, and friends, and do what you can to send it to the ends of the earth.

If you thus love the Bible, it will, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, be the great joy of your life. It will guide you in all your ways, will purify your heart, will be the source of comfort to you in your sorest troubles, will make you victorious over death, and will conduct you to heaven.

How have you treated the Bible? Have you neglected it, disobeyed it, spoken against it? Before you speak another word against it, we beseech you to read it, and to read it with prayer for light from heaven. If you do that sincerely, we are sure you will feel that you have been greatly wrong. But you will find forgiveness for all you have thus done, through the Lord Jesus Christ, if you mourn for your sin with true penitence. Then, forgiven, resolve, like William Hone in his later years, not only that you will read your Bible for yourself, but that you will do your utmost to build up the faith which once you sought to destroy.