

CHRIST AND SOCIETY.

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TO
The Congregation
of the Parish of the Park, Glasgow,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED,

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF A MINISTRY
OF NEARLY TWENTY-FOUR YEARS,
DURING WHICH, OWING TO THE KINDNESS OF ITS MEMBERS,
NOT AN INCIDENT HAS OCCURRED TO MAR
A HARMONY
CHARACTERIZED BY PERFECT CONFIDENCE
AND WARM PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP

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IS SOCIETY CHRISTIANIZED?

IS SOCIETY CHRISTIANIZED ?

“Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?”—JOHN vii. 19.

“**N**ONE of you keepeth the law.” This was perhaps the very last accusation to which the Jews would have pleaded guilty. That which filled their thought and their conversation, and to which they devoted themselves soul and body, was above all else the endeavour to keep the law strictly, precisely, continually. Every letter of that law had formed the subject of endless discussion ; every prescribed ceremony had been a battlefield over which scrupulous consciences had contended ; the ingenuity of the most acute minds had exhausted itself in discovering every possible interpretation of its precepts ; the highest honours were reserved for those who most accurately observed the minutiae of custom and worship. Reverence for the law, for the historic Church, and for Moses the great lawgiver, was not merely the religion—it was the very passion—of the nation. And yet it was to these very people Christ addressed the sweeping assertion, “None of you keepeth the law.”

Not once or twice, but constantly, does He repeat the charge, and that in various forms. There was scarcely a Mosaic institution which He does not describe as perverted by them from its true meaning. Their

fasting had become an instrument of pride, instead of a means to humility. Their payment of tithes, instead of being a confession that all they had belonged to God, had been treated as if, by supererogative payments, they had made God their debtor. Their Sabbatarianism had changed what was meant to be a blessing to man into a cruel tyranny. Their sacrifices, instead of being a witness to self-surrender, had become a substitute for self-surrender. Ritual had taken the place of the moral; traditionalism obscured the spirit of the Scriptures; and conventionalism had supplanted directness and sincerity. Standing in the midst of a society the very breath of whose life was theology and ecclesiasticism, He tells them that they do not know God at all, and that all their painfully scrupulous worship had little to do with true religion. He prefers Roman centurions and tax-gatherers, and a despised Syro-Phœnician woman—Gentiles and heathen though they were—nay, even the outcast publicans and harlots of Jerusalem, to the recognised leaders of the then “religious world.” He found a spirit in the one that did not exist in the other—the elements of true religion in the broken-heartedness of the so-called irreligious which He failed to discover in the so-called religious. For the popular religion of the time appeared to His eye utterly irreligious. The doctrines and institutions which were intended to promote true religion had smothered its spirit, and perverted it from its purpose.

We need not be surprised at the effect which such attacks produced. Proud pharisees, accurate scribes, great doctors, priests and levites, and the multitude of their admirers and imitators, could not but have

been shocked at the daring blows which seemed levelled against everything they deemed sacred. No wonder that they regarded this young prophet as a dangerous innovator, a blasphemer, a rebel against Moses and the law of God, a destroyer of the holy Temple. Every received propriety was outraged in their eyes.

Yet this innovator professed to be the truest conservative. Not one jot or tittle of the law would He abate, while He swept away the rubbish of misunderstanding which men had heaped over it. Attacking doctrines which had been stamped as authoritative and many a custom which had been regarded as of divine sanction, branding the phraseologies which had passed for current coin as worthless metal, He at the same time exhibited the pure gold, the eternal spirit of religion. Humility, gentleness, justice, mercy, supreme love to God and love to man—these were religion. In so far as dogma or ecclesiasticism fostered these ends, they were of God; when they became substitutes for these realities, they were of Satan.

The tendencies which Christ condemned in the Jerusalem of His day have been often found in the Church since, and are perhaps finding their counterpart in the Church now.

The question must often occur to him who reads the Gospels, and regards Christianity as it is exemplified in the lives of its professors, *Whether the religion we see around us is the religion which Christ intended to establish among men.* Is society in this so-called Christian country founded on Christian principles? To what extent have we made proof of those principles, or tried to work out the problems of daily life in harmony with them?

In order to get an answer to such questions, let us take a glance at some of the broad features which are presented by our social condition, and see how far the doctrine of Christ harmonizes with these features. I assume that, as a whole, we profess, in these British Islands, to be Christian people. There are, of course, many who make no such profession; but, as a whole, society in this country is constituted of persons who profess to be disciples and followers of Christ. And if it is asked, What is the religion of Christ? we may take the Sermon on the Mount as the briefest expression of His requirements in relation to character. It is the plainest exposition of what the Christian spirit ought to be—that spirit which should be the fruit of His atonement and forgiveness, and of the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost. Giving, then, full allowance for the vivid style in which, after Oriental fashion, the truth is put, we cannot fail to notice, even on the most general interpretation, the uncompromising character of its demands.

Humility, meekness, intense love of righteousness, mercy, peacefulness, sincerity form the elementary notes from which the full harmony of the discourse is sounded. Goodness, which is to be like a permeating salt in the world; goodness, which is to be manifested by good works that are to shine in their inherent beauty, like the candle set on the candlestick; a love towards the brother man, which cannot brook causeless anger or an unworthy thought; forgiveness to the uttermost; purity, not merely of life, but of desire; such high honour that no oath is required to confirm the simple Yea, yea, or Nay, nay; unquestioning generosity, embracing the unthankful as well as the thankful; freedom from that rancour of

party which refuses to salute any but friends; such an absence of ostentation that alms and fasting and prayer should be in secret, and known to God alone; the unworldliness which cares primarily for character, righteousness, truth and God, and regards money and success, and the questions, What shall we eat or drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed as of very secondary importance; the honest charity which refuses to judge a brother, or to take the mote out of his eye while the beam is in our own; that habit of life, in short, which Christ calls the essence of all religion, the spirit of the law and the prophets, to do to others as we would be done by;—if these and such like precepts form the religion of Christ as manifested in life and character, then I think the question is very forcibly suggested, Is the Christianity of modern society the Christianity of the great Founder of our faith?

Let us apply the test to certain spheres of life.

If we commence with the Ecclesiastical World, we are free to acknowledge that there is great zeal and an extraordinary expenditure of energy by different parties on behalf of what each terms “the truth,” or “the Church,” thereby meaning those aspects of truth, or that branch of the Church, with which they have identified themselves. But if Christ’s religion is in its spirit that which is described in the Sermon on the Mount, we may entertain some doubts as to whether it has been advanced or retarded by ecclesiasticism, as distinct from the beneficent work which all Churches more or less promote. When we estimate the bitter quarrelling about the mint and anise of government, combined with neglect of mutual fair-play; the straining out of the gnats of observance and the swallowing

of camel-loads of uncharity ; the outrageous importance attached to shibboleths, and the practice of intolerance, jealousy, pride, and the petty trickeries of party politics, we wonder whether there is no ground for Christ addressing priest and presbyter now as He did the old Jewish ecclesiastics—"Have not I given you the law of humility, charity, and righteousness ; whence this strife and evil-speaking in the name of the religion I founded ? None of you keepeth my law."

Or if, passing to Social Life, and overlooking many immoralities and sins of luxury, we regard in the light of the Christian ideal the separations which divide class from class, rich from poor, we must experience a sense of antithesis rather than an approach to the realisation of that ideal. For the spirit of Christianity is essentially socialistic—not the socialism of the Nihilist assassin or of the Communist *pétroleuse*—but the socialism of the New Testament, which would have us, recognising the brotherhood of man, to come under the burdens of others in order to elevate and bless. We, however, have left it to Red Republicans and visionaries to preach in the name of Atheism a wild travesty of the truth committed to us by Christ, and God is visiting the sin of our neglect by the threatened outburst of many a slumbering social volcano.

Or again, taking a broad view of the Commercial World, and assuming that it is composed chiefly of men professing to be governed by the principles which Christ inculcated, we may ask how far there is a proportionate importance attached by them, such as He would have them attach, to that kingdom whose primary reward is righteousness, and that other kingdom whose primary rewards are success, money, and

the power which wealth bestows ? How far can it be said of the way in which so-called Christian men, as a whole, act in business, that "they seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness," not giving the foremost place in their hearts to profit, but to what is just and true ? Is there conformity in all things to what is honest, or conformity to the principles which control competition, whether strictly honest or not ? Is it first the claims of honour, and then success, or is it first success, and then as much honour as may be convenient or usual in the circumstances ? Would it not, in like manner, be difficult to make Christ's precepts harmonize with the attitude in which employer and employed mutually stand ? In short, is society founded upon what Christ taught, or is it founded upon selfishness ?

Such a review, however brief, of some of the features which the worlds of Ecclesiastical, Social, and Commercial life present, may suggest a few painful reflections. I do not deny that there are large exceptions to be made, or that the tone of society as a whole is in many respects becoming better. But the fault of the present time, as it has been the fault of other ages of the Church, is the neglect of the all-embracing character of the demand of Christ, and that the true measure of the advance of His kingdom, as distinct from any ecclesiasticism, is to be found in the extent to which the spirit of Christ is carried into every sphere of interest and duty. For while modern society is certainly to some extent chargeable with such breaches of Christ's law as have been sketched, yet were society resolved into its component parts, we would discover a great deal that is apparently sincerely religious in the individuals who so compose it. The

ecclesiastic who leads the party warfare, who is a conscientious hater of the rival sect, and is as unscrupulous in the furtherance of his "side" as any wire-puller in secular politics, may be a man earnest in prayer, the subject of deep religious emotion, and really anxious to serve Christ. The man of wealth, and the lady of rank and fashion, who live as separate from those of a lower social scale as the high-caste Brahmin does from the Pariah, may be full of a certain luxurious religious sentimentalism, and zealous for the specialties of their favourite Church or worship. The merchant whose mind is absorbed with gain, and whose transactions may not always be quite "regular" if tested by the standard of unblemished honour, would not only be indignant if any doubt were thrown on his Christian character, but, as the world has frequently seen, he may be a religious professor, famous for his long prayers and strict observances. These are not necessarily hypocrites, if it is thereby meant that they are consciously acting a part. The causes lie deeper. One of these causes may be found in the false distinction between the religious and the secular, which makes so many people act as if they were two departments, the one somehow connected with the next world, and having appropriate sentiments for certain occasions, and the other belonging to this life, with principles suitable for things as they are. They say, "Business is business, and religion is religion," or, "If the Church has its duties, it is also necessary to maintain one's position." And in this way religion becomes divorced from its true function as an influence which ought to elevate and consecrate all duties by the spirit which is carried into all.

THE SINS OF CHEAPNESS.

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THE SINS OF CHEAPNESS.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"—ISAIAH lviii. 6.

AS a rule, there is nothing really cheap. When a price is charged which cannot remunerate the seller of the article were it genuine, the buyer has paid full value for the imitation. He has not procured what is cheap, but has bought goods that are necessarily adulterated, and probably dear at the money. Or, if he has received them at a rate which is really below their legitimate value, some one else must have paid the difference. The underpaid workman and the poor seamstress have contributed, out of their flesh and blood, to the "bargain" over which the purchaser may be congratulating himself. These two principles—adulteration and underpaid labour—are the chief "sins of cheapness."

I do not question the fact that there may be undue profits in certain classes of business, and a cheapness which, comparatively, may be perfectly legitimate. The Co-operative Stores represent a movement produced by a belief in the excessive character of the profits reaped by retail dealers; and the success which has attended that movement, has proved the possibi-

lity of supplying genuine articles at a comparatively low charge. The credit system, and that of ready-money payments, must also affect the cheapness or dearness of the sales.

Nor do I question the benefits which have followed the legitimate cheapening of fabrics by other appliances, whereby the person of limited income can in the present day procure many beautiful and useful articles that were formerly beyond his resources. The use of machinery, and the wideness of the field opened up for the disposal of products, have placed within the reach of our artisans many objects which were reserved only for the wealthier classes among our ancestors. These are achievements which properly excite congratulation.

But it is not of the bright side, but of the dark ; not of what is legitimate, but of the immoral and cruel elements in the cheap trade of the country, that we are now treating.

The economical aspects of the question are connected with the law of Supply and Demand, and it may be asserted, that as long as the demand exists there will be the supply, let philanthropy moralise as it may. This is quite true ; but there are methods by which the action of the law of Supply and Demand is modified, and can be modified still further, in reference to many branches of trade. Legislation interferes with that law when it forbids the employment of women and children, or when it limits the hours of labour. Combinations of workmen limit cheapness of production in other directions. And the demand for cheapness may be also modified by a healthy tone of public opinion. In the event of other and more directly coercive

methods being found impossible, the force of opinion may affect the evils complained of, even more powerfully than external pressure. At all events, the first step towards amelioration is to inform the public and thereby arouse conscience.

Among the many evils connected with illegitimate cheapness, it will be sufficient for our purpose to select two: (1) the dishonesty it induces in the manufacturer and retailer by tempting him to meet the demand for what is cheap by supplying "shoddy" and adulterated imitations; and (2) the cruelty it entails on large classes of workpeople through inadequate remuneration.

1. There are probably no persons more ready to confess the evils of cheapness than manufacturers and salesmen. They know too well the position in which they are placed. They are pressed on all sides by competition, and they cannot hope for a market except by conforming to the prevalent custom. They consequently become involved in a system which is essentially immoral. The trickeries by which inferior material is mixed with that quantity of genuine which may serve to conceal the adulteration; the ingenuity whereby machinery is brought to imitate the strong products of handicraft, while actually supplying what is thriftless; the methods by which worthless fabrics are thickened into the consistency of solid and valuable goods—these and numerous devices of a similar character are only too familiar to those who are intimately acquainted with many branches of our manufactures. And, following on this vicious system of manufacture, we have the no less vicious system of sale; from the lying advertisements that proclaim the

“giving away at an enormous sacrifice” of goods called genuine, but known to be worth not one fraction more than is charged, down to the petty falsehoods of warehouse employees, who have to support the imposition by personal assurances.

It is easy to denounce as unprincipled the whole system of “cheap sales,” from the inventor and maker of the adulteration down to its vendor. But it may be asked whether the blame is to be laid entirely at their doors? Are the manufacturers and merchants alone responsible for evils which are eating as a canker into the commerce of the country? Is the salesman who, with plausible tongue, palms off the counterfeit—sheltering himself under what is termed “the custom of the trade”—to be alone chargeable with the immoralities which that custom has created? Must the tissue of frauds, daily perpetrated in factory and warehouse, be imputed solely to those immediately engaged in them? Assuredly not. If you were to question these persons they would tell you that it is the public demand which has forced competition to such a degree that it is impossible to conduct business in any other way without incurring ruin; that were they to act differently they would lose their market; that the public insists on having goods at a certain price, and as the genuine article cannot be so supplied, they are compelled to give what may best imitate it.

Without accepting such excuses as at all exonerating those who make them, we are led to attribute at least an equal share of the guilt to the public which is thus “art and part” in the commission of the evils condemned.

The craving for what is cheap arises from many

causes, but is to be traced chiefly to the influence of an age of great wealth, and to the spirit of social ambition pushing one class closely on the heels of another. It undoubtedly springs sometimes from a lurking unwillingness to spend the price which the purchase of genuine articles would render necessary. No one who has ever watched the crowd of carriages congregated near a fashionable Co-operative Store, or which presses towards the portals of some warehouse where a "cheap sale" is going on, can doubt that the desire for cheapness is not confined to those whose limited means compel them to be economical. We do not allude to the commentary afforded on the adage *noblesse oblige*, as we notice how those, who ostensibly can so well afford the fair profits which the regular shopkeeper is entitled to expect, put themselves to no small inconvenience in order to secure a petty saving. These, however, are questions with which we have at present nothing to do. We allude to the spectacle, because it shows the existence in society of a widespread desire for cheapness. It has become even fashionable. There are wealthy people nowadays who delight in hunting after "bargains," and who are as much elated at the purchase of a cheap article as a sportsman over a successful day after "big game." But this habit arises from other causes. The love of display which permeates all classes; the ambition to appear "like other people"—that is, like people in a higher social scale or richer than themselves; the imperious demands fashion makes on every rank; these are largely the causes why so many are willing to purchase at a low rate the shoddy imitations of what the wealthier classes can alone command.

We have no hesitation therefore in convicting the public which insists on having everything "cheap" of an equal share of the guilt which falls on the unprincipled trader, who determines to win his profits let the method cost him morally what it may. Nay, if the vendors seem culpable, there appears something even worse in the public when, assuming the airs of high principle, it denounces the dishonesties of trade, forgetting that it is its own demand which has promoted the system of trickery. If the merchant is guilty of practical falsehood, assuredly the runners after "bargains" are his accomplices. It ought therefore to be a matter as binding upon Christian people as truth itself, to insist on honest transactions, and to pay honest prices, and to do their best to put down the villainy of lying advertisements, and the knavery of adulteration.

2. But "cheap sales" have another aspect that is full of cruelty. We have already said, that if it is possible sometimes to obtain articles below their intrinsic value, it can be accomplished only by some one else having had to pay the difference. The "some one else" is unfortunately a member of a class which is helpless. Legislation protects, and trades unions also protect, the rights of labour in many branches of trade; but there are other branches, where cheapness is reached only at the cost of terrible human suffering.

Many years have passed since Hood wrote the "Song of the Shirt," which roused the conscience of the country to the cruelties endured by poor seamstresses. Many years have also passed since Charles Kingsley, in "Alton Locke," laid bare the horrors of the "sweating system." Something has been done since then to

modify these evils in certain directions, but it does not require an actual knowledge of the miseries still endured by similar classes of workpeople, to convince us that these miseries still exist. We have but to consider the prices charged in many warehouses, for made-up clothing and various other articles, in order to realise the fearful cost at which these prices are obtained. It rouses our indignation when we picture the unprincipled thoughtlessness with which the public rushes after cheap products, without the slightest consideration of the sufferings of which each one of these products is the representative. The petty gain is, forsooth, secured, and "the bargain" purchased; but oh! how different would be the sentiment, if a glimpse were for a moment afforded of the untold wretchedness, undergone in frightful dens, before the petty saving, over which the buyer congratulates himself, has been made possible. And yet it would be better if we could limit the evils to those only who are engaged in the "cheap trade"; but unfortunately there are those who, keeping what are called fashionable warehouses, make large profits by selling at full value the results of the same underpaid labour.

I will put before you some facts taken from London, but which are not worse than those found in other great centres of trade.*

A woman receives at the rate of 8d. for sewing a child's suit of clothes, and by working sixteen hours she can manage to win 1s. 4d. a day. For making men's trousers she gets 6d. a pair, and can sew two

* Any one who wishes to get the fullest, most recent, and accurate information on these matters should read the Blue Book containing the report of the Government Commissioners.

pairs in the day. One penny a dozen is paid for making button-holes in collars, and by commencing at 5 A.M. and labouring till dusk the seamstress can earn 4d. A shirt is made for 2d., the maker finding her own thread, and by toiling from 6 A.M. to 11 P.M. she can win 1s. There are other branches of trade in which labour is equally underpaid. From 4½d. to 5½d. a thousand is the rate paid for making paper-bags, averaging a net wage of from 5s. to 9s. a week. Match-box makers get 2½d. the gross of 144 boxes, and by working sixteen hours 1s. may be earned.*

Take this from the journal of a trustworthy visitor among the London poor, which was sent to us privately along with other documents of a similar character.

"I called on Mrs. —. I saw her a fortnight ago, when she was in bed suffering from debility caused by insufficiency of food. She is very young, and has two little children. Her husband is out of work, and she, to make a living, works at children's ulsters with her sewing-machine. These ulsters have to be made nicely and neatly, with button-holes and a lined hood, five long seams, and sleeves with cuffs. For making each of these she gets 2½d. We thought of the buyers and sellers of such things when they had to meet that poor woman before God's judgment-seat. She told us that if she worked very hard and kept close to it she could make three ulsters in the day and earn 8½d.; and that when she did this she felt very thankful. I spoke to her about God, but she said, 'I have trusted and hoped in the Lord, but when things come to the last, and I don't know which way to turn, I don't know how to trust any more.' We hardly knew what to reply. We gave her a little money. She seemed quite overwhelmed, such a small sum being to these poor souls an unexpected joy."

"Mrs. — works at brush-making, piercing holes in the wooden backs, then putting through the hairs and wiring them, and after-

* We are quite aware that there are manufacturers who pay higher wages to their match-box makers than the scale given above; but this does not invalidate the terrible fact we have there stated; as little as the knowledge of establishments which adequately remunerate their seamstresses weakens the terrible evidences of the sufferings of the underpaid.

wards cutting them even with a large pair of scissors. She is paid $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per 100 holes, and by keeping close at work she can make from 3s. to 4s. a week."

These are but specimens of a misery which affects many thousands of the population in all our manufacturing cities.

Not long ago I found here, in Glasgow, a girl of apparently eighteen folding up a pile of embroidered skirts—richly embroidered with a pattern executed by the sewing machine. She was about to take these to the warehouse that employed her, and on my asking what she received for her work, she replied, fourteenpence the dozen, supplying her own thread, and liable to have the work thrown back to her in the case of the slightest flaw being discovered. Looking on this picture of sore trial, I imagined that other picture when these same garments would be exposed in the warehouse windows as extraordinary bargains, and pitied the thoughtless purchasers, who are most to blame for the cruelty which this love of cheapness entails.

When we calculate what must be paid by these poor people for lodging, amounting in London to three shillings a week even in the most wretched hovels, we may ask how the barest necessities of life can be procured. Can we wonder should intoxication be sought as a relief for these wasted bodies, or if immoralities of the direst kind should be resorted to in this despairing struggle for existence? May we not further ask whether these evils are not fairly chargeable upon the so-called Christian community which secures its profits out of these horrors? "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their

transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. . . . Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke."

But when it is asked how are these evils to be removed, we confess that it is exceedingly difficult to suggest a remedy. Undoubtedly the community, if roused to a sense of its duty, could effectually change the whole system by "boycotting" every trader engaged in it, while paying proper prices to all who can produce evidence of their having given just remuneration to their labourers.* A trades union for these underpaid workers might be of advantage, but it would be exceedingly difficult to establish such a union among starving women; and, unfortunately, even were it established, the facilities for procuring manufactured articles from the Continent are so great as to render complete success doubtful. We cannot ask the present employers to cease giving out work, for that would be the total destruction of the poor; and if you ask them to give higher wages without securing them higher returns, they say, with truth, that the margin of profit is so cut down by competition in "the cheap trade" that there is no room for increased pay to labour. There are certainly retailers who do make

* It has often occurred to me that much might be done by publishing lists of those mercantile houses which are known to pay adequate wages to their workpeople and to have no dealings with "sweaters."

large gains out of the miseries of the poor, so that, even when a full price is paid, one cannot always feel sure that the labourer has reaped any proportionate advantage. It is not impossible, however, to make such inquiries as may satisfy the purchaser even on this point. But if there is no security for just wages having been paid when full prices are charged, there is a certainty that the horrors we have described are connected with the production of those "bargains" offered at prices which never by any possibility can afford adequate remuneration to labour.

Whatever measures of a compulsory character may be taken to counteract these terrible evils, it is the duty of each individual who cares for the moralities of life, to do his utmost to buy honest articles, paying honest prices for them; and to avoid, as he would avoid deadly sin, the running after the cheap products of necessarily underpaid toil. It is surely enough to deter us from such things when we remember the terrible cost at which these articles are really supplied:—

“ Oh, men with sisters dear,
Oh, men with mothers and wives,
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives.”

We ought also to do what we can to promote a healthy public opinion regarding these social wrongs, and, if legislation is found possible, to support it with our whole might; or if some philanthropic and wise enterprise is devised for the amelioration of these sufferings, to help it on as we have opportunity. Good may be done even by the exposure of the terrible sores which are eating into the life of the community. The

more that they are dragged into the light, and the conscience of the nation aroused to consider them, the more hope is there of some remedy being found for this oppressive and cruel bondage. In the meantime it is one of the dark shadows of our civilisation—one of the features of pagan selfishness which disfigures our Christian profession.

FIGHTING AGAINST GOD.

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FIGHTING AGAINST GOD.

“Lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”—Acts v. 39.

THE advice of Gamaliel was that of a prudent man of the world who had risen above the fanaticism which blinded the scribes and rulers. There is more of the statesman than the theologian in his counsel. He had apparently been a dispassionate student of history, and had learnt that error must always be weak beside truth, and that the wisest course is to give liberty of thought to all, believing that whatever is false is doomed, and whatever is true—however strange the truth may at first appear—must stand.

Gamaliel, in short, exercised that calming influence over his more zealous brethren which it has been the function of the historical student in all ages to wield.

But, leaving Gamaliel and the council, we may ask whether it is possible to fight against God. Is not God omnipotent, and does not the question bear on the face of it an absurdity? For how can frail man fight against Him who guides Arcturus and the Pleiades, and whose dominion is from everlasting to everlasting?

In one sense, no one can fight against God, for he who resists or breaks any law of His must inevitably reap the consequences. By fighting against God we

do not mean that any law of God can be altered, or its fulfilment averted, by human opposition. But we do mean that man, in his ignorance, may imagine that he is serving God while he is really opposing Him, and that in the history of the Church, as well as of civilisation, progress has been usually characterized by stubborn resistance, often waged in the name of God, against things which have proved with fuller knowledge to be divine.

Any educated person can recall instances of this. There have always been men of faith who trusted God and followed His guidance, as Abraham did, and Moses, and the goodly fellowship of the prophets; yet the denunciation which St. Stephen hurled against Israel was literally true: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed beforehand of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers." In every stage of its history it was so. Israel resisted the leadership of Moses, although the future nationality was at stake. They afterwards struggled after a merely earthly dynasty, blind to the world-wide nature of their calling; they clung to the works of ritual, and rejected the spiritual end of such services; they stoned the prophets who revealed the eternal laws of the divine Kingdom; and they did not perceive how the destruction of the Temple, and of the Jewish throne, and the dispersion of the people from the hereditary centre, was a necessary step towards the fulfilment of the great promise to Abraham, and the means whereby the

true glory of Israel would be attained. When Christ came, in whom the whole end and purpose of their past was fulfilled, they crucified Him. Yet God's purpose was not thereby overthrown; the grand law of progress went on in spite of men's resistance. Thus men reaped the consequences of their opposition, while the divine law was fulfilled. So, too, did the Roman empire persecute, so did it try to annihilate the new power which was in reality to recreate Europe.

In similar fashion has the Christian Church been over and over again a fighter against God. Look at the fearful suffering and bloodshed which marked the Reformation, when human passion burned at its fiercest under both the priestly robe and the Geneva gown.

Or if we come to other periods, and recall how the Church, shutting her eyes blindly against the truth which God was teaching men, resisted the discoveries of science from the days of Galileo till the present hour, we can see how good men may conscientiously fight against God. We smile now as we think of the dismay and the bitterness when geology overthrew hitherto accepted traditions respecting the age of the earth and the interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis. Why, even the use of chloroform was denounced in the name of religion. We need not touch on more recent controversies which are yet unsettled.

But how foolish is all such passion! As if, forsooth, any proved fact can be a peril to divine truth. As if God was not the Father of lights, and that, therefore, every light given to man must come from Him.

Mr. Huxley once wrote that if men wished really to be reconciled to God, they ought to study His laws,

and seek to obey them. As used by him, the advice savoured somewhat of a half-truth, for the allusion seemed to be to physical law only. But if it is made wide enough to embrace spiritual law, then his counsel is one of the truest and most profound which can be given.

It goes without saying that it holds true of physical law. We can appreciate in the present day the mistaken zeal of those who, when plague or pestilence followed upon the most dreadful breaches of sanitary law, deemed that their duty was fulfilled by appointing days for fasting and prayer, while they left the causes of the pestilence untouched. Apparently most religious, they were really irreligious, for, while rushing to churches and crying to heaven for mercy, they were in their daily life fighting against God's own laws of health. The plague that they prayed against—and very properly prayed against—might have been regarded by them, had they wisely considered it, as the finger of God pointing out habits that were an outrage on divine law. While they ought to have fulfilled the one duty of humbling themselves in prayer, they ought not to have left the other undone. You have no right to take poison, and then pray that it may prove innocent. You have no right to live in selfishness and indolence, and then pray for the peace and satisfaction that spring from the love and obedience and generosity of Christ. The contrast which such circumstances present, the combination of a religious spirit with an irreligious breach of divine law in common life, is most instructive and suggestive.

For divine law embraces every department of

human interest. It touches on social life as well as spiritual. And Christ did not come to lessen the strictness of these laws—He came to fulfil them, He came to reveal them. He Himself, working always within the domain of spiritual law, came, through highest law, to bring us into true reconciliation with God. Through the spiritual laws of forgiveness, love, holiness; through the law of self-sacrifice in loving duty to God and man; through the law of sonship and brotherhood, He came to bring us under “the law of the spirit of the life” that was in Him, and thereby to redeem us from that curse which was the consequence of breach of law. Christ verily came not to destroy law, but to fulfil it. He was at once highest law, and the Saviour of the sinners who had broken that law.

But, passing from this, let us consider the possibility of fighting against God in things which have a more direct reference to our own day. Taking, for example, the relation of the Church to social life; we are met by various remarkable applications of the principle we have been considering. How false, for instance, does the distinction appear which so many people draw between sacred and secular! What mischief has it not wrought! As if God had to do with Churches and pious feelings, and not with ordinary life and its multitudinous interests and requirements. As if human nature had to deal with divine law only when under the influence of things spiritual, instead of recognising that every part of our nature—every tendency, every taste, every power, every desire—has a right and a wrong use—in other words, is under a divine law that may be broken or observed; and that

for religion to shut itself up in one sphere of interest, and to neglect these manifold powers, tastes, and tendencies, because they may be engaged on matters that are usually termed secular, is to deny the true function of religion. Nay, such conduct is certain to produce the consequences which inevitably spring from every breach of law.

Thus is it that men have fought in the name of religion against that law of our nature which makes us desire beauty, and which vindicates for Art a divine purpose; or they have ignored the needs which have been implanted in our humanity making amusement and relaxation almost a necessity; and have frowned upon humour, wit, laughter, kindly fellowship, and kindly merriment as if somehow profane. Such forgetfulness of the laws of God, as seen in the facts of human nature as He has constituted it, has always led to fearful reactions. The Puritanism of the Commonwealth was the harbinger of the immoral laxity of the Restoration. The breach of law on the one side, by failure to observe the right use of these affinities, brought on a wild reaction in the flood of licentiousness which broke every limit.

And are we so guiltless of a similar neglect that we can afford to treat such sins as only an interesting historical study?

Look at society now; look at our own city, containing masses lying outside of all Churches: read, and re-read, and do not forget, never banish from your mind night or day the dreadful facts that have been over and over again set before what is called "the Christian Conscience" of the community. Go down and see it for yourselves—the sodden poverty, the bestial vice, the

blight of drunkenness, that which, like the fabled Upas tree, desolates homes, makes devils of men and demons of women, which is the curse of the helpless children, who derive their life from poisoned blood, and are the dependants on every shade of evil, from a barbaric coarseness down to moral loathsomeness. And all this is going on at this moment! Whence does it arise? What are the causes of this foul blot on our Christian civilisation? Drunkenness, you say. Be it so! *But what is it that produces the drunkenness?* May we not safely assert that among other causes this one may be named—we have been fighting against God, we have been neglecting those laws of His in human nature which make men crave for some brightness in life, some alleviation of its hardships, some change from its monotony, some excitement to deliver for a while from its dulness and despair? What do we give these people? Little or nothing! The craving which seeks this false and damning answer of intoxication ought surely to receive a right answer in the supply of what may be a healthy stimulus to nerve and brain. We ought to supply them with healthy mental change and healthy amusement.

Should it not be a part of true religion to do this? And is that not a one-sided and miserable religiousness which is busied about what will happen when we die, and overlooks the duty of obedience to those divine laws on which humanity is constituted? If we are reaping a whirlwind in the degradation of tens of thousands of our people, is it not because in the department called religion we have been going to church and saying our prayers, while in other departments called secular we have been fighting against God; and then,

His laws being thus broken by society, they revenge themselves upon society in the fearful consequences we behold ?

Or take a wider view still. I do not attempt to picture the present state of Christendom, and the attitude in which class stands towards class. I simply ask—Whence does all this arise ?

I reply without hesitation that it arises from the manner in which religion has failed to cover the ground. Religion has done much—has done almost everything that has been done—to ameliorate these evils, but it has made for itself too restricted a sphere, and the voices of disorder seem to be the call of God for a larger and more humane Christian influence.

Popular Christianity, while naming the name of God, and propounding its theologies, and building its churches, has miserably come short of the purpose of Christ, and most blindly and sinfully misunderstood His meaning. For what do you see ? Those very Christians who, within the sphere of what they call “religion,” busy themselves with ecclesiasticisms and theologies, or theories and signs of Salvation, have all the while, in other spheres, fought, and do fight, a continual battle against God, and conduct social, commercial and political life on principles which are in direct antithesis to the laws of Christ’s kingdom. We have never even tried to work out the laws of Christ which we profess to obey. And what is the result ? Whence come these wars and fightings among us ? Whence come these gulfs of separation between rich and poor ? Whence comes the array of Trades’ Unions against Masters’ Unions ? Whence the feverish and cruel rush of competition, with its trampling

down of the weak? Whence comes the long line of wounded, and the fearful suffering and despair which are left on the track of the vaunted march of civilisation as on the track of a desolating army?

I answer boldly—it is because society is founded on selfishness, and because the Christians who go to churches and repeat creeds, and are more or less busy about the redemption of their own souls, have scarcely ever attempted to bring into play the mighty spiritual powers which God has armed them with, and commanded them to employ; and because they have consistently and continually fought against His laws, and done just the very opposite of what Jesus Christ set forth as the rules of His kingdom. He declared the great law of human brotherhood—what have we made of it? What influence, I ask you, has that law upon Christians when it comes to be some matter of business that they are dealing with? Who cares for human brotherhood when it is a question of commercial “push” and the chance of “cutting” down prices and of buying in the cheapest market, though it may be that cheapest market is at the cost of untold human misery? He enthroned love, with all that it implies of kind consideration, justice, mercy, forgiveness, patience. He placed that as the central power by which society might be reclaimed, and the kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy He established among men. And yet even to name such a law as one that should primarily be obeyed, and as the true power for reforming society and for changing all its discords into harmony, would be only to awaken a smile of contemptuous surprise from the very persons who, when it is religion in its conventional sense that is dealt with,

would expect to be greeted as chiefs in the modern synagogues.

Think on all this, my brethren. It is a large subject—too large for a brief sermon—but enough may have been said to suggest some reflections, regarding the possibility, at least, that the evils of Christendom arise because Christianity, as exemplified in the lives of Christians, has, in the wide sphere of common life been actually fighting against itself, fighting against God; and that through thus breaking the laws of Christ's kingdom, it now reaps the consequences in enmity, separation, confusion, strife, degrading poverty, and in vast masses of the people lying outcast and in despair.

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY.

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CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY.

“Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability.”—MATTHEW xxv. 15.

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”—PHILIPPIANS ii. 4.

IT has often been asked, “Were St. Paul or St. John now to visit the earth, would they recognise in our Churches the kind of religious life for the production of which they laboured?” Whatever answer may be given to this question, few will deny that the Church—in the widest sense of the term—has, in a large measure, failed to give effect to the conception of the Brotherhood of Man, or to rebuke the sins which separate class from class, which we find so emphatically set forth in the gospel of Christ as a part of Christian duty.

And while we contemplate these failures on the part of the Church, other voices are heard shouting watch-words which sound like an echo of the neglected truths. If we have not been taught Liberty, Equality, Fraternity in their Christian sense from the pulpits of Europe, we have heard them proclaimed in a voice of thunder by the Revolutionary Press, and that, too, as frequently in the name of Atheism as in the name of God. And what a charm these words have for millions, even when so proclaimed! No experience, how-

ever bitter, of their false use, can destroy the fascination they exercise. Although, under the name of Liberty, the world has seen the horrors of a Reign of Terror; under that of Equality, class-proscription and class-banishment; and with the cry of Fraternity, wars have been witnessed that have deluged continents in blood; yet, in spite of this knowledge, these names represent at this hour the most powerful of all political factors among millions in every country. These aspirations after a new Social Order may or may not have elements in them of selfishness, class jealousy and a desire for spoliation, as well as the nobler hope of seeing a renovated civilisation, in which rich and poor may meet in a Utopia of universal love and prosperity. I do not discuss that here, but would ask whether the intensity of these aspirations, and the wide influence exercised by the cry for Liberty, Equality, Fraternity do not indicate the sin of the Church in failing to give adequate expression to the true conception of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

The cause of this longing after a greater Social Equality is easily found. In every city of Europe there are classes whose inalienable lot seems to be grinding toil, poverty, and suffering, and these live side by side with other classes whose heritage appears to be power, wealth, luxury. The inhabitants of Belleville and of Montrouge live in a different world from the glittering throng which fills the gay Boulevards, feasts in the brilliant restaurants, and sweeps past in the splendid equipages. Over the one quarter hangs penury, sometimes famine; over the other, the ceaseless opportunity for boundless gratification. Misery and luxury are thus made near neighbours,

and the frontier line between the two is drawn along a social chasm across which there are few, if any, bridges. And what exists in Paris is found in a greater or less degree in every other city of Europe. Rome, Vienna, St. Petersburg, London, Glasgow, Liverpool present similar features. Have we not then, under the pressure of such contrasts, a sufficient cause for the readiness with which the wildest doctrines of Nihilist and Red Republican are received abroad, and the more sober teaching of the English Socialists is received at home? The outburst of the Commune ought to have taught society a healthy lesson. The rush to the Baricades of those rugged enthusiasts pouring out of their forgotten dens; the heroism of those poor women who, intoxicated with the dream of a new Social Order, perpetrated great crimes, and yet almost atoned for their excesses, when they faced the fusillades with the calm of Martyrs dying for a holy cause; such scenes as these ought to have made the world think. 'Blood and Iron' put down the outbreak; but no blood or iron can heal the sores which produced the outbreak. It is true that if we ask what is the Equality which large sections of the Party of Revolution seek, we have a terrible answer given in the rhapsodies that are devoured by millions as a very gospel of Social Salvation. We do not find these disseminated in our own country as they are abroad—where the accepted panacea of the Anarchists is the brief creed, "No God, no law, no property, no marriage." Shocking as such doctrines may seem to us, yet for millions of unhappy people they suggest nothing but freedom, with the hope that humanity, when delivered from all restraint, will respect the individual and, when trusted, prove peace-

ful, fraternal, and generous. Poor enthusiasts! we cannot but feel for them, while we condemn their errors.

While we have little of this wild teaching in Britain, we must remember that society on the Continent is so honeycombed with secret associations pledged for its advance, that there is scarcely a Government which is not forced to arm itself against the growing power of these doctrines. The existence of such a condition of feeling ought to arrest the attention of every wise man, and especially of every wise Christian.

When we turn to the consideration of Social Inequality, we may perceive that there is an Equality and an Inequality ordained of God. All men are equal in His sight—equally sinful, equally redeemed, and equally responsible. This Equality is of God, with Whom there is nothing arbitrary.

There is also an Inequality which is of God, Who giveth to one man talents different from those of another. The attempt to produce absolute Equality could be accomplished only when men are equally clever, industrious, healthy, strong, and good. It could be attained only by a uniformity which always becomes rarer and the more impossible as we advance in civilisation.

And Inequality of a certain type, instead of being an evil, is really beneficial to Society; for it produces that mutual dependence which promotes usefulness, and stimulates what is noblest. Society, in the widest sense, has been often, and truly, compared to a family in which, through the inequalities of age and the various necessities and gifts of the members, all that is beautiful in affection and in mutual care comes into

play. It is thus that the very infant exercises an influence in the household and, because of its helplessness, becomes a valuable educator. When all recognise their various duties to one another, Inequality proves the greatest blessing. Jealousy and hatred never occur when the true ministry of each to each is in active operation. So is it in the wider family of man. It is good for the strong to minister to the weak; and for him who possesses to acknowledge the claims of him who lacks. It is in like manner good for those who need, to recognise in others more prosperous the unity of friendship and brotherhood. The innumerable gifts which God bestows, when thus used, become, like the distribution of capital, the sources from which a social commerce of influence, help, brotherhood may go on to the increase of the moral wealth and happiness of the Body Politic.

But there are many forms of Inequality which are not necessarily inherent in society, nor in harmony with its ideal, and which it ought to be the work of the Christian spirit to remove. I do not allude to differences of rank, or to the separations produced by the pride of birth or of wealth. The social demarcations which permeate every grade of life in this country often present features as cruel, groundless, and even absurd as the petty tyrannies of caste in India. But it is not of these inequalities I now speak. There are others of an infinitely more serious character.

For what a picture is that which is presented by the statistics recently published in reference to the housing of the poor of this city! When we read of the enormous percentage of the population doomed to live in houses of one apartment, it requires few words to

emphasise the facts which such a statement suggests. These statistics speak to us of thousands—men, women, and children—huddled, night after night, in the stifling atmosphere of small tenements, where it is next to impossible to observe the common decencies of life. In health, in sickness, in childhood, in the full strength of youth, and in the feebleness of decrepit years—all ages, all sexes, all conditions of humanity, are crammed together in these one-roomed houses, wherein every function and economy of life goes on—cooking, washing, dressing, conversation, births and deaths—with scarce a chance of privacy. Such is the picture. I know how marvellously many a family is able to manage, and what decent, pure, and godly generations have come forth from conditions of existence that are a disgrace to our civilisation. But I also know that no one dare describe evils that are well known to persons intimately acquainted with certain sections of the population, and which are plainly traceable to the manner in which they are lodged. Here is an inequality which meets masses of our people at their very birth, and which gives them small chance of attaining the refinements of Christian culture. It is also a terrible inequality which handicaps children, to whose sad lot of poverty we have to add the curse of drunken parents. Think of them! brought up in kennels, ill-clad, ill-fed, and exposed from infancy to sights and to language, which any father or mother who listens to me would rather suffer any sacrifice than have their children exposed to for a single day. It is no excuse for us to quote the law of Supply and Demand as our warrant for permitting the degradation produced by crowding in cheap cellars and attics. We limit, in many directions, the

law of Supply and Demand to favour the helpless. Nor is it enough to appeal to other laws, whose vengeance may be traced in the visitation of the sins of the fathers upon their children. Undoubtedly, drunkenness, sloth, and thriftlessness must bring their due punishment; and we are justified in ascribing the sufferings of many of these shivering infants and rickety-limbed children, and, still worse, inherited tendencies towards drink, impurity, and dishonesty, to the evil doings of ancestors. But does not this only make the picture darker? Are we not forced to go a step farther back, and inquire whether there were no preventible causes for much of the sin of these bygone generations? If their habits now doom so many to those wretched hovels, I ask whether dreary physical surroundings, overtaxed bodily strength, and sunless, unbrightened lives, have not had much to do with the production of the drunkenness, and with the sinking into the unthrift and slatternliness, which now seem almost hopeless?

Certainly there are fixed laws at work in producing these consequences. The law of Supply and Demand is at work in giving the cheap houses which penury requires, and the unfailing punishment of sin is a law, fulfilled in the terrible harvest reaped by the dissolute, and by their children. But there are other laws which ought to be at work as well as these, and which are intended by God to be the means of counteracting the evils we deplore. There is the law of Christian Brotherhood, and of that Enthusiasm for Humanity which is of the essence of the spirit of Christ. That society can scarcely be called Christian which can stand on one side of the gulf, each busy with the salvation of his own soul, while it leaves to the law

of Supply and Demand the miserable thousands who, on the other side of the gulf, are crowded away in dens, where salvation of any kind is the hardest of problems. Ought not the Church, in the largest sense, to be the first to recognise the responsibility lying upon society, and inspired by divine love, to overleap the barriers of class separation, as they have not yet been overleaped, in order to grapple wisely with this terrible heritage of physical and moral wrong? If the results we see now of past neglect fill us with dismay, let it be ours to remove the causes, as far as they can be removed, which would perpetuate these evils to future generations. We cannot, indeed, avert the consequences of breach of law, whether physical or moral. The law of heredity cannot be altered by any legislative or philanthropic appliance. But the sources out of which have sprung the inducing causes of heredity may, and ought to be, dealt with. Legislation, for example, can do much to secure the best possible precautions against the evils which the present system of house accommodation entails, and it is the duty of the community to take care that such legislation is adequate. The physical and social surroundings which in other respects lead to temptation, ought also to be remedied. For it is possible to make life brighter, and, by supplying healthy amusements, to counteract in various directions the influences which lead to dissipation. Education and the training of girls in domestic economy are obviously most hopeful agents for creating a better future.

But there are other evils to be removed besides those which may be effected by legislation and education. There are social barriers which separate brother from

brother, and class from class, which require the higher remedy of a fuller recognition of the gospel of Jesus Christ, by the proclamation of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, through brotherly deeds and a loving ministry of kindly interest, more than by the preaching of truths about them, however valuable that may also be. Society requires to be sweetened by closer and kindlier interest between class and class, and the Christian Church ought to be the most powerful instrument for bringing them into this loving contact. The failure of the Church to fulfil adequately this great mission is one of the most serious facts of our age. For it is a terrible though true confession, that there is in every city and town in this country whole sections of the community, embracing a large proportion of the labouring classes as well as the very poor, to whom it would make little practical difference were we to-morrow to close every church in the land. It would also be no exaggeration were the words "Social Inequality" written over the doors of the vast majority of our Protestant churches, so exclusively do they seem to be reserved for people who are "better off," or those at least who can appear there in "Sunday clothes." The arrangements which usually prevail in our churches, as well as the customs of society, make Equality, even in the house of God, almost impossible. That place which should be a witness for the common brotherhood of rich and poor, and a visible testimony to the loving relationship in which all mutually stand who are in the communion of Christ, has in too many instances become only too true an exponent of the separateness and the pride and selfishness which are the curse and peril of the community at large.

And there is another method open to every individual who has to deal with others more or less dependent on him. Let such remember that "man does not live by bread alone," and that he requires sympathy and loving interest as well as his mere "due" in the shape of wages. Landlords and tenants, employers and employed, mistress and servant, those also whom neighbourhood alone may have thrown together, can do much to change the aspect of society by living out in practical life the Christian spirit of Brotherhood. I would counsel employers of labour to become personally acquainted with those who work for them, to know their wants and difficulties and anxieties, and to be truly interested in their welfare, sincerely caring for them as Christ would have them care.* They may be met at first in some instances by suspicion, if not by rebuffs. But if they are sincere, and have the wisdom to take the people into their confidence, so that they understand them, and can go with them in what they do, they will soon discover how such trust will become reciprocated. Human nature is much the same in every rank. Honest, loving care, will never be misunderstood. It is just this law of love that is required to take the place of the law of selfishness, which forms to so large an extent the basis of all commercial relationships. It is the living exemplification of Christian Brotherhood, in the spirit of that Equality in which we all stand before God our Father and Christ our Redeemer, which can alone meet the cry for the

* One of the evils connected with the system of Limited Liability is the cessation, in many large commercial undertakings, of the sense of responsibility in reference to their employees which used to make the tie a personal one, at least in numerous instances, rather than wholly a business one.

Equality and Fraternity of Revolution, and which would gain its ends by hurling into ruin the whole social fabric.

“O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother !
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there.
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.
Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him whose holy work was doing good,
So shall this wide world seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.
Then shall all shackles fall ; the stormy clangour
Of wild war-music o'er the world shall cease ;
Love shall tread out the baneful fire of anger,
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace.”

THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS.

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THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS.

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE QUEEN, AND AFTERWARDS
PUBLISHED BY HER MAJESTY'S REQUEST.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”—MATTHEW xxii. 37—40.

OUR Lord here lays bare at a stroke the foundation on which all religion rests. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment”—first in importance, first in the true order of duty, first in the sequence necessary for the production of all the rest—“and the second is like unto it”—it is next to it—flowing from it, and vitally united to it—“thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Both are in their nature one, for “on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

You will notice that it is a command: “Thou shalt love”; for God will not be satisfied with anything short of this, nor accept any substitute for it. There are no external sacrifices required, no hecatombs of costly victims, nor gifts of silver and gold, nor self-inflicted agonies. It asks not the offering of genius, nor the tribute of lips that glow with the eloquence of

men or angels, nor the giving of the body to be burned, nor the privation of the anchorite. Its demand is higher and grander, and yet so simple that a child can comprehend it—"Thou shalt love."

And what a magnificent command it would be were it even nothing more than "Thou shalt love with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind!" So to love even an earthly object raises a man above himself. Such an absorbing passion has been the source of all that is heroic, and is often the fountain of what is most tragic, as well as what is most chivalrous, in life. But there is more than a command to love. The first, the great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

Christ is very direct in this claim. He first leads us up to God; and from thence He makes all else possible. Having reached God, the love of our neighbour flows as a consequence. For when we find ourselves in God, then we find truly our neighbour, and we can never find him aright till then. The Brotherhood of Man derives its meaning from the Fatherhood of God.

The lessons suggested by these statements are exhaustless in variety and richness. We can but touch upon one or two.

(1.) We are taught the unity of the Old and New Testaments. Christ asserts this when He adopts the fundamental principle on which hang all the law and the prophets, as the basis of His own Gospel to mankind. Nay, it is the basis of all religion, for there can be only one kind of life which is the true life of man; there can be only one supreme good for him, and only one law that is absolutely the right law of his nature. God can never seek anything else than

this, and, therefore, we may be prepared to find that the purpose of both Old and New Testaments is identical. All that is of value in other religions must also point to the same end. For to love God with all our heart and soul and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves, is salvation. If that end can be reached by any human being, in any method, whether as a Jew or a Greek, whether as a Christian, or Buddhist, or Brahmin, that man is saved—for he has become that which God wishes him to be. I say if it can be reached; for that condition is the one which makes Christianity different from other religions. This is practically what Christ taught regarding the nature of salvation in His dealing with the rich young man who asked Him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He put the law of love to God and man before him, and said, "Do this, and thou shalt live." The further command, to go and sell all that he had and to give to the poor, was not intended as an addition, but was used as a test, in order to show the inquirer how mistaken he had been in imagining that he had kept the law of love to God and his neighbour perfectly from his youth. Christ, like a good physician, touched the sore, and the young man winced under the consciousness that it was money he loved supremely, and not God or his neighbour.

The continuity of this demand of God in the Old and New Testaments is dwelt on elsewhere in Scripture. The commandment is described by St. John as having been "from the beginning," and yet as "new." And Jesus takes up the old law and reasserts it with such additional sanctions that He also calls it "new." "A new commandment have I given you, that ye love

one another, even as I have loved you." It was new, for Christ gave a new reason and ground for love. He bestowed new power through the Holy Ghost, and gave also a new example and measure of love. But nevertheless the requirement was necessarily as old as the beginning; because as long as God is God and man is man it must be right to love God with our whole heart and our neighbour as ourselves. It lies in the very fitness of things; therefore the commandment is old. The real difference between the Old and New Testaments lies in the fact, that while the Old Testament stated the law, the Gospel gave power to fulfil it.

For the command to love is powerless when it is no more than a command. No one can love merely because ordered to do so. And it is for this reason that St. Paul describes the commandment as being "holy and just and good," and, at the same time, weak and ineffectual. It is a right command, but being no more than a command it cannot produce love.

Now what the law could not do when in the form of a bare command is accomplished in the Gospel. Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves. For the Gospel is more than a command; it is the love of God so manifested as to awaken love in us. It is love forgiving, helping, nourishing, and enriching us—fanning the smoking flax into a flame, and strengthening the weak reed of the wavering will into fixed and joyful resolution. It is the Gospel of the Holy Ghost also, the Giver of life, and love, and conviction. Accordingly that which distinguishes Christianity from

Judaism, and from every other religion, is not so much any difference in the demand, as in the array of spiritual truths and influences whereby it becomes possible to meet the demand. It inspires the life of love in us, through which the law of love becomes the law of our being.

It is thus that the great commandment of love to God and man is common to both Jew and Christian, is necessarily fundamental in all religions worthy of the name, and yet assumes such a shape and is enforced by such influences in the Gospel, that while it is as old as the beginning, it becomes new in Christ Jesus.

(2.) Again, the manner in which Christ places the love of God first, and makes the love of our neighbour not secondary to, but consequent on the love of God, is exceedingly suggestive as to the source and character of true philanthropy. Nay, it touches on a wider question than philanthropy. It bears with direct force on one which is every day becoming of more vital interest:—Is it possible to create a true basis for human society without the recognition of the personal God? This is a matter which we can discuss at present as a theory, but which, in a few years, may prove the most terribly practical of all questions—the answer to which may be arrived at only by dire experience of what society can become, when the basis of religion has been removed. With the advancing power of Democracy it will be all-important whether duty in the highest sense is to control the individuals of whom society is to be formed, or whether society is to be disintegrated by each man being a law to himself, while there is no sufficient religious authority to rule selfish passion.

The method of Christ is to bring man first to God, as the source of all righteousness, and truth, and love. When a man recognises his own relationship to God, he cannot fail to recognise his relationship to his brother man. Out of the sense of the One Father comes the sense of the common brotherhood. We then put a true value on our brother man. We see that the love which is in God for ourselves is a love that includes every man. We can love our brother "as ourselves," for then we stand all on the same ground before God. We regard our brother no longer in the light of our own selfish wills or passions; we see him in the light of the divine purpose, and as bound up with us in a common responsibility, the object of the same love and called to be sharer of the same blessedness. When duty is planted on this firm foundation, then public order becomes secure.

This is the opposite of the materialism which, in many forms, has been advancing its claims among the learned and the unlearned, and which professes to exalt and serve humanity while God is put aside. You find it in Agnosticism, which exercises such a charm over many of the most cultured minds. You find it in Positivism, which has been accepted by others as the new religion of humanity. You find it in the coarser Atheism of certain schools of the advanced Socialists and Anarchists, as you find them by hundreds of thousands on the Continent, whose creed is the effacement of God and of all law, and who dream of a possible social system in which there shall be nothing but the Arcadian simplicities of unfettered love, undisturbed by any ambition, or envy, or lust, or roguery.

All these systems have one common characteristic.

They either ignore or deny a personal God, and therefore refuse the first and great commandment, which demands love towards God—supreme and complete—as the basis of duty. They have also this in common, that they make humanity, not God, the one object, and the love of the neighbour, and not of God, the one law of the religion of the future. Society is to be improved by every appliance which science can furnish to ameliorate man physically and mentally. Every one is to be instructed regarding the principles which affect bodily health; the mind is to be educated by the study of the wonders of the material universe; and, according to the panacea of Strauss as well as of the modern *Æsthetic* school, man's rougher nature is to be subdued and purified by the influence of Music and the Fine Arts.

So far as these suggestions go, there is nothing to regret but everything to be thankful for, in the emphasis which has been laid, in recent years, on the importance of using all the instruments which Science and Art can suggest for the improvement of man's physical and social condition. We cannot be too grateful for all the light which can be thrown on the laws of health, or enforce too strictly the much-neglected principles of sanitation. We ought also to rejoice in the aids which Science and the Fine Arts can so well supply for the enlightenment of the intellect, the refinement of the tastes, and the brightening of life. If the Church, in the widest sense of the term, has been culpably negligent of the importance of such matters, we may be thankful to those who have roused her from her indifference and shown her fresh paths for her beneficent labours.

Nor would we deny the nobility of purpose and the refinement and beauty of personal character which have marked, and do mark, many of the apostles of the new faiths. Movements of this kind are usually inaugurated by men of a fine nature, who are fired by the fresh impulse which a new creed frequently furnishes. At the same time we may remark, without any breach of charity, that in most cases they—unconsciously, perhaps—derive their motives and their ideals from the very religion which they profess to have relinquished.

Nevertheless, however valuable the contribution may be which they bring for the elevation of society, we must look beyond the motives, and beyond the personal character of the promoters of these new theories of life, and ask whether it is possible to base a true philanthropy or a social order upon a materialistic creed, from which belief in a personal God has been banished. Are there the elements of success in these proposals?

We might assert that, judging from past history, the principle of there being no responsibility to a righteous and holy God, Whose righteous and holy laws we are bound to obey, must, if adopted in modern society, produce in the long run the same fruits which similar movements have borne in former ages. Any schoolboy can point a moral from the decadence of ancient civilisations, when religious faith had become either degraded or abandoned. The merest tyro can tell whether, in more recent times, "The Age of Reason" proved a blessing or a curse.

But we can judge of what the consequences would probably be were society founded on a materialistic creed, from other considerations.

For we must have a worthy conception of what man is, if we are to love humanity and to labour for its welfare ; and we must have a sufficient motive for conduct, if we are to secure nobility of sentiment and of action in society. Duty must have a proper basis ; and the only adequate basis is belief in God and immortality, because that belief alone vindicates a true estimate of humanity. Humanity can respect itself only in proportion as it takes a right and worthy view of its responsibilities and its destiny.

But if the people are taught that man has no more a future than the earth-worm or the ephemera ; that all human history, and existence itself, are girdled by darkness and emptiness ; that man is not merely linked physically, or in his animal nature, to the beasts around him, but that he has nothing more than they have, though he may have it in a higher and completer form ; if they are taught to deny that there is in man the gift of a life that is in the image of God, and that there is a knowledge of righteousness and holiness possible for man, which the brute has not, and cannot have ; let this be the creed on which the religion of humanity is to be based, and then, alas for society ! Comfortable houses, healthy food, perfect drainage, lecturings on scientific discovery, and the senses soothed and saturated with Music and the Fine Arts, will be found vain antidotes against the flood of selfish passions, or the tide of sanguinary struggles, which such culture of man as a mere animal must eventually produce. With such an animal creed, man must, in the long run, sink into sheerest animalism.

“Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.”

No, the love of man to man, if it is to be more than a visionary sentiment, must be based on the love of God. Duty must have a stronger sanction than public opinion or social utility. Authority must be seated on a firmer throne than the votes of a majority. The purpose of existence must have a higher issue than to get through life pleasantly and have done with it. If there is no God and no hereafter, we know too well how men will interpret present opportunities; and how weak must be the appeal to physical or social consequences which take end, at most, in a year or two. Better far than this modern would-be representative of polished Paganism was the stern Puritan, as indifferent to art as he was ignorant of science, but who was armed with the strong sense of duty, and knew that life had a nobler purpose than material comfort, and that there was a law higher than the Social Contract.

No, verily! we may be certain that society, as well as the Law and the Prophets, hangs upon the two great commandments; and that the primary condition of all right views of man and of duty is our acceptance first and foremost of the law—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." When we go up to God first, then we are able to see all things in their true light. We then put the highest stamp upon man, upon the very worst, for we can regard man wherever found, not as the beast that perishes, but as made by God and for God. Never was a nobler sentence penned, never one better fitted to be the charter of social liberty and order and patriotism, than the familiar statement of our old Scottish Catechism—"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever."

From such a conception of life all duty, all loving service and all courageous self-sacrifice become possible. Let this be the basis of our national life, and all is well. A Democracy charged with such a belief will be strong, loyal, orderly, brave. Such a belief, which sees man in God, and every man an object of divine interest, has been the inspiration which made apostles and martyrs count not their own lives dear to them, and which at this very hour sends forth the countless army of Christian men and women, who, loving their neighbours as themselves, labour to teach, to alleviate the hardness of their lot, and to bless with infinite blessing their ignorant or suffering brothers and sisters.

This surely is the noblest creed, the true religion of humanity, the security at once of individual liberty and of national greatness:—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself."

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

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THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”—MATTHEW iv. 23.

THE most cursory reader of the New Testament must be struck by the frequency and the emphasis with which the phrases “Kingdom of Heaven,” or “Kingdom of God,” occur. The doctrine of the Kingdom lies at the centre of Christ’s teaching. His first announcement is the coming of the Kingdom. The glad news with which He arrests the multitude is the gospel, or good news, of the Kingdom. Of a similar nature had been the preaching of His forerunner, John the Baptist. The call to repent with which he heralded the advent of the Messiah was urged with tremendous earnestness, because he could tell them that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Throughout the ministry of Jesus this fact of the Kingdom of God forms the chief basis of His appeals. It is not of an ecclesiasticism, nor is it mainly of a future heaven, in the usual sense of the term, that He speaks; but constantly, almost invariably, of a Kingdom and of Himself as the King—a Kingdom already commenced, but whose full accomplishment was yet to be attained. This is His Gospel. His people are “the children of the

Kingdom." The first and the last note of blessedness with which in the Sermon on the Mount He crowns those whom He describes as His own, is that "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." The glory of the righteous is that they shall shine as the sun in the "Kingdom of the Father." Nicodemus must be born from above, and the greatest must become as little children before they can enter into this Kingdom of God. It is this Kingdom of God and its righteousness which men are to seek first and foremost. For the sake of this Kingdom they are to be ready to leave wife and children. It was for the coming of this Kingdom that He taught His people constantly to pray. It is the same idea which is so strangely brought out at the crucifixion. It was for His claims as a king that He was accused before Pilate. It was the justness of these claims which formed, in the strict sense, His only ground of defence. He stood silent before Herod. He asserted before the High Priest His Messiahship—as the Son of the Blessed, who was one day to be revealed in kingly power, in the glory of the Father. But "I am a king; My Kingdom is not of this world. All that are of the truth hear My voice," was His majestic saying to Pilate, the representative of Roman power. It was these claims which were set at nought when they arrayed Him in the imperial purple and crowned Him with thorns, and put the reed as a sceptre into His hands, and bent the knee to Him, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews." It was the title of Christ as King which, placed above the cross, was the visible accusation for which He suffered, as it was, in another sense, the unconscious declaration of His real glory. After the resurrection we find the same idea

filling the minds of His disciples, for their chief questioning was in regard to the time when the Kingdom of God should come.

When we take such a review, however imperfect, of the position which this Kingdom of God occupied in the teaching and claims of Christ, we may well be struck by the contrast which the prevalent tone of modern thought presents. I should say that the doctrine of the Kingdom is as markedly absent from ordinary preaching as it is emphatically present in the Gospel of Christ. Preaching the Gospel has a totally different meaning now from that of preaching the Kingdom of God. And this difference in the point of view leads to essential differences in other things. It leads to undue prominence being given to ecclesiastical systems, as if their success was equivalent to the advancement of the Kingdom of God. It thus narrows the interests of religion within lines which are as likely to exclude as to include the domain over which Christ as King, in the Kingdom of the truth, has to reign. It furthermore produces an exaggerated individualism. The duty of each one saving his own soul being dwelt on with an almost exclusive power, the gospel becomes identified with that single matter. It is thus in modern times that, in what is termed "Gospel preaching," it is the glad tidings of individual forgiveness that is insisted on, rather than the glad tidings of a divine King and Deliverer, and of a Kingdom of divine order and righteousness, which is to bless mankind. A further evil consequence of this neglect of the Gospel of the Kingdom is to shut out the recognition of God from many and vast fields, wherein a wise reflection on the meaning of the Kingdom of God would

lead us to see His governing and guiding hand. Forces, movements, influences, which have been and are powerful factors in the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ, have, in this way, been treated as secular, irreligious, profane. Instead of a healthy rejoicing in the good news of the Kingdom, and seeing in the gifts of civilisation tokens of a Divine Order asserting itself above the chaos of lawless forces, religion has behaved too much like a pharisee, fencing itself behind traditional, and often purely conventional, distinctions, and standing aloof when it should have fallen gladly into the ranks and led the advance along the whole line of human progress.

The idea of a Kingdom of God was familiar to the Jews. They had been marvellously trained to recognise it. However mistaken were the conceptions which Israel frequently interpolated into the lessons they were being taught concerning the Kingdom of God, yet the fact that there was a Divine Plan and a Divine Order, under which they and all men were being governed; that there was a Divine King who ought to be confessed and who was leading all things towards the establishment of righteousness and truth on the earth; this they were taught, and to this it was one of the chief missions of Israel to testify.

But this conception of the reign of the righteous King was witnessed to in other ways. The people had been educated to its recognition by the special form which their national government had long taken. Israel had been trained under a Theocracy. The conception of their national position, which they received from Moses, was that of a people without a king or any visible centre of power coming between them and the

living God, Who was to be their only king and their defence. Every Israelite was to be directly responsible to the divine law, and to obey the word of Jehovah. Other nations might trust in chariots and horses, but they were to make mention of the name of Jehovah, and of His name only. "The Eternal God is thy refuge," said Moses, in the triumphant climax of his dying song, "and underneath are the everlasting arms : and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee ; and shall say, Destroy them. Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! "

For upwards of three hundred years the attempt was made to preserve the nation on this basis. Judge after judge arose to assert the old theocratic faith when it had almost perished through national unbelief and disobedience. It was the dishonour which it seemed to cast on the theocratic position of Israel, which had Jehovah for its King, that made Samuel hesitate to anoint Saul over God's people. But the position which Saul, and all those who were to reign over Israel, was to occupy was that of being witnesses for Jehovah as the true national king. They were not to be as the kings of Egypt or of Syria. They were not to reign as selfish political despots. They were to be the visible exponents of the national faith in and of the national obedience to the invisible Jehovah. It was for failure in this that Saul was rejected. It was for failure in this that the kingdom was rent away from the house of David. It was for disloyalty to Jehovah that both Israel and Judah were finally carried away captive. But these very failures served more than one great

purpose. They served to lodge for ever in the national conscience a belief in a Divine King whose law was the source of all order, and in obedience to Whom they could alone find deliverance. Nay, these failures to realise a Theocracy through such kings as had reigned in Jerusalem led on to a completely new range of expectations. The prophets caught glimpses of a higher Kingdom than that of the earthly Israel. As judgment after judgment fell upon one weak government after another; as one national hope after another went out in the dark midnight of massacre and captivity; when they beheld every token of national glory swept into ruin, the Temple overthrown and Jerusalem trampled under the satraps of Assyria; then the prophets struck a clear note of joyous hope. They beheld, dimly indeed, as from a distance, yet with unfaltering certainty, the advent of a Kingdom of which the Theocracy had been but a shadow. They spoke of the birth of a King who would fulfil the hopes of the long past. Detail after detail was filled into the picture.

But centuries passed away. And at last a voice is heard by Jordan proclaiming "the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand." The people had their own ideas as to what that meant. And then Christ came, and His first word is "the good tidings of the Kingdom." The people again had their own ideas as to what that meant. But He went on preaching the Kingdom. And as He did so He disappointed every hope, He baffled every expectation. They had imagined a restoration of the old monarchy. They hoped that in Jesus they had discovered the anointed leader of the national aspirations after conquest and a world-wide empire. But He dis-

appointed them at every turn. And yet, while He thus disappointed them, His assertion of His true Kingdom became more and more pronounced. They expected a Jewish kingdom with a sovereignty stretching from sea to sea; but He told them His Kingdom was "not of this world." Of what use then could He be to these patriots? They were looking for signs to indicate the advent of a king who was to fulfil their hopes. But He told them—"The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo it is here, or Lo it is there; for the Kingdom of God is within you." What could He mean? They had dreamt of the glory of Israel raised in exclusive majesty over all other peoples. But He told them that men would come from the east and west, and north and south, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in His Kingdom, when they who thought themselves the children of the Kingdom would be cast out. Was it any wonder that they hated such views, and called Christ a blasphemer? They could not comprehend Him. Nay, the last scene of all was the most baffling, when they saw this One whom so many regarded as the Anointed One, hanging dead, and over His drooping head, fixed there, in the three languages which represented universal humanity, this extraordinary claim of His exhibited. In Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, there it stood—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

It is true that the people of Jerusalem failed to understand it. Yet the past history of Israel had not been in vain. Its institutions, its laws, and the voices of its prophets, had prepared the way for implanting the idea of an invisible King and Deliverer for

humanity, of an Order which is the truth of man and of God, and of One, human yet divine, who was at once the expression of that truth and to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth for its establishment. The hope which long had lingered within the narrow limits of Israel and was identified with temporary and shadowy institutions, opens up into an all-embracing expectation. The little stream of historical development, often baffled, often failing, reaches at last the illimitable sea. The Kingdom of God passes from Israel to humanity; from association with a visible and earthly throne to that of the Eternal; from the idea of exalting a petty nation to the glad tidings of the restoration of man to God, and the victory of the divine order over all the confusions and suffering of sin.

FORESHADOWINGS OF THE KINGDOM
OF GOD.



FORESHADOWINGS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”—HABAKKUK ii. 3.

THE Kingdom of God among men implies the acceptance of divine authority and law. Righteousness, love, purity, holiness, are laws of the Kingdom, but they assume a new meaning when recognised as expressions of what God is, and are obeyed as in sympathy with His will.

Much is gained when we believe that there is a Kingdom of God, and that the universe is not a confused medley of forces driven along out of the unknown into the unknown. Are we taking part in a whirligig dance of atoms, and is this vast system but the resultant of material forces that are under no governing will and have no intelligent end; or are we within a Kingdom in which a divine purpose is being fulfilled? What is the meaning of the sequence that runs through the cycles? Are these linked to one another as idly as the waves that beat upon the iron shore? Or are they parts of a stream moving on to a worthy destiny? Such questions lie at the basis of morality, and must determine whether life is worth living or not.

(1.) What answer is given to such questions by a study of the material universe? The lesson taught is markedly one of progress. It matters not whether we

hold the doctrine of Evolution or not. Whatever be the process, natural or supernatural, through which the world, as it now is, has reached the variety and perfection of its life, yet the one fact which both science and religion express, is progress from the less to the more perfect, from inorganic to organic, from vegetable to animal, from the simple to the complex, from the merely sentient to the intelligent. Let it be granted that in monad or mollusc can be found germs of the great chain which leads on to the mighty poet or painter, yet surely poet and painter are more than molluscs. The gulf that separates these classes indicates the greatness of the progression. And it is as certainly not a blind progression. Our common sense must acknowledge that there is intelligent purpose in it. "The stream of tendency" has been making towards a worthy end. We believe that the goal towards which things are moving is the response of the intelligent universe to the divine will. We believe that the universe shall find voice in redeemed man and in all the intelligences which have learned to say, "Father, we know Thee; we confess Thee; we choose Thy will; it is our very life to serve Thee!"

(2.) The history of civilisation as well as of the material universe illustrates a similar progression, and, more definitely also, we can see it to be a progress towards the attainment of an ideal human society, a movement, as often unconscious as it is conscious, towards the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

In whatever light we view the story of the Garden of Eden, whether as historical or allegorical, it marks a step from trustful and unquestioning innocence to the exercise of free choice, albeit that choice may

be one of evil instead of good. The expulsion from Eden represents the beginning of the long education in which, with the knowledge of the evil, man is being brought to choose the good. How has that battle gone? Towards which side does the victory seem to lean?

When we take the briefest possible survey of the history of men in relation to the Kingdom of God and the establishment of an ideal society in which He shall be loved with all the heart and soul and strength, we need not be surprised if we discover that the progress is inconceivably slow, and that the indications of advance should be sometimes as rudimentary and inarticulate as the hints on which the physiologist is able to trace Evolution from the lower to the higher types.

The earliest germ of social order, the root out of which the principle of the Kingdom of God among men first appears, is undoubtedly the family.* The patriarchal system is therefore the rudimentary type of all society. The relationship expressed by the names father, son, mother, sister, are the basis of greater social organisms, and, as being principles of a divine order, these relationships never lose their primary force, while they widen with the widening process of historical development, but become the key to the requirements and possibilities of natural life as well as of that ideal society which we term the Kingdom of God. Yet family life was no guarantee against lawlessness and corruption. It was only when it was held under the consciousness of the heavenly Father that it

* For many suggestive thoughts upon the growth of the Kingdom of God, see "Social Aspects of Christianity," by the Bishop of Durham.

was preserved pure and healthful. It was because Abraham and Isaac put themselves in covenant with God that the life of the family was preserved from confusion. Whenever the recognition of the earthly relationship to the heavenly was forgotten, and self-will and selfish passion usurped the place of dependence, then, whether it was Lot, or Jacob, or Esau that was guilty, there came disaster. The human order rested on the divine as its security. True fraternity must arise from the life of sonship. We cannot say, "Brother" aright except we can together say "Father" also.

When the family tie proved insufficient, then the confusion that arose through warring clans led to the instinctive desire for a wider social order. Whether based on the necessity for self-defence, or fired by ambition and lust of power, or stimulated by the social instinct, there came the rise of a new order. National life took the place of the patriarchal. The important matter for us to notice, however, is the amelioration and perfecting of social life, the progress, in other words, of civilisation, as indicating movement towards that ideal society which we term the Kingdom of God.

We may notice certain broad features in the history of nations. We can see that there has been an unconscious groping after a universal and perfect social system. It is not the personal ambition of great rulers alone which accounts for the attempts made to establish universal empire, such as in the great despotisms of the ancient world. Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, in subjecting mankind to their will, established a wide domain of law, and their empires illustrate one side of a true social system, for they presented a far-reaching

order, although an order created by external force. In contrast to these dynasties we have another ancient power attaining a wonderfully complete social life, not by the compulsion of a central despotism, but through the freedom of individual conviction. When the Greeks met the Persians it was the conflict of two systems of national life, and in the victory of the former there was a vindication of the possibility of combining law with personal liberty. The Greek Empire of Alexander spread these conceptions far and wide. Then came the Roman power with its firm laws and the creation of a citizenship which was to embrace all nations and religions in a common interest and under a central authority. These vast historical developments were not fortuitous. They expressed a tendency and an aspiration. Their failures are as instructive as their successes. And all of them teach the impressive lesson that while there has been and is in man a movement towards a social system in which liberty and order shall rest on secure foundations, yet the attainment of such an ideal state is hopeless if there are no higher elements present to secure it than are found in ancient Persia, Greece, or Rome. This is the lesson which is interpreted for us in the Old Testament and by the long line of prophets. These are always the truest historians. They teach us how no world-system of mere force, no cunning policy, no mere jurisprudence and system of external law can attain the ideal of human blessedness. They preach of another Kingdom. Amid the crumbling of States they tell of a city "whose builder and maker is God"; and showing the failure of their own Theocracy, they read in it as in a mirror the promise of good things to come. They tell of the advent of One "in whom all nations

would be blessed"—the King who would reign in righteousness, and whose service would be perfect freedom. It was a similar hope which formed the undying conviction of Augustine, when Alaric the Goth was storming at the gates of Rome. When the great city and centre of the world's power was being shattered he wrote the "*De Civitate Dei*," which was to be the source of a new order and of a true Christendom.

Many a century has passed since then, and perhaps some may ask now, "Where is the promise of His coming?" "He that believeth shall not make haste." The fulfilment of God's purposes is always slow. It has been slow in the physical world, and it is slow in the progress of His kingdom. But when we regard the advance that has been already made from primitive societies, till we reach the Europe of to-day; when we weigh the aspirations that are heard now on every side after a fuller human fraternity; when we trace how the leaven has been leavening the mass, and men's thoughts have been turning, vainly perhaps, yet earnestly, after a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and universal brotherhood: we can say of this, as of other fields of study, what Galileo spoke so bravely in his very defeat, "*E pur si muove*," "Nevertheless it moves." What lowly prophets of old believed would come, what Christ promised, what the Church has been labouring for, is surely nearer its realisation. The progress of human history, like that of the physical world, has not been a thing of chance. It betrays a tendency that shapes for a definite end, and that end is the Kingdom of God, the response of man to the Holy Will of the Father and the reign of highest law through truest love.

THE KING

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN ITS NATURE
AND ADVANCEMENT.**

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN ITS NATURE AND ADVANCEMENT.

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation : neither shall they say, Lo here ! or, lo there ! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”—LUKE xvii. 20.

PASSING from a consideration of those facts, which seem to indicate that in nature and history there is a stream of progress towards the realisation of a Divine Order, regard may now be paid to what Christ Himself says about the Kingdom of God.

(1.) We may be struck by the joyful and merciful aspects in which He sets the doctrine of the Kingdom. The point of view from which John the Baptist viewed it was different. We catch in his teaching the echo of Malachi, “Who shall abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?” But Christ proclaims the nearness of the Kingdom as His gospel of good news, and He makes works of healing and not of judgment the signs of its advent. “Go and tell John how the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and unto the poor the Gospel is preached.” It was thus the most joyful hope of humanity which Christ intended when He spoke of the Kingdom of God.

(2.) We discover in the Sermon on the Mount the

nature of the Kingdom being spiritual and inward, the character of those who are its members, and also what that ideal is which He seeks to realise. The Sermon begins with a portrait of ideal character as viewed from different sides. Humility and sorrow from a sense of spiritual poverty; a meek readiness to be taught; a tender mercifulness; an intense craving for righteousness; pureness of heart, peacefulness, the doing of the right whatever suffering it may entail, are the vivid outlines which set forth the children of the Kingdom. He pictures the spirituality of the Kingdom. It is not a matter of external observances, for its claims are not exhausted by the doing or not doing of prescribed actions. It reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart. He that fails in positive love, even towards an enemy, is no better than the heathen. He that harbours impure desires is an adulterer. The laws of the Kingdom require absolute truth—the “yea” and “nay” of spotless honesty—the most unstinted generosity, and the largest recognition of human brotherhood. The motives are searched, so that such good deeds as the giving of alms, such acts of worship as fasting and prayer, are of value only when fulfilled for their own sakes and as in God’s sight, and not from vanity or selfishness. The life of the members of the Kingdom is to be childlike in its trustfulness, its freedom from anxiety, its contempt for material riches as compared with the Divine riches of goodness. Charity in judgment, earnestness in prayer, and usefulness of life—the living out, in short, of the Lord’s will rather than mere intellectual assent to it—these are the features which He portrays as belonging to those “whose is the Kingdom of Heaven.” We

have thus at the outset of His ministry an ideal life presented, unlike anything which existed before Christ, and, alas ! far beyond anything which has been generally attained by the Church since Christ.

(3.) We learn more regarding this Kingdom when we recall the general purport of our Lord's parables of the Kingdom. It is not by the mere culture of man as he is that it begins and grows, for it is like seed sown ; it is the imparting of a seed-like principle which takes root in the heart, growing secretly, and increasing from within outwards. Again, it is compared in its effects upon character and society to a permeating influence like that of leaven in meal, which does not destroy the meal but fills it with new qualities. The individual retains his natural characteristics ; he continues to be imaginative or intellectual, clever or the reverse ; but there has been breathed into his nature a new spirit. The society which has been similarly affected may retain art, literature, commerce, politics, but these different spheres of interest become charged with a new moral life, for the generosity, truth, purity, and goodness of Christ impart their own nature, even as the leaven gives its flavour to the meal. The slowness of the growth of the Kingdom, so slow as to be almost imperceptible, is indicated in the parable of the grain of mustard seed, and in that of the husbandman who sowed good seed which grew night and day without his perceiving its increase. Difficulties and dangers are hinted at in the parables of the tares and wheat, and of the net with fishes good and bad, discouraging the hope of any immediate perfection.

(4.) Much is taught as to the preciousness and

blessedness of the Kingdom. It is as a pearl of great price, a marriage feast, and so valuable that all loss should be sustained rather than lose it. Better cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye than be excluded from it. This Kingdom and its righteousness are to be sought first and foremost, and all other objects regarded as secondary. And these parables prepare us for other statements which set forth the inwardness and spirituality of the Kingdom. It leaves the monarch on the throne and the judge on the bench, for its power lies in the force of the truth and not in that of the sword. Its advance is not marked by things that startle the eye, but by influences which ameliorate the hardness of life, by powers which win sympathy, kindle enthusiasm, and inspire faith, hope, love. The Kingdom of God, Christ says, "is within you," and it accordingly grows with the deepening of the Christian spirit and its increase in society. The Kingdom of God is, therefore, wider than the Church. The rules and institutions which belong to ecclesiastical organizations cannot determine that which is the spirit of a society, rather than a system of creeds and observances. It is thus that St. Paul distinguishes the Kingdom of God from the kind of matters which differentiate the sects. "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink"—thereby meaning the questions which had produced divisions and party spirit in his day—"but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Nothing can be grander than the conception thus set forth by Jesus. He, a Jewish peasant, brought up amid the narrowest surroundings and among the unchallenged formalisms of a society dominated by pride

and bigotry, gazes on the confusions of earth, the tyrannies, the injustice and cruelty of the world, and from the first announces a Kingdom which, without touching the material forces that then weighed so heavily on mankind, would yet, working from within, change all, by reaching into every domain of human character. It was too pure and exalted an idea for those to whom He preached it. It was long ere His disciples perceived even His meaning. But with Christ there was nothing to re-shape in His first declaration, nothing to change. From first to last this Kingdom was the gospel He preached. He had come to bestow a new life, to implant principles, to give vitality to the diviner part that is in man, and through the growth of this life from within, outward confusion would gradually change into order, the law of God would become the law of heart and life, until the glory and goodness which dwelt in Himself would be reflected in humanity, and the reign of God be established in conscience and will. This was the marvellous claim and the extraordinary tidings announced by the Nazarene, and never announced with greater assurance of victory than in that hour when His own life seemed ending in defeat.

Such conceptions had never dawned on any mind before; nay, the very idea of such a Kingdom being possible is even now but faintly believed in, because we fail to measure the power of spiritual forces. Yet what power can be compared to these? Consider, for example, the influence which Public Opinion has at this day. Through Public Opinion telling on the moral temperature of Europe effects are produced which no despot can resist. Or take the strength of such a principle as Self-interest, and we can safely

assert that no emperor leading great armies to conquest exercises such a dominion as this silent force, which, like gravitation, controls the movements of commerce and the exertions of every man and woman upon earth. When, therefore, Christ laid His finger upon the spiritual rather than the material as the great means for ruling the world; and when He spoke of a Kingdom springing from influences upon the heart and conscience, changing the aspect of society by the breath of a new moral life—even as nature is changed by the warmth of spring; and when as King in this Kingdom of the Truth He asserted His power to accomplish it all, unfaltering as if the victory was already won, He assumed a dominion and claimed an empire in comparison with which the proudest throne seems paltry. And closely connected with the idea of spirituality is the no less characteristic and fundamental conception of universality. It is a universality much wider than what St. Paul meant when he said that in the Kingdom of God “there is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, bond or free.” For, as claiming in its array of victories all those influences whereby the well-being of man is advanced and a perfect social state realised, it must include not merely the things which good people term religious, but also those they call secular. It is impossible to limit the effect of spring to one or two objects, which may be the means of radiating the heat or are those we especially care for; a thousand other things are also affected. The snow melts on the mountain, leaf and flower burst into beauty, and the whole landscape is changed. So is it in the Kingdom of God. It may be that the spiritual forces are, as it were, focussed in zealous convictions

in the hearts of comparatively a few ; or the truths and convictions which are intended to move the world may dwell in their intensity within the Church of God. But as the moral temperature of society is raised, the results cannot be confined to those individuals or organizations. Innumerable influences are quickened into action, by which customs and institutions pass away without a blow being struck. Slavery disappears like vapour under the hot sun ; family life is changed ; Governments acknowledge new duties ; social amelioration touches unexpected spheres ; art and literature are charged with a new character ; legislation is stimulated by the prevalent tone, and no longer directed to the repression of crime alone, it seeks the physical and social well-being of the people. The Kingdom of God thus advances without observation, and, gathering to itself all that is human and elevating, and purifying all which it thus gathers, it hastens on "the golden year of God."

"Red of the Dawn !

Is it turning a fainter red ? So be it, but when shall we lay

The Ghost of the Brute that is walking and haunting us yet, and
be free ?

In a hundred, a thousand winters ? Ah, what will *our* children be,
The men of a hundred thousand, a million summers away ?"

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THE KING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

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THE KING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

“Pilate therefore saith unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”—JOHN xviii. 37.

THE highest hope of humanity is the coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth and its full fruition in the eternal reign of God, when He shall be “all and in all.” This is the glad tidings of the Gospel and ought to be the assured hope of every believer. The well-being in time and eternity of the individual who is saved by the grace that is in the Lord Jesus is an infinitely precious result. But grander still is the salvation of Society, and the glorious end set forth in the promise of that time when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ.” It is probably this redemption of Society which is represented in the vision of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse. There is something more there than a vague dream of a sinless spirit-world beyond the grave. For it is a heavenly City which is to be established on the top of the mountains. And if a City, then the very name indicates an ordered social state—and a true *Civitas Dei*, a City of God. And this, as the blessed end of Christ’s mediatorial reign, is the hope to which all history,

sacred and profane, has been pointing. It is the ultimate answer to the oft-repeated prayer of every generation of faithful men: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

But when the eye turns from the glorious end to the beginning; when from the vision of Christ glorified it falls upon Christ before Pilate, the contrast startles us. In the bright early morning of that April day long ago, which was to end with the mysterious darkness that fell upon the crucifixion, there stood this young peasant, before the representative of Roman power. The utter solitude and outward weakness of the one, the unquestioned power wielded by the other, made the unbounded claim, urged with such dignity by that friendless prisoner, appear so extraordinary as to evoke the contempt of the Roman. "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation hath delivered thee to me." But Jesus said, "I am a king, for this purpose was I born. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

The claim so urged becomes still more remarkable when we measure the experience we have already gained of its validity. The very fact of our discussing that claim, that it should be worth our while after the lapse of nineteen hundred years to consider its truth, is itself marvellous. And it is still more miraculous that after so many centuries we should not only be discussing the claims made by the friendless peasant before Pilate, but that we are compelled to attribute all that is best and worthiest in our civilisation to the influence He has exercised in the course of history. What has been actually accomplished in the direction of establishing the Kingdom of God and of Christ in this same

Britain would probably have seemed as vain a dream to some missionary, had there been such visiting our shores in the first century Anno Domini, as the hope seems vain to many minds now, of the advent of the Kingdom of God in power over the whole earth, and the ultimate manifestation of that fair City into which nothing that is unjust, or false, or selfish, shall enter.

The answer Christ gave to Pilate suggests the best reply to the question, "What did Christ mean by the Kingdom of God." He was king, He said, in the kingdom of the truth, meaning thereby not a mere dogma, but the truth of God and the truth of man. The kind of power which He here claims is spiritual power, and that is the greatest which can be swayed. For it is spiritual power—true or false—which determines history, shapes the character of society, directs the tendencies of life, the movements of the world. There are uncrowned kings who have swayed the destinies of mankind as no leaders of armies have been able to sway them. There have been poets and teachers who have inspired enthusiasms and kindled hopes that have moved the world, for they have reigned over the domain of human thought and so determined the actions of mankind. There have been kings on other thrones than those of State who have been the real monarchs of humanity, from Gutenberg with his printing-press, Bacon with his inductive method, Isaac Newton, James Watt. What a wide domain of conquest does not the very mention of these names suggest! May we not say with truth, that if we are to find the influences which have given power to any of the great epochs of the world, we must look not to the brute force which was called into

exercise, but to the ideas, which gave nerve to the arms that wielded the force? Wherein, for example, lay the power of the armies of revolutionary France? Not surely in the numbers of her soldiers or in the genius of her commanders alone. These countless battalions marched with songs of joy against a world in arms, because every heart there was stirred with the sense of a grand cause. It was the charmed names of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, which excited their enthusiasm into a fierce world-conquering fanaticism. So is it that the true kingdoms which govern men are not those which strike the eye. They do not excite observation. They are the kingdoms of human conviction, thought, aspiration, passion. It is in the sphere of ideas, in the domain of the affections, in the faiths, the hopes, the loves, which sway humanity, that we discover the real forces of the world. And so it was that Christ touched the true fountain of all power when He refused to use the forces which the world imagines omnipotent, when He left Cæsar on the throne and Pilate in the Pretorium, and said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight. But my kingdom is not from hence. For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

But there is that in the claim of Christ which makes His position quite different from the poets and teachers, the philosophers, and the religious leaders who have influenced mankind. Christ is more than a setter forth of a doctrine of society. He is more than a moralist who has painted the picture of a possible Kingdom of

righteousness and peace and truth, and left it there for the instruction of mankind. Had He been merely the constructor of an ideal system, then we might have ranked Him among the many who, with more or less success, have attempted a similar task. Plato tried this in his "Republic," and Sir Thomas More in his "Utopia"; with what results the whole world knows. But Christ never attempts to draw a formal picture of an ideal society. He constructs no organized system. He expressly abjures all such detailed machinery as we find among systematisers.

Christ does two things: (1) He implants principles and leaves them in their vitality to take shape as they grow; and (2) He especially claims for Himself the central position as King in this Kingdom. He is to be the source of its vitality and the pledge of its conquest. He associates Himself with the continuance, the advancement, and the victory of this Kingdom. He is to be with His people to the end of the world. It is this presence of Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the fountain of all energy and the guarantee for final triumph.

These two features seem to differentiate Christianity as the Kingdom of God from all other systems. (1) The first requires little illustration. We know that Christ did not deal with forms of government, nor did He lay down rules which were to be a code for the new society. So far from that He left institutions alone, for He knew that laws imposed from without are vain antidotes for the evils of society. He knew also that to do no more than discourse about the beauty of love and purity and forgiveness would be equally idle, when the end in view is to make men loving and pure

and forgiving. The philosopher or poet might draw fine pictures of these virtues, but what effect would fine pictures have on a society teeming with selfishness and cruelty? Nor was He satisfied with giving the purest example of a life wholly governed by the will of God, for the vision of such love in another is insufficient to create love. Love is not a creed. It must be a life. Holiness derives not its power from any proposition about its excellence. It must be a spirit dwelling in man. Love and holiness as doctrines or as fine pictures would be as ineffective as to state a theory of heat when you wish to feel warm. You may express the principles of caloric in formulas for ever without raising the temperature by a degree. It is fire that is needed, not a description. So, too, the purest ideal of life which can be gathered from the Gospels will remain powerless, unless you can convert these descriptions into vitalising forces. It is not a picture of love that is needed, but it is the fire of love to kindle the flame of enthusiastic affection; it is not a description of holiness, but the spirit of the living God to awaken the devotion and inspire the aspirations of the heart. And thus it is that the central truth of the Gospel of the Kingdom is Jesus Christ the King. The glad news of the Kingdom was the manifestation of the King. The announcement that He was come of whom prophets and lawgivers had spoken; the incarnation of the love of God; the taking of humanity by the Eternal Word; the life of Jesus Christ in the flesh; His atoning death, burial, and resurrection; His glorious ascension and the giving of the Holy Ghost; His continual reign over mankind, as Head over all to the Church; and His abiding presence with His

people: all these make the Kingdom of God to be a reality upon earth, and render its ultimate victory assured.

My brethren, this is no unmeaning repetition of a theological creed. It is the most awfully real of facts. For what we need is surely something more than ideas. We need One to love us—a divine Lover—a person who shall touch these hearts with the flame of His own burning love. We require One who has conquered sin and death to be our Deliverer from sin and death, and to tell us amid the weariness of the fight that He lives, and that sin shall not have dominion over us. Amid the disorders of earth we require One who is the calm vindicator of a divine order, and the pledge of its accomplishment. If there is to be a Kingdom of God at all, we require the life of God to be shed abroad in the spirits of men. This is the highest of all requirements, and it is fulfilled only through Him who took our humanity, that He might quicken it with His own divine life. He lives that we may live also. "I am come," He said, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." It was this which was revealed in power on the Day of Pentecost. It was this new life, the life of love, the enthusiasm of humanity, the spirit of forgiveness and devotion and sanctity, which passed from heart to heart, from city to city, during that first century of our faith. It is the power of the same life which, up to this present hour, has been seen changing this man and that, and is now filling thousands through the world with desires, with devotion, and with a spirit of love and sanctity, and self-sacrifice that are wholly unaccountable, except on the belief

that they are inspired with a divine life, and that Christ reigns now as He did long ago.

Do you believe the things of which we have been speaking? Do you believe that the Kingdom of God shall come and recognise this as the most blessed of all hopes? I know how apt we are all to take a selfish view of religion, and to think that the only practical kind of preaching is that which deals with our personal wants, and which contributes to our enjoyment of peace and comfort. God forbid that I should speak disparagingly of such requirements! But even as seen from the point of view of personal well-being, is there not in the faith and hope of this Kingdom of God a gospel of courage for us all? When St. Paul tells us in one place that we are saved by faith, and in another that we are saved by hope, he taught a richer truth than what we usually understand by it, for there is a saving power in the belief that the Kingdom of God is coming and will come; that goodness is stronger than evil, and love mightier than selfishness. There is a saving power in the assured hope that sin will not have dominion over us or over the world, but that the Lord reigns, and that His purpose is a good purpose for the whole world. There is nothing so demoralising as a pessimistic creed, which brings a man to yield himself, as well as the world, to evils that seem inevitable. There is nothing so elevating as faith in Jesus Christ and in the coming of the Kingdom that is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Such faith, hope, and love are the abiding powers which make men forget themselves and make them live for others. It has been this life of faith in God's blessed purpose, and hope in it and love for

it, which have sustained the good men, the patriarchs and prophets and kings of every age. They were on the side of righteousness. They believed in it. Their hope in its victory never swerved. They loved God because He was righteous and good, and knew that He would not let them fall under their own evil. They loved men because they felt how God loved them, and had made them for a glorious end, and that He would assuredly vindicate His own order over all human disorder. They believed that there was a Kingdom of God, and that the King would manifest Himself; and so they spoke with unfaltering tongues of His coming. It was similar, but fuller, faith and hope and love which fired the apostles and saints of the Christian Church with their enthusiasm and self-forgetful devotion. They believed in Jesus Christ and in the coming of His Kingdom. This faith and hope and love elevated their whole nature. Such faith and hope and love, quickened by the very Spirit of God, really saved them, for they were thereby delivered from cowardice and selfishness and materialism. Through their very "optimism," as some modern writers would call it, they reached their own very best; they were lifted above themselves. And it is this faith and hope and love we need now. In this age of hesitating, nervous criticism, when the old watchwords and the old forms and customs which our forefathers regarded as the actual embodiment of divine things are passing away, we need our faith to be renewed in the Kingdom of God, and our hope in the future of humanity quickened, and our love and devotion deepened towards Him who is the living King, the divine Deliverer, Son of God and Son of Man. It may be that

God, for His own wise ends, may in these latter times "once more shake the heaven and the earth." He may shatter forms of thought and institutions which have been suffered to usurp a place which was not theirs by right. He may remove many an object which, in our ignorance, we had deemed not merely sacred but necessary. If so, let us have the stronger faith that "the things which cannot be shaken shall remain." Such periods have occurred in the past, and they have been times that have proved the richest in benefit, the sources of truest progress. Wherefore, "we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

**THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM THE SURE
HOPE OF THE CHURCH.**

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THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM THE SURE HOPE OF THE CHURCH.

“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”—REVELATION xi. 15.

“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father ; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority . . . that God may be all and in all.”—1 CORINTHIANS xv. 24, 28.

WHEN we read these passages, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever ;” and again, “Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all and in all ;” we are transported in thought to the utmost verge of future history.

The end stands in contrast to the beginning. Sin began in man putting God off the throne of his heart and will. Redemption ends in “God being all and in all.” Again, we have seen how Israel was trained to the idea of an invisible King, and how all the national institutions of law, temple, monarchy, priesthood, were to be witnesses for Him, being pictures of an ideal State. In the shattering of the earthly symbolism and the advent of Christ, the training passed from the narrow limits of a nation to the whole world, and from external domain to inward and spiritual obedience.

The true Theocracy is reached when "the end comes," and "the kingdoms of the world have become the Kingdom of the Lord." The advance of that Kingdom of God is by the increasing recognition of the truth, the truth of God and the truth of humanity as in Christ, sin and evil passing away as the mind of Christ possesses the spirit of man.

But in what sense can the kingdoms of the world become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ ?

The kingdoms of the world are something more than the various political States—Empire, Monarchy, or Republic—into which nationalities are divided. The true kingdoms of the world are the moral forces and interests which bear sway over human life. There is the kingdom of Commerce, with its penetrating influences, the kingdom of Science with its vast interests, the kingdom of Literature, of Art, of Public Opinion, all of which govern in that inner sphere which gives shape to history and character to movements. When we weigh what these kingdoms are we can perceive the possibility of their becoming the Kingdoms of the Lord, without any arrestment of movement or any shock to the methods in which they now control society. St. John indicates a mode in which this change takes place in the case of the individual and thereby teaches a wider lesson. He defines "the world" that is to pass away as consisting in the "lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life;" we have but to banish the evil element in order to banish the worldliness that is condemned. "The eye" is not of the world, but "the lust" makes it so. "The flesh" is not of the world, it is "the lust" which renders it worldly. Life need not be of the world, but "the

pride of life " constitutes it worldly. If we take away "the lust" and "the pride," then "the eye" and "the flesh" and "life" remain, but purified and true parts of the Kingdom of God.

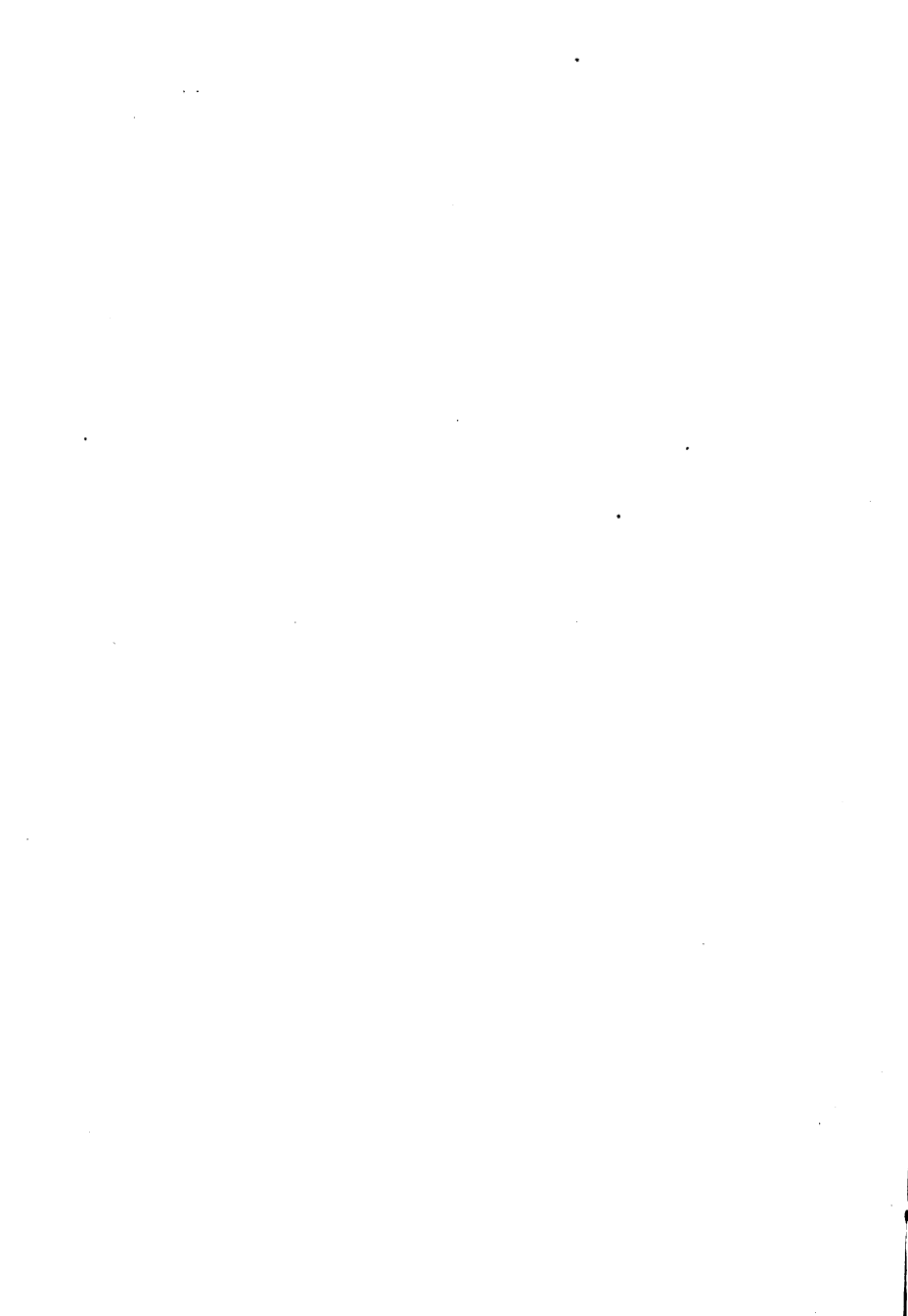
From these hints we can imagine the kind of victory secured by the coming of the Kingdom of God. Already we can see how the aspect of civilisation has been changed by the inward influence of the christian spirit, as in the case of marriage, slavery, and a thousand cruelties that have passed away as the mist vanishes when the sun arises in its strength. Let us imagine the diffusive power of the heavenly leaven to have penetrated the entire "lump" of human interest. If we take the kingdom of Commerce in which selfishness now reigns, it seems like a dream to conceive of a new spirit dominating the Exchanges of the world. At present we behold the fierce struggle for existence, the ruthless pressure which slays its thousands with as unsparing a hand for the sake of gain, as ever did blood-stained baron and warring clan, when it was strength of arm that won. The wreckage of modern social life is as fearful in many respects as that left by a destroying army. Is it possible that this kingdom of Commerce shall one day become a Kingdom in which Christ reigns, and in which consideration for another's good shall be as potent as the lust for wealth? Is it possible that Commerce shall everywhere, in its dealing with the poorest tribe in Africa as well as in the open transactions of the Exchange, on which beats "the fierce light" of public sentiment, be characterized by its recognition of law, and of the still higher principles of righteousness, purity, fair-play, and Christ-like goodness? The change which

such implies would not destroy commerce, it would only consecrate it as having become a Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

In like manner we can imagine a time when the kingdom of Politics, embracing the relationship of nation to nation, shall have been filled with a new spirit; when ambition leading to direful wars shall give place to the "comity" of mutual forbearance and the knowledge that the good of each is best served by the good of all; when the kingdom of Social and Domestic Life shall also be governed by the will of God, and when in love to the one Father men shall love their neighbours as brethren. The picture drawn by the apostle of domestic life truly christianized would then be realised, and the ties that bind husband and wife, parent and child, servant and master, be consecrated because held "in the Lord." Or passing to such kingdoms as Science and Art, it may well seem a glorious end when the hand of Science, having searched the wide domain of possible knowledge, shall come back richly freighted with the harvest of her long toil, to lay these fruits at the feet of Him who can alone give to the spirit of man an answer to his deepest cravings; and when man, made in the image of God, shall confess that it is not in the realm of material forces that his being can gain what it most needs, but that he requires to be led to the Father of his spirit that he may worship "in spirit and in truth." And thus too may Art, purified from all evil suggestiveness, and become a perfect mirror of the eternal beauty, be the lovely gateway whereby man may be led directly to the ideal, and, as Plato tells us, from the earthly reach the heavenly.

These are but suggestions of ways in which the Kingdom of God may come on earth and the kingdoms of the world become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. To believe in the possibility of such an end is itself ennobling. It is good for us even to hope that Christ will yet reign, not by the forceful putting down of all authority, but by winning the willing homage of every heart.

Very slow indeed, yet real, is the movement towards that mighty "end." Far wider than the advance of any ecclesiasticism is the advance of this Kingdom of God. Many forces seem working together for a coming good. The Christian spirit is widening out and occupying the thoughts and stirring the sympathies of men in new directions, and, strange to say, affecting them when sometimes they even deny the Christ. We may therefore with livelier faith pray the old prayer, "Thy kingdom come!" and with keener interest look out on all movements that would purify and elevate society, while tracing in them a deeper current and a more glorious end than as yet they may be confessed to have. For as we care for men we are fellow-labourers with God in the blessed kingdom of our Lord Jesus. Only let us have the great privilege of doing it consciously and with the prayer, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."



THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL.



THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL.

“To the poor the Gospel is preached.”—*Luke* vii. 22.

THIS answer of Christ to the disciples of John the Baptist is one of those sayings which set forth the essential characteristics of His mission. The words express the vital purpose of His daily ministry.

They have a special value in the present day because the two great problems which the Church, in the widest sense, has forced upon her consideration are, on the one hand, the authority of Scripture, and on the other, her relationship to the social condition of the people. What may be termed the literary questions that affect religion—such as those connected with criticism and science—however interesting and important, do not possess even the same evidential power as the visible work of the Church in elevating society, in changing degraded lives, ameliorating the miseries of the poor, and establishing a spirit of brotherhood among men. There is no such proof for Christianity as the actual christianizing of a people. The surest step to win confidence regarding the divine, the spiritual, the heavenly side of dogma is the manifestation of the Christian spirit in its vital energy in the everyday world around us. When men behold the earthly victory of the Cross they will be prepared to believe in

its higher relationships. On the other hand, no amount of abstract reasoning about Christianity will tell upon the world if the Church holds it as a dead creed, and if there are no signs following—such as accompanied the word of Christ when He was on earth—signs of healing, signs of a power to save society by redeeming men from evil to God.

There are many lights in which this saying of Christ may be viewed. I will touch only upon one or two.

There is suggested by them a picture of the state of the Jewish Church at that period which is not without meaning for our own age and country. There must have been then—as there is, alas! now—a great gulf separating the Church from masses of the people. It apparently failed to make the poor recognise that there was a message of good tidings for them. The Church was becoming the property of the so-called respectable and well-to-do classes. Pharisee and scribe kept the keys of the Kingdom of God, and took the chief seats in the synagogues, and identified religion with their various systems, their interpretation of texts, and with the drill of a ritual which required time and skill for its due fulfilment. Not but that the Temple was free to all. The widow with her two mites could enter there without any of the pecuniary hindrances which the poor experience nowadays in so many of our churches. That which differentiated the condition of the outcast population was not a question of money. It lay chiefly in habits of opinion and in social customs. It lay partly in the spirit of pharisaism which had created a certain tone, had made its own conventional standard of religion and appropriated its honours; it lay in the learned scribes who had bur-

dened the divine requirements with distinctions which lay beyond the interests of the crowd. The whole system of things belonged to a different world of interest from theirs, it belonged to those who were better off and who were able to master the grounds on which these sects differed from one another. The God of their fathers seemed at a great distance when they were thus brought by their spiritual leaders face to face with intricate distinctions, and with a prevalent tone of opinion which seemed to bar the way into the ecclesiastical preserve occupied by "the religious world" of that day.

It was into this state of society that Christ entered, and His work reversed the methods of the time. He branded as a woeful hypocrisy the religions that were being wrongfully identified with the name of God, and He vindicated as truly religious those classes and those virtues which the great men of the synagogue despised. He saw greater nearness to God in the humble publican than in the pharisee who could boast that he had done more than the law required. He found a better faith in the soldierly trust of the Italian centurion than in the pietistic assurance of the famous rabbis. He placed the practical kindness of the heretic Samaritan above the useless orthodoxy of priest and levite. He passed by the people whom all men honoured, and went to those who were beyond the pale of conventional respectability. He even shocked society by going down to the very worst—to publicans, and sinners, and the very harlots—and by ministering to them with a tenderness and hopefulness which surprised these despairing outcasts into a new idea of the possibilities of life. For He found in them, in their con-

sciousness of sin, in their humility and teachableness, a greater fitness for the Kingdom than in the self-satisfied religionists. He loved these poor ones because of their very trials. As the physician is drawn to the sick, as the shepherd thinks of the lost one of his flock, as the father longs for the wandered child, so did Christ care for those. And they felt that they did need a Physician, a Shepherd, a divine Father. And so Christ preached the good tidings of God to the poor. He told them that there was a Kingdom of God in spite of all the disorders of the world; that there was a Father Who loved them, and Whose children they were, in spite of the bitter temptations they may have often experienced to imagine the contrary. He spoke to them with authority, but not with the kind of authority exercised by the scribes propounding their texts and interpretations, and quoting the name of this great rabbi or that learned doctor; but with the authority of One Who went straight home to their hearts and consciences, Who created personal confidence, Who stirred love, and Who made them see for themselves what was eternally right and true. He awoke hope where there had been despair, enthusiasm where there had been indifference, and won devotion to Himself and to God. Such persons could say: "Now we know it, not because we have been told it by others, we know it for ourselves that, whatever else is true, He is true—this is indeed the Son of God."

I do not attempt to draw an historical parallel. That there is a frightful separation between the Churches and masses of the poor and labouring classes is too much in evidence. Many causes are doubtless at work. Perhaps we, like scribes and pharisees, have made a

conventional standard of religion, and have lost touch with actual humanity ; we may have made it intricate with our theologies and ecclesiastical rivalries ; or have made it difficult for the poor by our pecuniary arrangements and social distinctions. But the cause may lie still deeper, in our not having such a message of good tidings to declare as the age requires. Or it may lie in our methods more than in our doctrine, because we teach the love of God as a dogma rather than by our living out the love of God in the spirit of Christ ; or because we do not set forth in conduct as well as in word the grand truth of human brotherhood in the name of the One Father, and after the example of Him we call our Master and our Lord. The Church can never win men by merely preaching about love ; she must herself show what that love is. It is not a doctrine of self-sacrifice, but the life of self-sacrifice which can alone tell upon the world.

The lesson, however, which I desire chiefly to enforce, from the fact that it was to the poor that Christ preached the glad tidings of the kingdom, is *the necessary simplicity of all that is essential in Christianity.*

If it was among the unlearned, the poor, the outcast that Christ taught, it is evident that the good news He declared was such that they could understand Him. His message must have been something so direct, so simple that any, whether poor or rich, learned or unlearned, the young child as well as the most experienced, could appreciate its power.

Are we, or are we not, able to recover this message ? Can we restore to its original freshness that which Christ termed "the glad tidings of the Kingdom" ?

We can, at all events, distinguish with some precision matters which could not have been of the essence of that first Gospel. We may safely assert, from the conditions under which Christ laboured among the poor, that a vast proportion of the questions agitated in the Churches now, and discussed in the creeds, and which, in the past as in the present, have constituted the subjects on which Christians have expended the most zeal and the keenest temper, have very little to do with what in Christ's ministry was primary and essential. We do not require to go back to the times of the great Councils, when so many important definitions were made of doctrine; nor do we need to recall the various contentions which have prevailed at different periods and under different shapes since the Reformation. We have but to look at our own country and at the state of opinion around us, to see the necessity for our being recalled to the early dawn of the faith, and to the freshness, purity, and simplicity of the good tidings preached by Christ to the poorest, in order to know what is most vital in the Kingdom of God.

We require to do this, for there never was an age in which religious questions were more complex. There is scarcely a position in any creed which is not alive with the soldiery of attack and of defence. What was accepted a generation ago as unquestioned is now fiercely challenged. Beliefs which had become fixed in apparently permanent moulds are now thrown back into the furnace of controversy, and are once more in a state of solution.

Now it is plain that if Christianity was in its essence so complicated as to be incapable of acceptance till an opinion had been formed on all these intricate ques-

tions, it never would have been good tidings for the poor, and there would be little hope now for the child, or for those whose circumstances forbid their grappling with such problems. In other words, the things which are assailed under the name of Christianity cannot be identical with the good tidings which were preached with direct appeal to heart and conscience by Christ when He was in the world, and which were received, not because of external authority such as that of a Church, or even of sacred books—because there was no New Testament then at all—nor after every doubt of scientist and critic had been answered, but because that which was revealed by Him bore its own evidence, and was so revealed that the poorest and youngest could appreciate it in its primary, vital, and heart-constraining force.

When we place ourselves in imagination, as it were, beside Christ when He was on earth setting forth God to men, making them feel the very warmth of the love and goodness of the Father through the love and goodness of His own life; and when we measure what it was He required, and what it was that satisfied Him in those who came to Him, it is extraordinary how little remains that suggests the necessity for a hundredth part of the dogmas that Churches have been quarrelling about and stamping as essential. We impose a cruel burden on the people when we so enlarge on non-essentials that what is vital is lost in an array of complex questions which are the growth of centuries, and have but an indirect connection with the original message of Jesus. No wonder that so many working men and busy men in every rank are asking, "What are we to believe? Ecclesiastics differ; theologians

differ ; philosophy and science differ ; the secularist press tells us one thing, the religious magazines tell us another. When you have settled these questions among yourselves, then we shall know what to do ; but in the meantime, we pray you leave us alone ! ”

And yet it was just with such men as these that Jesus Christ had no difficulty at all. It was they who understood Him best. We give up as hopeless the very classes among whom He won His greatest victories. We are appalled at the awful specimens of degraded humanity that meet us in our great cities—the demoniacs whom no man can tame ; womanhood, sodden and sunk in the mire of brutal passions ; those awful wrecks of debauchery and drink, with their bloated cheeks and dishevelled hair, and whose one language is profanity and filth. We despair as we try to conceive of methods for elevating these, and for crowning them with the glorious liberty of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. But in our despair we have but to think of what Jesus did, of how He sought out and saved the greatest outcasts. He despaired not, but so believed that there was in the very worst some “pledge and keepsake of a higher nature, some inextinguishable gleam of the celestial light,” that He went to them and plied them with a love and with such a confidence in all good being possible for them as to kindle the waning spark into a flame. He won His greatest triumphs among the most unlikely cases, so that the despised publicans and poor fishermen who followed Him, touched as by a fire from heaven, became the apostles and preachers of the good tidings which fascinated, elevated, and sanctified the most hopeless of all classes, in the most hopeless of all ages, and

in a world fast sinking into moral and political ruin.

We do not require to minimise the importance of the dogmas which are the fruits of the study and of the spiritual intelligence of the Church during its long history and growth, but we shall not be doing despite to the Gospel which Christ Himself preached, if we assert that the knowledge of the grounds on which these dogmas rest cannot be of primary importance; nor do they require to be put into the fore-front in our dealings with men, because Christ never required a confession of faith in such matters from those who came to Him, and were received into His fellowship and Kingdom. It is true that His whole life and teaching have for us now, as they had for His disciples, a new force when seen in the light of His death, and resurrection, and glorious ascension, and under the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost. His message of mercy from the Father becomes fraught with new significance when we remember how He Who so taught, and loved and died, has been declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. But this increased knowledge does not alter the lessons taught us by the method of His mission to the poor.

No; the good tidings He declared were very simple. The love of God the Father, His care for His children, His kindness to both body and soul, His healing for the suffering and oppressed, His seeking in order to recover the lost. He Himself was the Gospel of all gospels, for He was the manifestation of divine goodness in the continual activity of tenderest compassion. His teaching was not so much dogmatic as profoundly touching, going down into men's hearts and evoking such awak-

ened aspirations, sympathies, and hopes as revolutionised the life. His primary requirements were equally simple. He asked them to trust Him, to recognise His message as from the Father, to be true to the love and forgiveness and mercy they were receiving, by being themselves loving and merciful towards others. Amid the confusions, and what seemed the hopeless tyrannies of earth, He declared the Kingdom of God ; that there was an Order which they had been denying, a love they had been rejecting, a Father they had forgotten, a brotherhood they had broken, but in the confession of which Kingdom lay rest, deliverance, and salvation.

These were the truths, these were the moral powers which Christ wielded. They were the forces which moved men's hearts, for they were not merely preached, they were lived out visibly. It was character and not a system which Jesus revealed, and it was character rather than a creed which He required.

And now when the vast social problems of the times are presented to the Church for solution, where can we turn for guidance except to those methods of Christ Himself? If the Church, as His body, is to represent Him and to do the kind of work He did, it can only be by following in His footsteps and living out the same blessed life of active mercy and loving sacrifice, forgetting the non-essentials, and falling back upon the same spiritual powers of eternal goodness whereby Christ won His blessed victories among men. If we would convince an age of doubt as to the realities of religion, the most direct of all methods is to show what that religion is in its vitality and power.

And so also in these days, when the loud voices of

disputants are heard on every side, and when simple souls are terrified as if the darkness of an eclipse were about to roll over beliefs that have been their very life, it is helpful, it is as a touch from the hand of Christ Himself, to go back to the early dawn and to think of what He was Who preached the Gospel to the poor. Let men wrangle as they may as to the date of this book or the authorship of that other; let the scientist cavil as he please as to a passage in Genesis; surely nothing that these or any can say touches the glory of this Christ. His goodness and truth remain in spite of all—the miracle of all miracles—shining in their own intrinsic excellence. The nearer we get to Him the nearer we are to the eternal life of religion. We feel that whatever is right, that is right; and we learn to care little for the disputings of men and of Churches, each seeking precedence, each vaunting its own doctrine, when we remember what He did Who once set a little child in the midst of His wrangling disciples, and said, “Look there! that is true greatness. That is heaven. Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”

Oh, it is the simplicity of Christ's methods, and the simplicity of Christ's message, that we need to help us now.

May He enlighten us with His own blessed light, and amid all our difficulties let us pray to be kept near Himself.

“Lord, lighten the darkness of our life's long night,
Through which we blindly stumble to the day.
Shadows mislead us; Father, send Thy light
To guide our footsteps on the homeward way.

“Lighten the darkness every human creed
Has gathered round the truth which came from Thee,

For human teaching fails us in our need,
And hides the light it fain would make us see.

“Lighten the darkness when we bend the knee
To all the gods we ignorantly make
And worship, dreaming that we worship Thee,
Till clearer light our slumbering souls awake.

“Lighten our darkness when we fail at last,
And in the midnight lay us down to die.
We trust to find Thee when the night is past,
And daylight breaks across the morning sky.”

THE LOSS OR GAIN OF THE SOUL.



THE LOSS OR GAIN OF THE SOUL.

“What is a man profited should he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”—MATTHEW xvi. 26.

THERE are two questions here. The one assumes that a man has his soul to dispose of, and asks what shall it profit him if he forfeit that soul for the gain of the whole world. The other question regards the soul as having been already lost, and inquires what shall a man give in order to recover it. “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Your attention will be directed chiefly to the first of these questions.

In order to understand its force, we must comprehend what our Lord meant by the soul, and by its loss or recovery. The ideas commonly attached to these expressions are very unreal. Many persons speak of the soul as if it were a something separate from themselves, which can be made the means of punishing them or rewarding them. And so you have descriptions of the excellence of the soul and of the immortality of the soul, and such like. There is doubtless a use of the word “soul” which justifies such treatment, but it has no place here.

If we would learn the true force of this question of Christ, we must recollect that the word which is

translated "soul" is the same word in the original as that which is rendered "life" in the preceding verses, where it is said, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it." How utterly confusing would it be were we in this context to substitute "soul" in the usual understanding of the term, and read, "Whosoever will save his soul shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his soul for my sake, shall find it." We have but to read it thus, in order to see that Christ never could have used the term in the sense we use it, and that the life of which He speaks as saved or lost is quite different from the ordinary conception of the "soul." Adopting the translation of the Revised Version of the New Testament, the text ought to run, "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

"His life?" What life?

That it was not of the bodily life our Lord was speaking is evident, because He tells His disciples that it is a life which they would lose if they refused to die for Him, and a life which death for His sake would only deepen. It was a kind of life which they would forfeit by avoiding physical death, and which would be preserved and increased were they to endure martyrdom for His sake.

It is therefore plain that by the loss or salvation of the soul, Christ did not refer to mere existence, or to existence in a place such as hell or heaven, but to a spiritual condition, which constitutes the life or death of man, a state of heart which is heaven, and a state which is hell. To perish spiritually is not therefore to

cease to exist, as little as the man who has lost his memory, or whose reason has become clouded, really perishes. As he may have lost capacities for joy which ought to be his, while he continues to live out his meagre or miserable destiny, so does he who loses his soul, in the sense in which Christ speaks, live on, and feel, and think in this world or the next ; but if he has quenched the kind of life which ought to be his as made in the image of God, then has he lost himself—lost the gift of his redeemed humanity in the strictest and most awful sense.

For the true life of man is that which links him to God and to the blessedness of the redeemed. The very purpose of his creation is to know God, and to be in fellowship for ever with His holy and perfect will, sharing His joy because sharing His character. It was for that glorious end that God made man in His own image, and it was to reproduce that life when it was forfeited that the Son of God came to earth and died for us. When we possess this life we are joined to the whole family of God, and partake of the joy of all those who, living truly, live blessedly.

That this kind of life is indeed the end and satisfaction of our being is witnessed to by the instinctive craving in every man for the absolutely good and fair. In those aspirations for the pure and abiding which visit the very worst ; in those responses given in our better moments to the call of Christ, when like a clear note awaking the slumbering strings of a neglected instrument, we find His word calling forth unexpected harmonies from chords of feeling long silent, we know that there is a life which may be ours, which ought to be ours, a life with which our whole character ought

to be inspired, a life which cannot be measured by days or years, and that cannot be disturbed by change of outward circumstance. It is the life of goodness, love, purity, through fellowship with the Father and the Son. This is the true life of man, and in its possession or loss lies the salvation or loss of the soul.

But we are not left to the gropings of our better nature to discover its character, for Jesus Christ has revealed it. "In Him was the life, and the life was the light of man." His life is the light of men. For we never can know what we possess in humanity, or what it is possible for us as men to become, until we see our humanity as it is in Him. There can therefore be no profounder study for us than the life that is in Jesus Christ. The most cursory glance shows how impregnable was that life against every assault from without. Poverty, shame, suffering, and death could not affect it. Like the silent but tremendous force of gravitation, His life in God held all acts, thoughts, joys, sorrows, fixed in harmonious order and in unassailable peace. All were centred immovably in the unseen Father and in perfect righteousness and love. This was what St. John spoke of when he said, "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

We are now in a better position to understand the question, What is a man profited should he gain the whole world and lose this life, for which God created him and Christ redeemed him? The question is put as an affair of merchandise. In one scale is placed the whole world. By that we may understand all that a man may *have* as distinguished from what he *is*; all

that comes from without ; all elements of power or pleasure ; what the most soaring ambition, the most refined taste, or the wildest passion can conceive ;—let all this be placed on the one side, and let there be put on the other the man himself with his infinite capacity for good and for God, and all will be at once outweighed. The question is not whether it is possible to possess both worlds, and to have all that is enjoyable in the outward without losing the inward. For we know that all things become truly ours, “the world, and life, and death, and things present, and things to come,” only when we are “Christ’s as Christ is God’s.” That is not, however, the question of the text. It refers simply to the unprofitableness of a man gaining the outward at the expense of the inward, having a life in the abundance of the things he possesses, and losing his life in God ; losing himself as a man in the deepest signification of the term.

The unprofitableness of this is apparent. For it is not difficult to recognise the superiority of personal goodness over material wealth and power. St. Paul in chains was in this sense richer than Felix on the judgment-seat, and John the Baptist in his cell was wealthier than Herod at the feast. But higher far than the measure of goodness, or purity, or rectitude, which men may attain here by culture, is spiritual life, life in God and His life in us, such as Christ had, and such as He is ready to bestow.

We here pass to the centre ; from gazing at the broken reflection of the light to the source and fountain of all glory. For Jesus Christ expresses nothing arbitrary. He states a condition which must hold true as long as man is man and God is God, when He

says "It is eternal life to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." To be towards the Father as sons, in sympathy with His mind and in loving obedience to His will—that is eternally the true life of man, by whatever method or in whatever measure it may be attained.

And a man is not profited should he gain the whole world and lose this life. The loss or gain of the soul, when thus understood, is an awfully real transaction. It is being fulfilled one way or another every hour we live. For each man, whether he will it or not, is gaining or losing this life which is called the soul.

With one man it is the toil of business, the anxieties of money-making, the constant worry of occupation which occasion that loss. Gradually the higher aims of existence lose their influence. The nobler ideal which he may once have formed ceases to attract him. He is gaining the world with its material successes and social comforts, but he is losing his life in God and as an heir of the immortal Kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And he may know that he is losing it. As earthliness gains the ascendancy, he may be sadly conscious that there are pure voices gradually becoming silent, and that in proportion as he is finding his reward in things external, there is a life perishing within which is capable of joys infinitely richer and worthier than can be derived from the abundance of outward possessions.

With another it is ease, comfort, pleasure, which spread a mildew growth over all manly and spiritual energy, till every earnest aspiration becomes choked. Or with another it is sensuality and passion, which sweep like a blast of death through the being, with-

ing every fair flower of purity, and blighting all healthy motives. And with another it may be no more than the nothingnesses and vanities of society.

Alas! that for these things we should ever barter our life as children of God, and the majestic possibilities of our redeemed nature.

And alas! too, if we should ever do so consciously, and under the rebukes of our nobler convictions. By the emptiness of our prayers, and by our gradual drifting away from former sympathies; by the ever-recurring consciousness of the chasm which is widening between us and the heavenly life into which we have been called; or, worse still, by the terrible possession of a stony heart and a seared conscience, and a will that has become strong and stiff under the power of habits that seem now unalterable; by these and other tokens we may perforce know that we are, indeed, exchanging the blessed life which might be ours as children of the all-holy and loving Father for one that is a counterfeit, a delusion, and a misery. Ay, what doth it profit now? And what shall it profit when the veil has been lifted and we stand face to face with the realities of being? If even now amid the bright voices and laughter of earth we are conscious that there is an exchange being made, and that there is an undercurrent which is carrying us away day by day from our life in God, what shall it be when the end is reached, in the possible destiny of one launched on the shoreless sea of eternal existence and self-banished from the one eternal good?

It is of this that Christ speaks when He asks, "What is a man profited should he gain the whole world and lose his life?"—that life which is his truest self, as a

man made for God and called to share the divine joy for ever.

But I cannot close without alluding to the other question—"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" What shall he give to buy back the life in God which he may have forfeited?

How, indeed, shall a man buy back the lost innocence, the peaceful conscience, the tender sympathies, the holy aspirations he may have lost? What sacrifices will not the earnest seeker after the recovery of such treasures make? What penances will he not endure? What self-inflicted lashes will he not suffer if by these he can only cut out the brand of evil—"the ineradicable taint of sin!" But it is in vain. You may tear away the flesh, but not reach that. It is too deep, too personal, too terribly ours to be removed by unaided human strength.

But, thank God, we are not left to our own powerlessness. There is a divine strength for us. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which has been lost, to recover the life that has been forfeited, to re-inspire the loves, the aspirations, the hopes, the courage which have been quenched. He gives the remission of sins; He takes away, in the strictest sense, the burden from the conscience and the iniquity from the heart. He restores the life of confidence and peace. He leads back to God, and to light, and joy, and blessedness. When we surrender ourselves to Him—for help, guidance, and grace—He works in us both to will and to do according to the will of God. His love awakens love, and His presence and spirit strengthen and sustain it.

The most important question for any who may be

seeking that life which is for us all in Him is whether we are willing to receive Him, surrendering ourselves to His will, and heartily trusting His love. When self is surrendered then all is possible, and the redemption of the life which we may have forfeited is secure.

These are realities of which I have been speaking. They are experiences which belong to this world, and which, in one sense or the other, must be ours. May God help us to make the right choice! Let us then keep the highest ideal before us, and reach ever towards Christ, and in thus choosing there will be the true saving of our souls. To know God and Jesus Christ is life eternal. To be in sympathy with His will is to share His joy. All else compared to that seems dust and ashes. As the quaint Sir Thomas Browne piously and characteristically expresses it, "That wherein God Himself is happy, the holy angels are happy, in whose defect the devils are unhappy—that dare I call happiness. Whatsoever conduceth unto this may by an easy metaphor deserve the name. To obtain this is the humble desire of my most reasonable ambition and all I dare call happiness on earth. Dispose of me, good Lord, towards this according to thy wisdom. Thy will be done, though in my own undoing."

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

“The word was made flesh.”—JOHN i. 14.

A VAST number of contrasts meet us to-day. Amid the darkness and chill of winter we are gathered in the gladness of a great and universal festival. As the last sands of the old year are running out, and our thoughts are filled with memories of the days “that are no more,” we are brought in spirit, not to death but to life, and to that birth of a little child which was the opening of a new age in our humanity. To the ear of faith the heavens resound even yet with the song of the angels, “Peace on earth and good-will toward men.” And yet the truthful observer is confounded as he imagines the Europe of the nineteenth century, the Europe that is panoplied for war, with its millions of soldiers armed with every engine of destruction that human ingenuity can invent; or as he imagines the Europe of most unchristian misery—the crowds of poor and wretched, the masses of sinful, cruel, and dissolute men and women that are the reproach of our civilisation. How dare we sing the old song of Bethlehem with such scenes before us? Seems it not strange that we have so little terror at the violence of the contrast, and are not disposed rather to fall on our knees and cry, “God have mercy on this sin-laden

earth. We have heard of the great hope which gladdened the hearts of the fathers. We have heard of the tidings of great joy declared to the adoring shepherds and to the wise men who brought their gifts from a far land ; but the world is full of misery, and there is no peace on earth, for the nations watch for war as if Christ had never lived, and men are still crying for faith, and for the love they have not from their brother-men. Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down ! ”

Has, then, that birth so long ago, and that marvellous life and death, been in vain ? Are we foolish to expect the Kingdom of God ever to be established on earth ? Has the Church been founded fruitlessly, and has the brotherhood of men in Christ been only a dream ?

Surely not. This very festival and the promise and hope which it recalls are a protest against these evils. They are a permanent witness for the truth of God against all the perversions by Christendom of that truth which Christendom still professes to accept. Nay, more. This entrance of the divine Son into our humanity, heralded by the heavenly voices which announced His ultimate triumph, is not a mockery.

The development of every divine purpose is immensely slow. Progress in nature, and the evolution of even physical types, require cycles that are incalculable. Life is the pledge of growth. Follow the line of life, and you are certain in the long run to find advance. It is so here. Here is life — a new life in humanity. We go back to Bethlehem, to a little child in a manger, but that life involves an infinite growth and is the pledge of the spiritual restoration of man and the redemption

of the world. Not at once, not in a thousand years perhaps, not in ten thousand years for all we know, will it be accomplished ; but yet, being there, a divine seed planted in our humanity, it does imply the end of which it is the seemingly feeble beginning—an end which the songs of angels anticipated with joy. That life *has* grown in our humanity. That seed *has* increased. The world is not what it once was, and the very shame with which society is looking upon the evils we deplore, is the sign of how greatly the heaven of the new Kingdom has worked.

For whatever this nineteenth century of our era may be, however terribly the midnight shadows still surround the light that shines over the cradle of Bethlehem, still the world feels now about those evils and about that darkness as it did not feel centuries ago. We have but to place the sentiments of the first centuries of our faith beside the public opinion of Europe now to mark the change. We have but to bring the Europe of the Middle Ages into contrast with the Europe of to-day—the Britain of the last century even into contrast with the Britain of the present, sin-stained and faulty as it may be—to mark the greatness of the advance. We may have been unfaithful, but He abideth faithful ; and as we look back upon it all, and see how every ray of purest light we enjoy streams from that spot where Christ lay, “the Infant of days,” we may and ought to join in the gladness which this day is thrilling over the whole earth, “Glory be to God in the highest, on earth peace and good-will toward men.”

We are asked this day to ponder on the mystery of the incarnation—“The Word was made flesh.”

“The Word.” What do we mean by the term? To those of you who are acquainted with the literature of the original, and who know how many notions are combined in the Greek “Logos,” here translated “Word,” it will seem vain to attempt, as a mere episode in a brief sermon, to give an adequate explanation of its significance. It will be enough to state that it means both “reason” and “speech,” at once the highest thought and the expression of that thought. As applied to Christ it may be held as teaching that He possesses the thought of God and reveals the thought of God. He could not reveal without Himself possessing, and He could not possess without being the One Who was “with God and was God;” Who “was in the beginning,”—not as created in the beginning, but Who “was” then. So that if we go back and back in imagination, and at the furthest reach conceive of a beginning, we are met by the statement, not that the Word began, but “*was*”—that He was “with God and was God.” It is the assertion at once of the eternity and the divinity of the divine Son.

The two ideas which seem to me to be combined in the name “Logos,” or “Word,” are—Thought, and its expression; spirit, and its utterance. Thought is invisible; unless it is expressed it remains unknown. You who are now listening to me could not tell what my mind is engaged on, except that the words that are uttered express the unseen idea. The word goes from me, and by it you know my thought. In like manner “no man hath seen God at any time,” and if we ask, What does God think? What is He? the answer is Christ is the Word, the direct expression of God. He is the Word that utters Him: “He that hath seen

me hath seen the Father.” He is not a dead word, like a printed book. He is a divine Person who, because He was in the beginning with God and was God, is the perfect utterance of God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.

It is when we try to imagine that union of the divine and the human—the human being the perfect utterance and expression of the divine—that among many other truths, the fact of the incarnation becomes so immeasurably valuable. The Word was “made flesh and tabernacled among us,” tabernacled even as the Shekinah, the cloud which witnessed to the divine Presence, abode in the tent in the wilderness. So did He who was in the beginning with God, and Who was God, dwell in our mortal flesh, taking it to Himself; and in our humanity He revealed God. “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

It is in the sharpness of many contrasts that the grandeur of the incarnation consists. On the one hand is the Eternal Word, on the other is our frail flesh, and the incarnation brings them together. “The Word was made flesh.”

It may well appear too awful to be true—“made flesh”! What! dare we associate these words—“All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made”—with the limitations of our common humanity? Dare we associate—“He was in the beginning with God, and was God”—with the Child in the manger and with the life of Him who was for years, boy and man, a villager among the villagers of Nazareth; with Him who was the wanderer over Palestine, and who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?

Must we not defend every just idea of the divine glory from such conceptions? Must we not, if we believe in the incarnation at all, say that it was but the semblance of human flesh and blood that He wore, or that she who bore Him was not a woman like the other daughters of men, but was immaculate—herself born without sin?

So have men sometimes been constrained to break the force of the impact between the eternal Word and our human flesh. So did many earnest thinkers in the second and third centuries believe that it was but a phantom body, an appearance of flesh, which the Eternal Son assumed; for it was too much for them to think of Him, the Eternal One, as taking this hungering and thirsting and weary flesh of ours. So has the Roman Church raised the Virgin Mother to something higher than human, and declared the dogma of her immaculate nature. All such attempts spring from unbelief in the fact, so startling, so awful, that He who was in the form of God, and “thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.”

Yet it is the very sharpness of the contrasts which gives value to the truth. The nearer we bring Him to us, the more that we see it was not another kind of nature, but our own very nature, our actual flesh, with its every weakness, that He assumed, and which He redeemed, the brighter become our hopes, the more certain becomes our redemption, and the more glorious does God’s purpose appear, making us sharers of the divine nature, because the Divine Son has clothed Himself in our nature, and raised it with Himself into heavenly

places. Whatever separates Christ from us weakens these hopes. Whatever impresses upon us the thought that He is indeed born our brother and our Saviour tends to ennoble life. This is the link which binds humanity to its eternal destiny ; it is the pledge of the goodwill of God concerning us, and that it is His purpose that we should be fellow-heirs with His own Son of the everlasting inheritance.

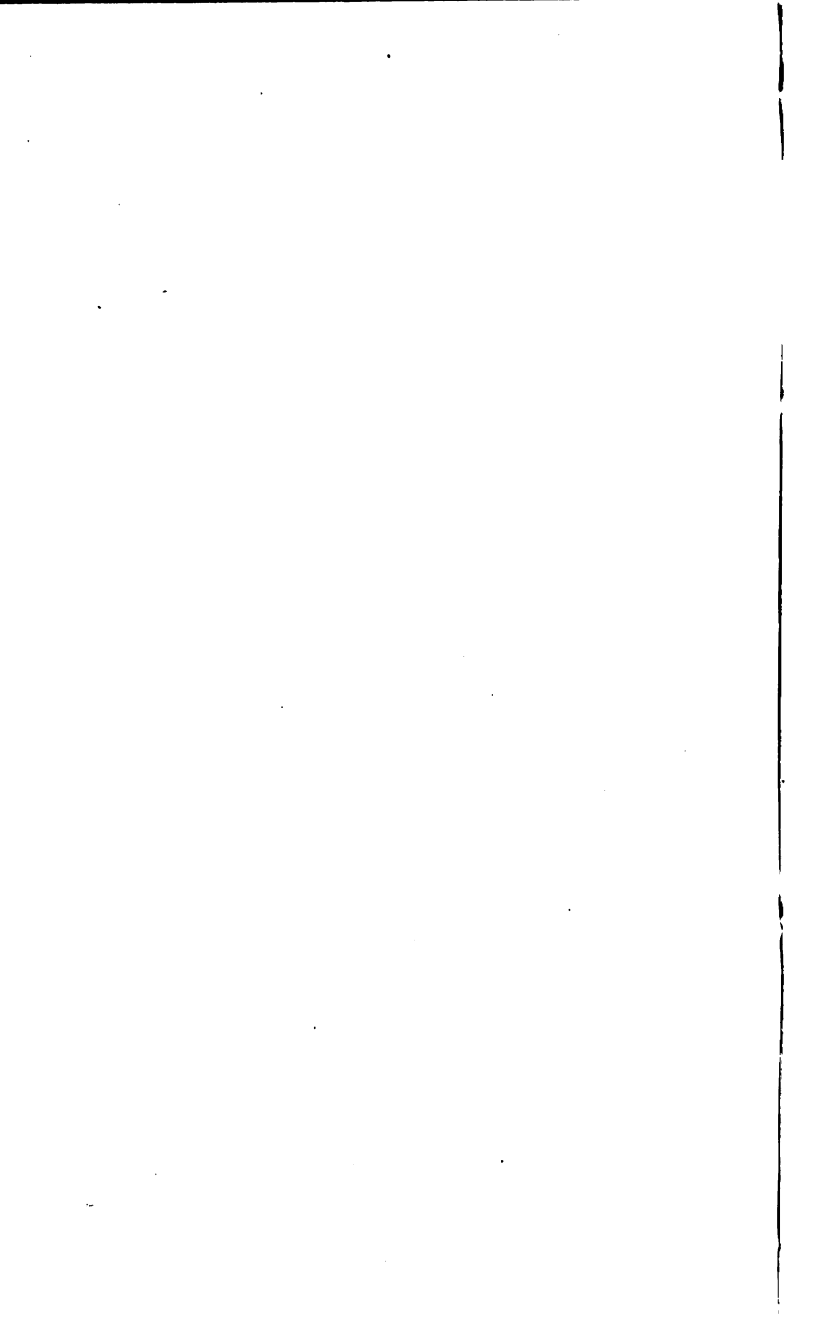
But how can that be ? How can the infinite dwell in the finite ? How can we moderns, we who pride ourselves in the new thoughts we have gained of the universe, of its immensity, and of the overwhelming forces which are everywhere at work, how can we tolerate this doctrine of the incarnation, how He by Whom all things were made appeared as a man, and lived a life bounded by the narrow limits of our flesh ?

To this there are many answers. One, however, may be sufficient for the present, viz., that the infinite which was expressed in Christ was not the kind of infinitude to which these objections apply. We have to distinguish what that infinite was. There are many modes of the infinite. When we speak of the infinitude of God, we surely do not mean only infinite size—height, depth, and length and breadth—or infinite duration. There are other infinitudes besides that of boundless force. And yet when men speak of the infinite it is generally of such qualities as these they think. Infinite goodness, infinite love, infinite holiness, infinite beauty, are not dependent on such supposed measures of the immeasurable as one would apply to the depths of space, when we attempt to express what it is in figures. We do not calculate

mercy as we compute cycles of time. We cannot weigh truth as we reckon the weight of a star or the force of a comet. The two kinds of infinitude do not belong to the same plane. The physical and the moral relate to different spheres; and, therefore, when you ask me whether the infinitude of God could be expressed in a human life, I answer it can be so expressed. The divine Word was made flesh, and in Him, the man Christ Jesus, we do behold the infinite beauty and glory, and holiness, and love and truth of God. There are other powers besides those of force. There are powers that are spiritual as well as powers that are natural. Power may dwell in an idea as much as in the thunderbolt. The sphere of spirit does not require size and space; it needs intensity. Spotless purity may shine in the eye of a little child as much as in the wide stainless heaven. The infinite goodness and mercy and love of God can be expressed in one vivid act, although that act may be a matter which belongs to a few minutes of our earthly life, and takes place in a spot which can be measured by so many yards. These last do not affect the other. Moral beauty requires nothing more than perfection to make it infinite. It defies our arithmetic, for there is no number which can express loveliness. It can be weighed in no balance, nor measured by pounds, nor by lengths of miles. It shines for the moral eye, exhaustless in its glory and unfathomable in its mystery and grace. And so it is that when we think of the Infinite which tabernacled in our humanity, we are led to the vision of an absolute sinlessness, a perfect goodness, a stainless righteousness, and a measureless love. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld

His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

And so as on this day, in common with the whole Church, we go back in thought to Bethlehem, and ponder on what the shepherds saw, who came from the starlit hills to the dim stables, and to the group of peasants gathered round a poor little child, and are filled with wonder as we trace the influences which have already streamed from that manger, and think of the promise which has yet to be accomplished in its fulness, we may, amid the perplexities of the present, have faith in the great future. The Word has been made flesh, the seed has been planted, the life has been imparted, our humanity is redeemed; and, therefore, although the vision tarry, we wait for it, because it will surely come. "Glory to God in the highest. On earth peace, and goodwill towards men."



THE GATE BEAUTIFUL.

THE GATE BEAUTIFUL.

“The gate of the temple which is called Beautiful.”—Acts iii. 2.

PREACHED IN ST. GILES', EDINBURGH, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
MEETING OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION IN 1892.

THE Temple was to the Jews the House of God in a far more literal sense than we can apply the term to our churches. It was the one appointed place of access to Jehovah, to which the sinner came with his confession, those whom God had blessed with their thank-offering, and the devout and loving with their adoration. It was the centre of religious interest, and the embodiment of the history of the nation, the palladium of its hopes, the expression of its aspirations.

How deep must the attachment have been which has survived nineteen centuries of desolation, and still attracts to the bare rock where once stood the altar of God the longing gaze of millions of our race, bringing weary pilgrims from every land that they may kiss the very stones which encircle the old sacred place!

We say, and say justly, that the Temple with its worship was a vast symbolism showing forth spiritual realities, and it has been the work of Christian teachers in all ages to attempt to interpret that symbolism, and to show the verities which it represented.

It is on this ground that I take as my subject to-day

“the gate that is called ‘Beautiful;’” for although it originally meant no more than that there was one door in the Temple court, among many, so distinguished for its architectural loveliness that it received the name of “Beautiful,” yet there is a suggestiveness in this fact which may be used to point a moral of no small importance. If there were men who gained access in those days to the worship of God by the gate Beautiful, is there no such gate for the soul still? Is the Beautiful in the widest sense, as embracing moral as well as material loveliness, not always a very real way of approach to God—nay, is it not, perhaps, the most direct of all the paths by which we can reach the Divine?

It is thus that nature affects us when we lie most open to impression. The spiritual in us then leaps forth to interpret and enjoy the spiritual suggestiveness with which nature in her every mood is charged. One cannot help catching the awe that broods amid the solitudes of the mountains. The glory of the setting sun attended by the retinue of shining clouds inspires a sense of grandeur and of spotless loveliness, so that, in spite of us, we are conscious of aspirations which lift us above earth into dreams of a possible world where all is light. If the yellow primrose stirs us with thoughts that “lie too deep for tears,” it is because its pure beauty and its very frailty make us realise an absolute perfection and a divine tenderness. Humanity is at its best when it can thus read what lies aback of common objects, and recognises the suggestiveness of things material. The eye of the beast perceives no such meanings, nor does the animalised man perceive them. Like the ox that grazes on them, he sees no marvellous array in the lilies of the field; and like the ox he can

stare in vacancy at the heavens aflame with splendour as of the throne of God. There are men to whom fact is but fact, and beauty appeals in vain. The lily is to them but a specimen, and the sunset only a study in prismatic hues. But to others, in whom the spiritual nature is awake, there are unutterable messages ever sounding in the ear, and ever being written on the heart by things of loveliness, and, if interpreted aright, these are whisperings of an ideal that has existence beyond and above the things they gaze at, and that ideal is God.

So was it that the greatest minds of the ancient world were led step by step to the conception of an Absolute Goodness, and were brought to recognise in the fragments of loveliness they saw around them prophecies and assertions of the existence of One in Whom alone the perfection of all truth and all beauty could be found. So is it that in a famous passage in the Symposium of Plato Socrates makes Diotima of Mantinea reason upwards from beauty as beheld in one instance to the thought of the universal beauty—whether in nature or in social laws, or in the morally fair, until the spirit reaches the Immortal One, in whom they all consist. “He who has learned to see the beautiful,” says Socrates, “in due order and succession, when he comes towards the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty—a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or increasing and waning . . . but beauty only, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting. . . . He who, rising upwards, begins to see *that* beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts

upwards for the sake of that final beauty. . . . But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty; the divine beauty, I mean, pure, and clear, and unalloyed? Do you not see that in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be able to bring forth, not images, but realities, and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may?" This, the teaching of one who lived centuries before Christ, is, strange to say, far more Christian, far loftier than much of what is vaunted in the present day.

The manner in which Socrates looked on beauty—as ranging from natural objects up to the beauty of holiness—is full of meaning for us. Such beauty is more than a pastime, and infinitely grander than what the selfish vanity of the modern æsthete would make it, using it only for delight and luxury. For we are bound to go beyond the objects or convictions which we call beautiful and good, and to recognise them as expressions of an eternal beauty, the crown of all. We are bound to rise as Socrates did, to One—even God—Who is the absolute and spotless perfection of all truth and of all goodness. We must believe that what we behold here is only the shadow of what is there, the shining into this world of an eternal light. And that the sense of the perfect and the desire for absolute loveliness that is stirred in us, by what we see and feel as we gaze on nature, or appreciate righteousness and self-sacrifice among men, are the instinctive goings forth of what is most divine in us towards Him who is the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible, of whose glory the heavens and the earth are full.

For surely there is more than phantasy in those aspirations, which may be awakened by outward things, but

which cannot be satisfied by them, and which, the more perfect the earthly objects are, compel us all the more to crave as by an irrepressible instinct for an ideal not yet attained. We are not greater but infinitely poorer if we permit the drudgery of life, or the marshalling of dry facts towards some inductive conclusion which we term law, to silence the voices which whisper to us of a world fairer and purer than this we see, and are not led by them to think of Him from whom they come. We ought to catch the full significance of—

“Those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward thought,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Doth tremble, like a guilty thing surprised.

* * * * *

Which be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence.”

This way of intuitional and direct access to God, this gate of the temple called Beautiful, is I know, despised in the present day. Many look at beauty for its own sake, and make it the end; they admire its loveliness and use it only as a minister to their luxury—a thing of furniture; but what we need is to go through the beautiful as a gate, that we may reach God and worship Him. Beauty has its votaries, and its culture is a fashion; with many it is itself a religion, but a religion in which the moral character is too frequently sacrificed to artistic form. But we claim for it more than this. Beauty ought not to be an end. It should, rightly used, be always a gate.

For whence comes it all? Whence comes that sense in man which appreciates what is so widely and variously expressed, from the loveliness of nature up to the glory of the grace and truth which shone in the face of Jesus Christ? Is there, or is there not, a counterpart—or rather an original—a central Mind from Whom they all come; and are we not warranted in regarding the universe as the instrument which utters His thoughts—so that we may through nature and through Christ know the Father of all lights and worship and serve Him.

Through methods like these, and by giving full value to our spiritual intuitions, whether awakened by the Gospels, or by what we learn “through sense and outward things,” we can find an open gate to the true temple of the soul and of all religion.

We are living at a time when there seems to me to be an exaggerated, because too exclusive, importance attached to that kind of information which a study of the facts of nature affords. I believe that it would not be an advance but a retrogression, if men were taught that the greatest achievement is to note and classify phenomena and to give no heed to those feelings and impressions which come to us not so much by reasoning as by intuition. We have to ask whether information is to be itself an end, or a means to this higher end, even access to the highest ideals of moral and spiritual excellence—nay, rather even to God? Are the objects we behold and the laws we study to be the limit of our interests? Or are we to regard them as the sort of language in which He utters Himself, Who is the eternal wisdom and goodness? Everything depends on the answer we give. The education of the

future depends on it, and the value of life whether "it is worth living" depends on it. The end of the one is the apathy of Agnosticism, the crushing incubus of Materialism, the bitter cynicism of the pessimist. The way of the other is courage, hopefulness, duty, religion, and God, the enrichment of our humanity and the ennobling of life.

For there are two ways in looking at nature and at life. There is the way of what is called fact, and there is the way of using these facts—passing through them as through a gate—to the Mind that is aback of them all, whereby we may learn the thoughts of the great Thinker and reach God—the all-holy and all-wise.

Facts, it goes without saying, are the material of truth, and are in a sense divine. A just induction is the handmaid of revelation. Modern science has been, in a sense, the successor of the ancient prophets; for it has been the interpreter of God, the teacher which has shown the secrets of the material universe, and which has declared to men the methods in which God has worked through the countless ages.

Assuredly it is not at this hour, when our minds have been filled with the marvellous tale of what science has done, that we require to assert our appreciation of the mighty gifts it has bestowed. It is just because of the greatness of these gifts that it may seem necessary to touch upon the use that may be made of them. For the value attached to the kind of information which science deals with may be exaggerated, and in my humble opinion it is exaggerated, when it is exalted, sometimes exclusively exalted, over what used to be termed the Humanities. The educative character of the two methods is worth considering. The dis-

covery of the extraordinary function fulfilled by worm in the economy of nature is, no doubt, very striking, and the patient and faithful labour of the great observer who perceived the meaning of the facts noticed by him, was an achievement of close reasoning and of noble faithfulness and painstaking accuracy. But it may be questioned whether our humanity can be greatly enriched by that kind of learning, though multiplied a hundred-fold. Is mankind made either better or worse by it? Is the sum of the moral well-being of nations increased by it? You may cram your boy with the marvellous story of the habits of ants and bees, and thereby have not only interested him but perhaps led him to cultivate habits of observation, and opened for him a new world of ideas as to insect life. You may have furnished him with a healthy antidote against idleness and a beneficial intellectual exercise. But it is doubtful whether such studies, if made primary and exclusive, can greatly advance him as a human being. After you have traced a line connecting the organism of the Ascidian with the body which enshrined the soul of Socrates or Shakespere, have you gained the least help towards all that really made Shakespere and Socrates worth knowing? Shakespere and Socrates are not touched by such studies. When the schoolboy, as it has been well said, has been coached so far in chemistry as to be able to tell you that the tear which trickles down his mother's cheek is composed of certain solutions of soda, has he really learned to understand what these tears mean? Their origin is moral, not chemical. When the physicist has analysed the material causes which produce the effects of the orchestra, and has calculated out the intervals and

the vibrations which have composed the harmonies, has he advanced our knowledge of the music that has been played by one single degree? Be it so, that it has been caused by the trembling of strings, and woods, and brasses; be it that there is a materialism in it, which can be measured by figure and expressed by number—is there not also something more than that? Is there not there the utterance of a soul conveying through that material instrumentality its own passion, its imaginative longings, its despair, its joy, its pathos? Are we not able thereby to hold communion for awhile with the majestic spirit of a Bach or Beethoven? Is this material beauty that comes to us not a gateway through which soul passes to soul, mind reaches mind?

“And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought as o’er them sweeps,
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the soul of each and God of all.”

Or, better still, what if all nature be just such another instrument through which we listen to God? What if all the chords of feeling that are struck in us by what we see, all the moral harmony which Christ Himself awakens in our humanity, be but the Gate Beautiful by which it is intended that we should enter the Temple of the Spirit and reach Him who is speaking to us through them all, but whom no one hath seen or can see. To count the stars and measure their orbits may be accomplished by a man who feels as little as does the calculating machine; but how different it is to come under the impression of the awe and grandeur of the starry heavens, even as a child may feel them, and under the power of which the greatest minds have attained their worthiest thoughts!

No; we must beware of assigning an exaggerated, because an exclusive, importance to the educative value of natural science. Used as a gateway to reach the wider meanings of things, it is a glorious study; but, if narrowed only to observation, and to the classifying of facts and the tracing of laws, I humbly believe that it is not in the best sense educative. It may, when thus employed, exercise a cramping influence upon our humanity. For it is sadly suggestive to read how the greatest observer the world has ever seen, one of the most truthful, simple, and noble of spirits, but who lived only to observe, and to classify, and to reason out the conclusions of his accurate induction, had to confess the spiritual atrophy which crept over him, and the terrible dying out of all the enjoyment which had once enthralled him through music, and poetry, and the arts, so that a side of his nature—and that side almost the richest in spiritual suggestiveness—became ossified.

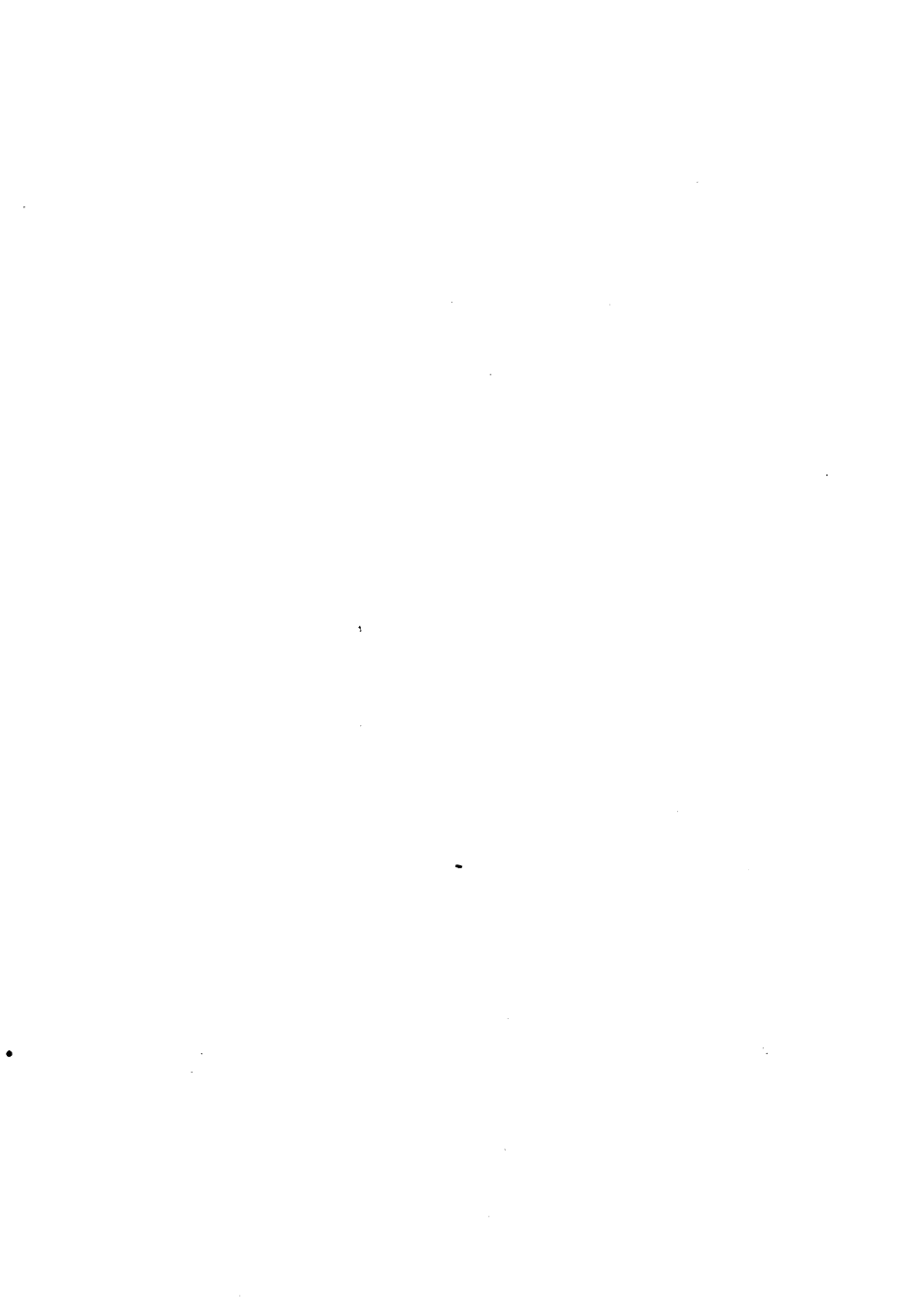
We need something more than all this. There is a spirit in nature whose voice we ought to hear, and which speaks to us soul to soul—"a still small voice" that whispers of the eternal, and of the ineffably pure, and good, and true. For our education we still require the old "Humanities." The thoughts of great poets; the far-reaching insight into truths that transcend experiment, left by the mighty thinkers of the past; the intuitions which pierce through the veil of sense to the ideal; the cry for God which all things awaken—these are the real educators of the soul. Materialism is but as the letters of the alphabet, the signs through which spirit can communicate with spirit; and it is what it is the means of telling

that gives it value. Who cares for what may have composed the pigments that were used by Da Vinci or Buonarroto as he gazes on their masterpieces? We forget the chemistry of the colours and are raised at once into another world, for we live in the thought of the great artist. The materialism is but the gateway through which we pass to the ideal.

Study as you may the marvellous processes by which the Alps have been left in their sublime magnificence, dissect the flower, and weigh the sun, yet mountain, and flower, and sun have more for us than you can reach through methods like these. When all is done, they raise us, as by an inherent virtue, into another region in which we feel more than any poet's tongue can tell. Subject Christ Himself to your criticism, and peer into version after version of the Gospels, weigh dates, nibble and cavil at details—it is like analysing the ink and paper of the Bible instead of studying the message. What then when all is done? In spite of all, the Christ remains. That portrait cannot be destroyed—the unapproachable of all ideals. The light shines unquenched and unquenchable. The eternal loveliness and goodness that are there stand sure in virtue of what they are—no criticism can rob us of these. And He is more than good and lovely—He is the way to the Father. The beauty of His holiness constitutes an entrance into another Presence. For is not this Jesus Christ—because He is the highest and the best that our humanity ever enshrined—this God-man—is He not the true "Gate Beautiful"? For in virtue of what He is, He becomes the most direct way to the Eternal Goodness. "We needs must love the highest when we see it;

not Lancelot or another." If there is a God at all, can there be any glory more divine than what shone in the face of Jesus Christ? We need no higher evidence of its truth than its intrinsic beauty. We feel that He has a right to say: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And all experience tells us that it is eternally the life of man to know this God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

GOD OR MAMMON ?



GOD OR MAMMON?

“No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”—MATTHEW vi. 24.

THIS statement evidently assumes that the two masters have wills that are opposed, for there is no impossibility in serving two masters who desire the same thing. When the difference is moral there is also implied a necessary antagonism in the character of the servant of the one master or the other. A good servant will love the good master and take a delight in doing his will, while a bad servant will agree with the bad master and despise the scruples of the good. When Christ says ye cannot serve God and mammon, He assumes that there is a necessary contradiction between God and mammon.

Is this really the case? Is there indeed a necessary opposition between the service of God and the service of that wealth to which not only the modern world is increasingly devoted, but which is the source of many of the greatest triumphs of civilisation? The political economist traces almost every social blessing to the love of money. He can shew it to be the great stimulus to enterprise, the parent of commerce, the handmaid of civilisation. He smiles with contempt at the conception of a society formed on the literal acceptance of

Christ's beautiful picture of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, and asks, "What would Europe become if men were to act on such a precept?"

Others, again, meet our Lord's assertion, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," with objections of another character. They ask, "Is it not possible to make the best of both worlds? Cannot a man serve God by his honest industry as well as by his prayers? Is the farmer who tills the field from sunrise to sunset, and who with keen anxiety watches every season that he may reap some return; is the engineer whose inventive genius employs an army of busy workers to construct the ships or the railways; is the merchant or manufacturer who conducts a business that gives a livelihood to thousands, and who keeps ledgers, and balances profits, and toils early and late to make money;—are these labouring wickedly and against the will of God? Is Christianity, in short, the enemy of modern progress? and is the idle *lazzarone* of Naples, basking in the sun, or the lazy loafer, waiting upon chance, the true representative of a life of faith?"

The answer is obvious. It is not industry that is considered, nor is it money that is condemned; for the Bible is full of enforcements to honest industry, and we know how our Lord has commanded us to "make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," *i.e.*, so to use money that it will prove our friend and not our enemy in the great day of account. There is no opposition between Christ and political economy; and money, like every other gift, may be so laboured for and so used as to conduce to the highest education in religion as well as in civilisation. The antithesis between God and mammon is therefore not to be found by

regarding the matter from the point of view of either of the objections we have quoted.

The opposition is discovered in the little word "*serve*," i.e., yielding supreme obedience, rendering the worship of the heart and life, giving over the affections to one or other, God or mammon, so that the claims of the one become superior to the claims of the other. This service is such that the will of God and the demands made by mammon may come in conflict, and, when they do so, that it is impossible to obey both, and that we must accordingly take the one and refuse the other. Then it will be seen whose we are and whom we love most. For all worship implies that some particular class of principles reigns supreme over our affections. We serve what we love most. There are certain principles which are identified with the will of God; and when we worship God, we love these principles and obey them, and everything else is used in subservience to their claims. A man can serve God, and be righteous and honest, loving and generous in the way he acquires money and in the way he uses money. In that case his life is harmonious, for it is in subjection to the will of God. On the other hand, a man may hold a creed about God while he serves and worships the very things which God forbids. He may give money-making the first place in his heart, and when the claims of righteousness, honesty, and generosity interfere with the prospect of greater profits; in other words, when the will of God brings any risk of pecuniary loss, then he lets money get the best of it; he keeps the will of God for his theology, but he lets the principles, whatever they are, that rule the market, sway his conduct. Nay, he may even go

further than this, and may use religion for business purposes, and pose as a zealot in the synagogue or as a pietist in the prayer-meeting, and advertise his subscriptions to this church or to that charity—not because he loves them, far from it! for if there was no publicity he would be as hard with charities as he is to his employees or his competitors. His apparent generosity is a part of his mammon-worship, for it is exercised because useful for mercantile success. Charity and religion form an excellent medium in these days for that sort of “push” which the demon of competition has consecrated as the very sign and seal of “getting on.”

What we mean by “serving God” is that we yield ourselves in everything to His will, and that in dealing with money we refuse to obey any custom of the trade or of the profession, however condoned by society, which is inconsistent with the high standard of honour, and fair-play, and justice, and consideration for others, that we know to be demanded by the will of God. And what we mean by “serving mammon” is that we place money-making as the first and the foremost aim; and when any honourable scruple, any very high conception of duty threatens to interfere with our success, that we put that scruple aside, and take the course which will save us the risk of loss, or secure to us the largest profit. In the one case we are governed by God, in the other we are governed by mammon.

The opposition is one which finds illustration every day. The two masters are continually making demands upon our obedience. God says, “Look not only on your own things, but also on the things of others. Do

to others as you would have them do to you. In other words—act fairly, honestly, and kindly with your brother man.” Mammon says, “Every one for himself. Get the better of your neighbour if you can. ‘Cut in’ upon his business ; cut down his prices, although you know them to be honest prices ; undersell him, though you may do it at a temporary loss. Pluck the bread from his mouth if you can. Do not be too particular in your statements, nor hesitate at a downright lie, now and then, if you can only thereby secure orders.”

God says, “Blessed are they who suffer for righteousness sake. Blessed are they who will endure the martyrdom of the spoiling of their goods, or of death itself, rather than compromise truth and honour, which are as much a part of religion and of the worship of Christ as a belief in the Gospel of the Redeemer.”

But mammon says, “That is all very well, very romantic, but you must ‘move with the times’ ; and, if you are to hold your own in these days of competition, you must not try to be better than your neighbours ; you must take the world as you find it, and fall in with the customs of trade, on which success depends.”

Now, what do these two voices indicate ? Do they not show that there may come in practical life occasions when a very clear-marked and fundamental opposition is presented between God and mammon, and when a man is called on to choose whom he will serve ? When the two masters issue contrary commands, it becomes a question of life or death whether the man will hold to God, and to the kingdom of the right, the just, the honourable ; or will despise all scruples, and accept the

way that promises the greatest return in money, whatever the cost in conscientiousness or delicacy of feeling.

What, then, is the principle which underlies the choice that men make when they take the wrong way instead of the right? Is it because they themselves prefer it? Far from it! Speak to the people whom I have been describing, and they will at once acknowledge that the state of things is bad; that no doubt the evils exist which are condemned; that there is no doubt as to the way in which various corrupt practices have crept into business, so that trade, as a whole, is tainted through and through with them. But what are they to do? They will have no hesitation in asserting that the one way gives success, and that the other means ruin. In other words, they say that, as far as business is concerned, God is their enemy, and the Devil is their friend; for as the great Ruler of the world has apparently lost command of the markets, and mammon, if we only serve him thoroughly and without scruple, can alone bestow profit, then let mammon be our god for six days in seven; and on Sunday, if you will, we can repeat our creed, and say our prayers, and feel assured that whatever we may have done in business, we are, at all events, all right in our theology! Perhaps, even, they may glory in their zeal for what they call the Gospel—making the atonement of Christ their very fetish, by which they hope to be saved, in spite of their unfaithfulness.

No doubt the temptations are many and great. But do they not remind you of another temptation in the wilderness, when our Lord, weak with fasting, and immersed in poverty, met the solicitations of the god of this world? Mammon gave Him, as he gives to many a

struggling and tried soul now, a vision of the rewards he professes to bestow. He gave that vision to Christ if He would only fall down and worship him. "Take my way and you will have it all—the world and its glory. Take my way—serve Thyself, and not God. Yield to these dazzling vistas of wealth and power; or, at least, yield to the very necessities of Thy poverty. Fall down before me, and all this, and this, and this, will I give Thee!" "Get thee behind me, Satan," was the calm rejoinder. "Though poverty, loneliness, and death itself be the end of the path of duty, yet that path will I follow. It is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'"

There may be no coming of Satan now in outward form; there may not be so sharp a putting of the choice before men. But it is the same temptation, the same choice which must be taken between God and mammon on every occasion when we are induced to compromise conscience and principle in order to secure gain. We then virtually say, "As we cannot succeed if we obey God, then we must fall down and worship those principles of conduct which, if they are wrong, at all events seem necessary if we are to be saved from ruin or to make our living. Therefore we will go with the world, we will "move with the times," though the times may be on the high road to Gehenna; and we must lay down our scruples, our conscience, our best ideals of honour and truth before this great idol-car where golden mammon sits enthroned, and where he promises prosperity to all those who will let these relentless wheels crush out that nobler part of their humanity which links them to God and righteousness and peace."

Do not misunderstand me. It is very far from my intention to bring sweeping accusations against society, or to exaggerate the evils to the neglect of the brighter and better qualities which—thank God!—so much characterize the great world of British commerce. Unless there was the preponderating influence of good faith and highest honour, there would not be so many transactions every day involving vast sums, and depending on honourable understanding rather than on binding documents. Neither you nor I can determine the proportion of good men to evil men, but we all know that the proportion of men cannot be a small one who do carry their religion, in the best sense, into their every transaction; men who would resent a dishonourable proposal as they would an insult, and who are as incapable of taking a mean advantage over another as they are incapable of forgery; men who are also considerate and generous to their dependants, and who subordinate all life to the highest principles of religion and virtue. But I make bold to say that these are the very men who will agree most readily with all that I have said as to the temptations which commercial life—and, indeed, every form of life—presents. For what profession is exempt? Law, Medicine, the Church, have each their own special trickeries, promising success to those who will adopt them. They are also the men who will be the first to acknowledge that the choice between serving God and serving mammon is one which the world presents every day, and on which the serious issues we have described do undoubtedly depend.

Again. Far be it from me to minimise the terrible pressure under which many an unhappy soul labours,

half distracted by difficulties. What Mr. Huxley describes as "the struggle for existence" is a very real struggle, and when it is keenest, the temptation is naturally strongest to take any method, if it only gives success. It is at such times that men will lay the flattering unction to their soul that they are "*forced*" to do the things they condemn.

You will, perhaps, ask me what are the things alluded to. I would be justified in replying that you know them better than I do. I know only by hearsay what many of you know by experience. I may, however, safely venture to indicate some customs as illustrating the kind of temptations to which men are exposed. You know, better than I do, the various methods too frequently adopted to secure business, to "cut into," as the phrase goes, the business of other people, or to secure their customers. You know how villainous is the system of double commissions—the undisguised bribery—which so many agents expect before they will place orders. You know how often it is said, "If you do not make it right with this agent or that, you will find in the future that you are out of the market"; and every excuse will be given, except the true one, that the expected fee had not been forthcoming. You know how deeply the habit has crept in of "treating," and how large and small employers, although aware of the ruin it entails on soul and body, wink at the custom, afraid that the profits of the department would suffer by any interference. You know how frequently it is the lowness of the remuneration given to agents which tempts them to accept bribes. You know how often the strict terms of contracts are evaded by "securing" the

inspector whose duty it is to prevent the evasion, and who for a consideration will allow the substitution of the cheaper material or the false workmanship for that which was agreed to. You know, far better than I do, the vast variety in the forms of roguery going on every day—the mean lies that are told; the tricks that are perpetrated in “lengths” and “qualities,” and the large amount of corruption which eats as a gangrene into the more speculative forms of business. You know what is meant by a “ring” formed to produce fictitious values, and to acquire rapid profits to the ruin of other people. If these things do not exist, then I am grievously misinformed, and that not in one or two particulars, but in an amount of testimony which has been extensive and varied.

But, if these things are so, it surely becomes the minister of religion to raise his voice, and to declare to every soul of man—to every one especially who believes in God—the solemn warning of Christ, “Ye cannot serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” It may be said, “What good does preaching do in the matter? Do you think you can alter the world?” Well, that is not our responsibility, but it is our responsibility to declare the truth to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. A religion which does not reach to everyday life is no religion at all. The choice presented in everyday life is the most critical, the most vital conceivable. It is as between right and wrong, as between God and the Devil. It is direct, precise, searching. It can admit of no manner of compromise. The will of God enjoins honour, justice, fair-play, kind and considerate treatment. The blessings which mammon pretends to offer are, more or less,

large profits, commercial success, or the avoidance of threatened ruin ; and when it offers these at the cost of the high honour, the justice, the fair-play, the consideration for others which God enjoins, then everything depends—all morality and all religion—on the choice made. Then must every sincere man listen to Christ's word—"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Then you will know the meaning of Christ's temptation—"All these things, the world and its glory, will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." And then, also, may God help us to use Christ's words—"Get thee behind me, Satan.'" I must worship the Lord my God, and obey the right and the honourable and the true, whatever may befall me or my business. "By Thine agony and bloody sweat, by Thy cross and Passion, good Lord, deliver me!"

And we surely need not fear to serve the right. The Lord knows how truly to reward us. Honesty always proves the best policy, even though it may fail to give the reward we expect. "No man leaveth house or wife or children for the kingdom of God's sake but shall receive much more in this life—houses and lands, with persecutions," it may be, and "in the world to come life everlasting." Yes, he may have persecutions. The old martyrs who died at the stake rather than deny God were not more truly martyrs than the man who faces loss rather than deny truth and righteousness. And "he will possess houses and lands." He will possess, as the poor fishermen possessed, the hearts and homes of the true and good of all ages, into communion with whom he is brought even by his very trial.

My friends, they are surely poor, poor riches which

are gained at the cost of self-respect, of a pure conscience, and of a once loving heart turned into sordid selfishness. And that is a rich, rich poverty—even if poverty it should prove to be—which carries with it the blessing of God, and the immeasurable treasure of an unsullied honour and of a character unstained.

ON SOME SPECULATIVE PERPLEXITIES.

ON SOME SPECULATIVE PERPLEXITIES.

“Now we believe, not because of thy saying : for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”—ST. JOHN iv. 42.

IT has become so trite an observation to speak of the time in which we live as a period when all received creeds are put on their trial, when each man is supposed to think for himself, when every authority must expect to be challenged by stripling as well as *savant*, that it need not be repeated here, except for the purpose of leading to something more practical than a superficial description of the spirit of the age.

But however trite the observation I have quoted, however much it has become a sort of cant on some lips, it nevertheless expresses a fact of profoundest interest. No thoughtful man can contemplate the present condition of things without intense anxiety. We are in the midst of one of those formative epochs in the religious history of the world, out of which we may expect great good to come, but at present it is intellectual chaos. Men refuse to be guided by the old landmarks, and many of the cherished beliefs of the last generation are classified among baseless prejudices or sheer mistakes. The universal ferment of opinion is acting as a solvent upon every species of authority.

All these discussions have naturally an unhappy effect on certain minds. There are many people too busy to study out for themselves the questions of the day, but who cannot help catching what I may call the infectious spirit of uncertainty. Whether they can give a reason for it or not, they experience a sense of uneasiness and insecurity. They cannot read the daily papers without finding assertions made on this subject and on that, by men of influence and acknowledged scholarship, which clash with many beliefs hitherto regarded as sacred. Scientist contradicts scientist, critic contradicts critic, new theories are propounded one day, to be overthrown the next. The impression alone remains decided that a great part of the thinking world is at sea upon some of the most important questions. What, then, are men of the ordinary type to do? Life is too short, and they are too busy to study out a new theory of the universe; and yet they cannot afford to be in darkness. That would be too miserable! How are they to act? Are they to remain in suspense respecting matters which have the closest, most intimate relation to their affections, their hopes, their very being, until experiment has made its way to a demonstrative conclusion? Must they be in doubt regarding immortality, be uncertain whether their dear ones are alive or have perished, hesitate between heathen darkness and Christian light, until they have formed, each for himself, a conclusion respecting the authorship of the Pentateuch or the date of the Gospel of St. John? If not, what then are they to do? Where are they to begin, or where find a satisfactory basis for their position?

Far be it from any Christian teacher to look with

suspicion on the labours of those who are seeking truth, and who have already added so much solid and reliable ground to the region of knowledge. What has already been accomplished has widened enormously our horizon, and cast new light upon the character of the material world, and on the manner in which it has assumed its present condition. There may be in the ferment of ideas which novelty stimulates much that is fanciful, even ridiculous ; but what remains of substantial truth is undoubtedly exceedingly suggestive, and inspires the hope that science will render powerful assistance in understanding the proper scope and meaning of holy Scripture.

The question I now propose has no reference to the truth or falsehood of the attacks so frequently made on certain familiar beliefs. Let us take the case of a man of ordinary intelligence, who is too busy with the practical affairs of life to go deep into the problems that are puzzling the age ; who hears the sounds of battle raging around positions he has been accustomed to regard as unassailable ; and, as he learns that some outwork, built long ago round the citadel, has been abandoned, begins to feel insecure, and asks for a position which may assure to him some legitimate peace until the war is over and the lines again become definitely settled. Where, then, is such a man to begin ? What is he to do ?

This is not only a very wide question, but I am persuaded it is a very pressing one ; and among many other replies which might be made to it, there are two distinctions by the observance of which some help may be found towards its practical solution.

1. The distinction between Theology and Religion.* Every man ought to be religious, but every man need not, nay, as things are, cannot, be a theologian. No man is therefore compelled to wait till all theological dogmas have been settled before becoming religious. If religion is to be the common property of man, possible for the peasant as well as the philosopher, its essence must be looked for in what is simple not complex, in the practical rather than the theoretical. However important theology may be, its position in reference to religion is very much that of chemistry or physiology in relation to the practical enjoyment of physical health. A man does not require to know the nature of oxygen in order to breathe the air of heaven, nor does he need to study physiology before eating his daily food. There are natural tastes, appetites, experiences, which together form a sufficient and easy ground for guidance, so that every sane man can act without hesitation in these common matters, without waiting for the instruction of science, or the establishment of some theory of life. In like manner there are moral affinities and spiritual desires, a sense of duty and of right and wrong, a perception of the beauty of holiness, an instinctive feeling of responsibility and of dependence upon God, which form a sufficient basis on which to construct a truly religious life. It is not necessary to master the arguments for Theism before believing in the existence of a God to whom we are responsible. Our nature is so constituted that the consciousness of God is one of our first instincts. The statement of sin and guilt; the assertion of moral con-

* See a suggestive sermon on this subject by Principal Tulloch, "Religion and Theology," Messrs. Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh.

fusion, of the strength of passion, and of the misery of evil; the message of a Father's love and of His readiness to pardon; the picture of the beauty of holiness and the promise of help for its attainment—these things appeal freshly, with a self-evidencing and convincing power which overleaps the scientific methods of theology, and goes at once home to the heart and conscience of humanity. The man who lives under the power of these influences, whose conscience is open to the dictates of righteousness, whose heart responds to the love of God in Christ, whose desires go forth towards the things that are “true” and “lovely” and of “good report,” who recognises himself as an immortal and responsible being, and who takes his place as a child towards his Father in heaven, and as a brother towards his fellow-man on earth—the man who so feels and endeavours, is a religious man, although numberless questions, in themselves full of deepest interest and importance, may long remain for him not only unsolved, but without the problems they involve having ever once suggested a difficulty to his mind. It is well, therefore, to distinguish between the religious life which is incumbent on all men, and the scientific or theological information which must necessarily belong to the comparative few.

2. Another principle, the observance of which may be of some use to those who are disturbed by the agitation of opinion in regard to many familiar beliefs, may be thus familiarly expressed:—*Begin at the centre, and not at the circumference.* There are a thousand intricate questions lying round about central truth, questions that are not vital, but which have been so much associated with vital truth that their discussion is some-

times made to wear a far more portentous aspect than really belongs to them. For example, many minds have been so trained under traditional teaching as to imagine that the truth of Scripture is involved in the theory of verbal inspiration. They have been so drilled by the pulpit to regard every word of Scripture, whether it be the genealogy of a priest or the value of a numeral in Chronicles or Kings, as given by direct inspiration—dictated, in short, by the Holy Spirit—that they fancy revelation itself is imperilled when a Colenso shows some arithmetical inconsistency, or when a Wellhausen proves the existence of verbal discrepancy.

In like manner there is a large class among those who read modern literature, who fancy the Christian religion itself is being imperilled when science challenges the historical accuracy of the Mosaic account of the creation. They fancy the glory of the Gospels must vanish and Christ cease to be true, except we believe the world created in six literal days, or in six epochs, or by means of sudden cataclysms and repeated manifestations of fresh creative energy. They see an antagonism so direct between any theory of Evolution and Scripture statement, that, to their imagination, all religion must totter to its fall should Darwinism be proved true.

Now, without discussing, far less conceding the statements of Scripture on such matters, it is sufficient for our present purpose to notice that all such questions lie at the circumference, and far away from the purpose of divine revelation.

Once upon a time, the Church, in its great blindness of heart, its prejudice and ignorance, deemed that the very existence of the faith depended upon such poetic

and popular statements in Scripture as seemed to indicate that the sun rose and sank, that it revolved round the earth, while the earth abode continually, firmly established upon the floods. We now, without any effort, perceive how far such questions are removed from the real centre of religious belief, and with what perfect freedom they can be handled without any danger accruing to Christian life. In like manner we need stand in no terror of any light which modern inquiry may throw on the conditions—the length of time, or the process of development—under which the material world and the varieties of vegetable and animal life may have possibly reached their present state. We must not identify the authority which belongs to the Sermon on the Mount with questions of criticism as to the authorship of the Pentateuch, whether the book of Job is a history or a drama, whether the account of the Garden of Eden is meant to represent actual facts or is an allegory, or whether the massacres perpetrated by the Israelites are in accordance with the Gospel. In whatever way such questions as these are finally determined, I believe it is absolutely necessary for us, in the meantime, to recognise their true position as lying wholly at the circumference, and as connected only in a secondary manner with the truth or falsehood of the Christian religion. Once we get a firm hold of the centre, once we are securely anchored to the eternal verities, then we may not only with safety, but with profit, deal freely, frankly, gratefully with minor matters of criticism, or with the interesting discoveries of scientific research.

What, then, is the centre? I answer without hesi-

tation, Jesus Christ—or, in other words, “the light of the glory of God shining on the face of Jesus Christ.” That is the true point at which every man calling himself Christian ought to begin. Numberless problems may continue to exercise the minds of men as the horizon of knowledge becomes widened, and as God reveals the order, the greatness, the beauty of His works in a measure far exceeding anything given to ancient prophet or historian. But there is one revelation, supreme, central, and, as regards our spiritual condition, decisive in its issues; and that is, the goodness, the divine truth and excellence of Jesus Christ. It is here we must begin, as it is here we derive the most convincing evidence for Christianity. Whatever theories may be devised as to the origin of physical life, they cannot affect the impression we receive of the eternal fitness and truth of what Jesus Christ was and did. As we stand in His presence, or follow His footsteps and trace that sinless life of His, passing without stain through every human experience; or when we listen to the gracious words that proceed out of His mouth, as He invites the weary and the heavy—laden to come to Him for rest, or tells us of a Father who loves us and seeks our good—there is a world opened up of spiritual glory which shines with its own light, and is its own best evidence. That which has really convinced the world has not been the arguments derived from the circumference into which the scriptural history extends. That which filled the hearts of Apostles and Martyrs with their holy enthusiasm; that which nerved the hearts of feeble women with a heroism defying death and torture; that which has shed peace on troubled consciences, which has been

the comfort of the sad, the allurements of longing souls, the satisfaction, the life, the all-in-all of the Church in every age, has been Jesus Christ Himself in His truth, His love, His holiness, His ministry of healing, His sufferings and death and resurrection. We do not need to go through an intricate theological education ; we do not require to determine the nature of protoplasm or the merit of some theory of Evolution, before we can confess the truth of Christ's parables or the glory of His cross and passion. Wherever there is a true spiritual eye, it is enough simply to look there and see. The light shines, and the spirit of man, unless utterly blind, is bound to confess its glory. Let critics discuss the extent of inspiration ; let theologians philosophise regarding many important mysteries of the faith ; let geologists examine the age of the earth's crust ; let physicists reverently trace the manner in which organized life has been evolved ; but the man who with true heart reads the Gospel, does not need to wait the result of such controversies. Such a man feels that Christ speaks as no mere man could speak ; that, whatever inspiration means, verily He has the words of eternal life ; that, however the Athanasian Creed may be attacked, Christ was in the most awful sense Divine ; and that, whatever explanation may be given of atonement, he cannot look at Gethsemane and the Cross without receiving such a sense of the love of God, of the evil of sin, of the fulness of forgiveness and mercy to the utmost, which nothing else can convey, and which no arguments from the outside can shake.

And so would I, in conclusion, address those who are often perplexed by the speculations, the assertions, the

confusions of the time, and say, Do not confound religion with theology, do not begin at the circumference instead of the centre. Begin with Jesus Christ, your Friend and Brother. Hear what He says about sin and redemption, about death and life. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Try to live the life, possess the truth, accept the love of God in Christ. Acquaint yourself with His mind, His ways, His righteousness and tenderness unspeakable; and you will in your own experience possess an evidence which no merely external objection can reach. You will have a witness in yourselves so independent of other testimony, that you can address theologians and scientists with the old words of the Samaritans, "Now we believe, not because of your saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

**POLITICAL ECONOMY, CHRISTIANITY, AND
SOCIALISM.**

POLITICAL ECONOMY, CHRISTIANITY, AND SOCIALISM.

“For they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil : which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things ; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”—1 TIMOTHY vi. 9—11.

THE relationship in which the three great social systems, expressed by the names of Political Economy, Socialism, and Christianity, stand has been of late forced on public attention ; and if the pulpit has to do with questions affecting society, it ought not to be silent on matters so fundamental.

The political economists for many a day “held their goods in peace.” Few attempted to dispute their authority. Christianity also, crystallised into creeds and ecclesiasticisms, “slumbered and slept,” while its true mission lay, to a terrible extent, unfulfilled. Socialism has challenged the authority of both ; and we are glad that it has done so, for it has thereby awakened the conscience of Europe to the existence of evils that have been culpably overlooked. In our own country the contrast between the great wealth and the great poverty, often in startling proximity, has been vividly represented by various writers, and still more

forcibly taught by moving revelations of the misery lying at our doors. Painful, yet healthful, shocks have been so repeatedly given that the self-satisfied dare not put the problems of society away from them. The world is not what they thought it was. Dangerous animosities have been forced on their attention, dreadful penury and sores more dreadful still have been laid bare. The Political Economy which they deemed infallible, has left a terrible wreckage on its path. And the Church of Christ, so powerful now among the classes over which it had originally least influence, and busied with questions which had primarily least importance, is sadly separate from the toiling and suffering millions of the streets and lanes of our cities, and has lost to a large extent that "enthusiasm of humanity" which in early times was its characteristic. We are, therefore, thankful for the trumpet-call which has challenged Christendom.

There can be no doubt as to the loudness of that call, and the urgency with which social questions demand solution. The exaggerations of the revolutionary press, the wildness of the proposals frequently submitted, nay, even the crimes which are sometimes placed in the programme of Nihilists and Red Republicans, should make every wise citizen weigh carefully what it is which these symptoms indicate, and ask whether these enthusiastic aspirations after a new Social Order do not prove the existence of sores in the body politic which are the result of wicked neglect of duty?

My own belief is that the most culpable of all causes is to be found in the feeble influence exercised by the Christian spirit in secular life. In other words, that

it is because so-called Christian society is unchristianized, that we find life embittered instead of sweetened.

The first fact which meets us when we take a general view of society as at present constituted is, that *the principle on which the relationships of the various classes to one another chiefly rests is that of self-interest.* And they who thus act in matters of a secular character are nearly all persons who profess the name of Christ, and who "hope to be saved when they die." Their creed does not prevent their actions being governed in this world by motives which are the opposite of the Spirit of Christ and of that heaven where they hope soon to be.

The natural reaction against the evils thereby produced is Socialism, with its enforced fulfilment of a beneficence which love ought to have anticipated, and its proclamation of a brotherhood of man that seems at once a mockery and rebuke of the Church for its practical denial of Christ's Gospel.

We shall glance first at Political Economy.

Self-interest and absolute individual freedom have long been its watchwords, and they have heralded many a victory. For no wise man will hesitate to acknowledge the material benefits which have followed the teaching of Adam Smith and the influential school which has more or less adopted his principles. Adam Smith studied with accuracy the laws which determine the Wealth of Nations. He found trade interfered with by artificial restrictions and hurtful monopolies, and claimed absolute freedom as the primary condition for its healthy and successful development. Self-interest he believed might be safely trusted to make

the capitalist employ his wealth in the most profitable manner, and to guard the workman against any unjust encroachment on the part of the capitalist. From the same principle of self-interest he anticipated increasing enterprise, and that the pressure of competition would stimulate the invention of machinery and such subdivision of labour as would economise resources, and so attain the largest amount of product at the least cost. He further showed how the increased wealth of the nation must affect beneficially the employed as well as the employer; and thus, while self-interest is the motive actuating all classes, the greatest common benefit is the result. Within the sphere proper to their special studies, the work of the political economists cannot be challenged. They did not create, they only investigated laws; and we might with equal justice complain of the law of gravitation as deny the influence of such principles as that of Supply and Demand or the rules which affect values.

This is not the place to enlarge on the many benefits which have followed obedience to these principles. The enormous advance of commerce in modern times, the increase of wealth throughout the community, and the consequent enrichment of life with manifold gifts of civilisation, are universally recognised.

But "man does not live by bread alone." There are fields belonging to the social well-being of a country, which do not fall within the scope of inquiries into the economics of commerce. There is a dark side to the glowing picture of material prosperity drawn by the political economist. The law of Supply and Demand, and a prosperity based upon self-interest,

may work cruelly as well as beneficially. Its motto, "Laissez-faire," or in other words, "Leave alone, do not interfere, let evils work out their own cure," is but an equivalent for the "Survival of the Fittest" of the naturalist; and this implies the correlative sinking, suffering, and social destruction of the weakest. The fittest rise, while those that are not so fit fall under the relentless wheels of modern progress. The strong, the industrious, the rich prosper; the poor, the lonely, the feeble, the ignorant—some deserving, some undeserving—fall behind. And thus the violent contrasts which we now deplore are created—enormous wealth and frightful poverty, luxury and misery, palaces and hovels, classes which possess all that the eye of man can desire, and classes sunk in the most wretched degradation. We have a minority enjoying riches, and a vast majority more or less poor, some being in comparative comfort, and a mass destitute of the very decencies of civilised life.

There is a school of political thinkers which regards such consequences with complacency. It would permit the law of Survival to wreak its vengeance in society as well as in other fields, believing that the progress of the race is best served through the law of Social Evolution, whereby the worthless and the weak perish, and the best elements continue. Whatever truth this hard and cruel law may express, its advocates appear to us to forget that there are other laws which may be brought into play, through which the causes that have produced the worthlessness may be removed, and a more universal social health promoted.

The evils connected with modern progress as founded

on self-interest have been frequently pointed out. We shall but indicate three of them.

(1.) While it may safely be left to certain classes of labour to protect their own interests—as when we see Trades' Unions formed to guard against the power of capital—yet there are other classes of industry, notably those connected with female labour, which appear to be helpless. Competition, unchecked by any union, has them in its relentless grasp. If proof is required, we refer to what is said elsewhere.*

(2.) If the subdivision of labour has its undoubted advantages, yet it has moral and intellectual results which, if not guarded against, are of a most pernicious character. The occupation of a lifetime in the performance of one mechanical detail must have a cramping influence on the intellectual and moral development of the individual so engaged. Adam Smith dwells with suggestive interest on the number of hands a pin must pass through in its manufacture, and shows conclusively, that the cheap rate at which pins can be purchased arises from this minute subdivision of labour, whereby the man who has only one small detail to attend to, acquires a dexterity and can produce results otherwise unattainable. But what must be the effect on the man whose life is spent, from morning to night and from year's end to year's end, in the execution of this little mechanical act? "This enormous production of *things*," says Bishop Martensen, "takes place at the cost of *men*."† We can easily perceive that unless a man has some healthy relief in domestic comfort, amusement, or in some fresh pursuit, the temptation

* See "The Sins of Cheapness," p. 15.

† "Social Ethics," p. 138.

becomes very great to excitements of an unhealthy nature—anything, if only the monotony of toil can for a time be dispelled! But the possibility of gaining such healthy relief is enormously lessened if the subdivision of labour equally affects the female population, and if domestic life is rendered comfortless and repulsive, because the wife or mother knows nothing of domestic economy, having been herself from girlhood but the mechanical performer of a similar detail in some factory. Still more, when the lives of such persons, thousands of whom are congregated in the same locality, are surrounded by physical conditions which afford scarcely one bright object or aim to which they can turn for relief. Within, it is the one-roomed house with its stifling air; outside, there are the grimy streets and a murky smoke-laden atmosphere, and not a resource open save the public-house and gin-palace. Can we wonder that consequences ensue which give some warrant for the sweeping condemnation of the social Pharisee who points to the unthrift and the drunkenness of the working-man as the cause of his lapsing into hopeless penury and discontent? But are we not bound to go farther, and to ask whether there are not causes for the unthrift and drunkenness, and consequent “lapsing” of the masses, for which more than the working-man is responsible? Is that society not still more guilty which adopts the maxim of “Leave-alone,” and takes shelter under the law of the “Survival of the Fittest,” while it contemplates with philosophic indifference a crowd falling out of the march of progress and perishing socially?

(3.) Another effect of this law of Self-interest being left to work unchecked by other laws is the spirit of

antagonism which it produces between man and man, class and class. While the two sides represented severally by employer and employed, capital and labour, landlord and tenant, depend on one another, so that the prosperity of the one is connected with the prosperity of the other, yet the spirit in which they regard each other has unfortunately of late years been becoming one of jealousy and opposition, rather than of brotherhood. The attitude of Employers' Associations and of Trade Unions is too frequently one of open warfare, and in many places the landlord and tenant stand equally at variance. In commerce the adoption of the principle, "Every man for himself," leads to that keen desire to gain an advantage which often degenerates into practical swindling. Sympathy may flourish within circles where class interests lead to a certain unity. In the rush for riches and in the fierce struggle for existence, they whose cause is a common one, may herd together for attack and defence. But the spirit of human brotherhood vanishes in the wild war of competition. And thus, while society as a whole advances and wealth accumulates, scattering riches on its way towards increase in the hands of individuals, and while some rise to the first rank, and whole sections of the community gain improvement, yet the solidarity—to use a clumsy word—is not that of fraternity but of utility, or rather of selfishness. And all the while the bitter sediment is being deposited in the lower strata, where the social débris of this great advance is left to sink and fester in the purlieus of poverty and untold wretchedness. The exaggeration of individual freedom, each unit being guided by self-interest, thus leads to a half-concealed warfare, and to the excitement of those passions which

warfare of every kind is sure to generate. Man needs more than room to fight his way; and a society governed by selfishness must reap consequent distrust and alienation.

We do not deny that there are other principles at work, not because of, but in spite of, the hard doctrine of Self-interest and the necessitarianism of the law of Supply and Demand, and the fatalism of the "Survival of the Fittest." Increase of wealth brings to the community a thousand blessings that make themselves felt in innumerable directions. The better and more generous spirit, too, that is in man cannot be confined within the channels pointed out by self-interest. Charities in diverse forms flow forth abundantly from the treasuries of the successful, and religion and patriotism do not sound the trumpet-call to duty wholly in vain. But no one who contemplates the evils which affect society would assert that charities, however lavish, are an adequate cure, or indeed any cure at all. It is not charity that is required primarily; and at the best the call of religion or patriotism is weak as a child's voice compared to the imperiousness with which Self-interest appeals to men in all secular affairs.

The reaction from this condition of things is Socialism in its many forms—from the justifiable insisting on limiting the freedom of the individual, when it presses cruelly on the young or helpless, up to the wild dream of the anarchist who proclaims all property a theft, and all law, human or divine, a crime against "the Rights of Man."

Socialism stands in direct antithesis to the Leave-alone policy of the political economist. If that attaches

primary value to the freedom of the individual or of trade, Socialism in its extremest forms would destroy individual liberty, and merge all property in the State or in the community, and make the individual a drilled unit in the complex machine which is to distribute the gains of all equally among all. It is the old dream of many an idealist.

But it would be manifestly unfair to represent all Socialists, far more the Socialists of our own country, as the apostles of anarchy. Indeed, the schools of thought which may be classified under the general title "Socialistic" are so various, that it is difficult to speak of them as a whole without using terms which would be unjust to some, and inadequate in respect to others. Socialism may be viewed as including the purely beneficent teaching of the so-called Christian Socialists; the humanitarian, though to our minds mischievous, proposals of Mr. Henry George; the Communistic but now abandoned dreams of Fourier and Commettant; the Socialism which believes in God and that which would efface all religion; the Socialism which respects family life and that which denounces marriage; the Socialism which to some extent recognises private property, and that which calls all property theft, and would convert the State into a joint-stock company; the Socialism which simply contemplates legislation in favour of the oppressed and suffering, and that which breathes of nothing but blood and iron—the wild destructiveness of the *dynamitard* and *pétroleuse*, to whom the Reign of Terror and the slicing of the guillotine bring memories of a social paradise whose only fault was its brevity. It is therefore evident that it is impossible to use the term "Socialism" with

such accuracy as to be saved from a certain confusion when dealing with it as a whole.

All of these schools have, however, this in common ; in more or less pronounced forms they aim at the reformation of society by means of State interference with what has hitherto been recognised as private property, and the limitation, for the same end, of the freedom of contract and of trade. But when stated in this general form, we are again forced to recognise the inadequacy of our definition ; for the extent to which that interference may be carried must affect the opinion we form regarding it. We believe, for example, the interference already exercised by the State in forbidding the employment of women and children in certain trades, or in limiting the hours of labour in others, to be legitimate and beneficial. Only a very small section of Socialists in this country would, on the other hand, advocate the confiscation of property in order to secure an equal division to all and everybody.

It is not our purpose to discuss the political aspects of these questions, or to show how terribly foolish and dangerous are all those extreme systems which proclaim enforced equality, and dream of securing thereby a regenerated world. No legislative arrangements can extinguish human sin, destroy the law of heredity, eradicate ambition, and prevent the consequences which must arise from the differences of genius, strength, and capacity among men. At the best it would be the burdening of the able and industrious for the benefit of the idle and incompetent. And yet even in its most advanced and destructive form, the dream of making earth once more an Eden, by the effacement of religion and the enthronement of Equality and Frater-

nity (which could only be reached through untold bloodshed), is the hope of millions; and oh! the charm which its idealism has for the suffering and unhappy! Its watchwords are fascinating, for they promise a human brotherhood to the lonely, with freedom from grinding care and from the slavery of ill-paid and dreary labour. It gives voice to the cry of the poor and of those who yearn for a love they receive not. It is the longing of the weary and heavy-laden for some rest from a toil whose rewards never lift them from life-long misery. We need not wonder at the greediness with which even the wildest proposals are hailed by thousands, who feel themselves thus helpless under the despotisms of Europe.

Nor do we discuss here the political advantages or disadvantages of the more sober measures, which are so frequently brought forward in our own country at present. Whatever practical shape these proposals may take, their discussion must at all events prove beneficial. If evils exist in society, there is nothing better than to have them thoroughly exposed, and remedies of every kind carefully considered.

What chiefly concerns us at present is the relationship in which Christianity stands to both systems.

As popularly taught, Christianity has very little to do with either; for if it is no more than a "plan of salvation," or a creed, or an ecclesiasticism, through which the individual is to be made ready for death and eternity, it can be so held that it may, without any great shock, be made to consort with the tyrannies of self-interest, remain powerless in view of the separations which divide class from class, and be professed on Sundays or on the sick-bed by the very persons who

transgress, in all secular relationships, the letter as well as the spirit of the Gospel. But no one can read the Bible, and weigh the meaning of the Old-Testament prophecies—every page of which teems with applications of divine principles to secular affairs—or can listen to the teaching of Christ and of His Apostles, without feeling that we have, professedly at least, in these writings a key to the questions of society now as well as then.

We shall, however, only attempt to indicate here some of the relationships in which Christianity stands to the systems of the Political Economists and Socialists.

(1.) Christianity is at one with the Political Economists in respecting the rights of property and individual liberty.

(2.) It is at one with the Socialists in their protest against Self-interest and the Survival of the Fittest being permitted to wreak their consequences unchecked by those other laws of love and brotherhood among men, which are surely quite as authoritative. Christianity gazes with horror on the social wreckage which has hitherto marked the course of modern progress, and it proclaims the law of brotherhood with a voice infinitely more commanding than that of the Nihilist or Red Republican. The worship of humanity, as taught by them, is a baseless sentiment, and can never lead to fraternal duty with a power comparable to that which is inspired by the law that first places man in his true relationship to God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength," is a command which gives force and possibility to the fulfilment of the other, "Thou shalt

love thy neighbour as thyself." But if the Church of Christ has been untrue to the principles of the Gospel, it ought heartily to thank the Socialists for having reminded it of these principles, although preached by them sometimes of "envy and strife," as far as Christianity is concerned.

But while Christianity, as thus standing between the two extremes, can show its agreement with what is true in both, it also deals effectually with the evils which disfigure them.

(3.) For, in reference to the rights of property, which it recognises, Christianity utterly condemns the selfish indifferentism of the Leave-alone policy of the economists, and their heartless attention to the accumulation of wealth, as if that were the *summum bonum* of social prosperity. It preaches the all-commanding duties of property as enforced by Christ. It denies that self-interest should be the primary basis on which the body politic ought to rest. It respects the rights of property, but it touches the roots of all the evils that have created the miseries and jealousies and separations of the time; for it is the worship of mammon instead of God which has been the sin of Christendom. While Jesus Christ has been recognised in that department of life to which the name "religion" is attached, and which belongs to Sundays and churches and creeds; yet it has been before the idol of greed that these same men have bowed the knee, when they have entered that other department of life which is called "secular," and which belongs to the week-days, the Exchange, and the Factory. And Christianity cannot brook such compromises. It should be its function, if it fulfils the will of the Master, to

dethrone this Mammon-god of the political economist, and to place supreme over the conscience of the nation the laws of righteousness and peace and love. Christ indeed declines to be "a judge and divider" between selfish brethren struggling each for the largest possible share of the inheritance; but He commands both to beware of the covetousness which has caused the bitter quarrel. He asserts liberty. "Whilst the property remains, is it not in your own power? You are responsible for it; it is undoubtedly yours; but it is at your peril if you use it without any sense of a higher responsibility than what self-interest imposes. 'Thou shalt not lie to the Holy Ghost,' or profess the love, justice, and generosity which are the essence of my Gospel, while you pay your workmen or seamstresses starvation prices, and make your wealth out of their flesh and blood, and draw your rents out of houses that are fetid dens. You are not to profess my name on Sunday, and worship gain and overreach your neighbour every other day in the week." "Thou shalt render to all their dues." Christ always places righteousness and love first; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"; and He expects men to run the risk of suffering loss for the sake of the right. "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, theirs is the kingdom of God." These principles are of the essence of His religion. Prophet and apostle, Old Testament and New Testament are charged with them. It is therefore in spite of the Christianity which we profess that the evils we deplore have been allowed to rise. Let society be inspired with the love of God and of man which are thus taught, and the question of the masses will be

easy of solution. Class separations will be bridged from both sides of the chasm. For it is because society has been founded on the non-Christian principles of selfishness and Mammon-worship, that selfishness and Mammon-worship are now confronted by selfish force, and are in terror for "the goods" they have so long "kept in peace." Reverse this, bring the ideals of Christianity into secular life, and all will be changed.

(4.) In a similar manner does Christianity meet Socialism. The Anarchist and the Nihilist seek Equality, but they would achieve it by tearing down, by physical force, and in hatred of the rich and governing classes. "We shall have deserved well," says one of them, "if we stir hatred and contempt against all existing institutions." Christianity also seeks Equality, but it is through the spirit of love, which is "enriched while enriching." Again Socialism of the better type would distribute wealth by the compulsion of State interference, and by the votes of the majority assigning property, or limiting its possession, as that majority may determine. The Socialism of the New Testament, as seen in the Church at Jerusalem after Pentecost, if it held "all things common," did so as the free outcome of the enthusiasm of a new love. It was not the result of the "Stand and deliver" policy of compulsion, but the natural effect of a love which delights to share.

And this leads to another contrast between State Socialism and Christianity.

(5.) It is true that Christianity can never be indifferent to the enactment of such laws as tend to the well-being of the poor, the weak, and the miserable. It must be in sympathy with that State compulsion

whose object is the prevention of what is cruel or demoralising, or the promotion of what is humanising and elevating ; limiting the hours of labour, granting protection to women and children, compulsory education, support of the poor, enforcement of sanitation and improvement of dwellings, public libraries, and such-like. All these may be regarded as expressing a national feeling inspired by Christian principle. On the other hand, moral actions which are the result only of compulsion have no value in the eye of Christ. Freedom is essential for the acquirement of goodness. A right-doing towards others, which is necessitated by statute and not by love, has no place in His Kingdom. A regenerated society can therefore never be produced by external force from above or below. It must be from within, and be the issue of the free play of the moral and spiritual influences which it is the proper function of the Gospel to inspire. The absolute success of State Socialism might therefore accomplish many objects which the philanthropy of Christianity would be glad to witness, but in itself a State compulsion of goodness would not be a distinct gain, in the light of that religion which seeks the voluntary actings of a divinely-inspired love.

But we need our faith to be increased in Christianity as a power sufficient for this regeneration of Society from within. The movements of the time, which to many seem adverse to that faith, are according to our belief God's own method for rousing His Church, and for re-creating a life which has been allowed almost to perish. They are His rebuke to dogmatists and ecclesiastics and formalists of all sorts ; they are His call for the re-assertion of the true

Gospel of His kingdom, and for its revival in power. And what He says to all He says to each one of us, "Seek first, not your own profit and success in the wild struggle for riches, nay not even the salvation of your own soul, as a matter of self-interest; but seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness; the Kingdom of the Father, and in Him the Brotherhood of man; the Kingdom whose law is love, whose yoke is duty, whose banner is the cross, and whose victories on earth are those of human helpfulness and social well-being. Seek first that Kingdom and all other things will be added unto you: prosperity, it may be, here on earth; but if not, then that life eternal which is the life of God, Whose name is love."

HOW FAITH AFFECTS CHARACTER.

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"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth."—HEBREWS xi. 13.

THESE all lived in faith, as well as died in faith, but what made their dying in faith remarkable was that they died "not having received the promises." The nature of the lives led by these patriarchs was determined by their faith, and so was their own personal character the result of that faith.

In a sense every one lives by faith, for faith in some form lies at the basis of all life. Confidence is as necessary to the commercial world as gravitation is to the material universe. There is a latent faith in which we daily act as unconsciously as we breathe the atmosphere. We could not lie down in security if we had no faith in the protection of the law, nor eat our food without faith in its being free from poison. It would be a curious theme for the dramatist to construct a play the subject of which would be the life of a man who had faith in nothing, and to depict the absurdity, confusion, and terror which must ensue from universal scepticism.

But while all this may be trite enough, there are many persons who fail to perceive the necessary connection between faith and character, especially if the

faith alluded to happens to be religious faith. It is for this reason that salvation by faith is a stumbling-block to so many. They fancy that it is an arbitrary doctrine, because they identify faith with the holding of an opinion, and salvation with admission to heaven when they die, rather than with the actual redemption of character. But if saving faith acts upon us in such a way as to save us, in the most real sense, from our sins, by imparting a new range of motives and aspirations, we may be helped to understand the method of its operation by considering the similar influence which the principle of faith exercises in daily life, when engaged on other objects.

The faith which tells on character is always more than an intellectual belief; it must be charged with the warm colouring of sympathy. The great moral trinity of faith, hope, and love is continually at work, making men what they are according to the objects they believe in, hope for, and love. When faith is no more than an opinion, failing to reach the affections and desires, and kindling no hope; when it is but a creed-belief, reached by proofs and evidences like some conclusion in mathematics, and lying as far away from our real interests as a theory regarding the rings of Saturn or the distance of the fixed stars, then it is what St. James calls a "dead faith." It has nothing to do with the man, who would not be a whit different had he never formed that opinion at all. But when the object of his faith is one he supremely loves and hopes for, his life and character are thereby determined. Faith then passes into self-surrender; he yields to the ruling motive; it becomes the key to conduct and lends its own nature to his thoughts.

These principles are at work daily. It is because a man believes in money, or in social position, or in domestic comfort, and because he loves the kind of happiness these bestow, and hopes to attain to it, that his life is governed. His character is determined by that faith, hope, and love. If you wish to know what that is which a man really believes, notice the objects that create self-surrender, kindle the interests, enlist the affections, and inspire the hopes. When you have ascertained these you can pronounce with some certainty upon the man's character.

It is evident that the exercise of the mere principle of faith does not make one either good or bad. It is the nature of the object of the faith which lends moral value to the act of faith. If the self-surrender is to a mean and selfish aim, then the life becomes mean and unworthy. If the faith goes forth to God, and if self is yielded to the divine purpose in hope and love, then the character is at once ennobled. All men live by faith, but few live by faith in God.

There are, as we might expect, various stages of religious faith. There is a growth in it; it learns to soar from the spot of earth where it first learnt to gaze on heaven, to heights from which it can enjoy visions of the Kingdom of God in its larger relationship. Unfortunately, however, good people often identify saving faith with the earlier stages of experience alone, to the neglect of the other stages. They fail to attach to it the noble conception, so magnificently illustrated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, wherein the story is told of one after another of the heroes of the ancient Church, whose faith was not so much directed to their own salvation, as it was engaged with the great

hope of a divine blessing for all mankind. It would be difficult to connect the kind of faith which made these men and women so resolute, bracing them against temptation and suffering and death, with the conception of saving faith usually held forth as peculiarly evangelical. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth." These men were raised above themselves by the vision of a good not yet realised. The picture is most pathetic. Nothing can be more self-neglectful and noble. But if it was wholly unselfish and occupied with promises, the fulfilment of which they were not to receive during their life as strangers and pilgrims, it was also a faith which saved them from the temptations that assailed them, and elevated their natures, and made their lives saintly and brave. We have no right to impose upon the words of Scripture any artificial meaning, or to twist them into harmony with some comparatively modern system of theology—as when we try to fit on the Pauline doctrine of Justification to the experiences of patriarchs, or to the martyrs who died under the Maccabees. We lose nothing, but gain greatly, when we realise the influence of the same grand principle of faith when fixed on God, whether the immediate object be a promise seen afar off, or the full knowledge of the Saviour in whom all God's promises have been sealed.

The first form of that religious faith which is usually termed "saving," is naturally personal in its character. When a man yields himself to God and to the grace that is in the Lord Jesus, and is able to rejoice with an

assurance, more or less decided, in hope of the glory of God, he may be, and probably is, a true believer ; but his belief dwells chiefly on the relationship of Christ to the safety of his own soul. This kind of faith commonly consists in a personal application of the atonement to individual necessities. But the sincere and the truly spiritual cannot stop there. They cannot remain self-centred, even while they cling to phraseologies and experiences that turn wholly on themselves. The very thought of divine love produces lovingness ; they begin to care for others, and are gradually carried into new ranges of interest and of sympathy. Having a real faith in a God of love and holiness, it necessarily exercises a vital and stimulating influence upon all that is god-like in their nature.

For while the personal character which marked its commencement continues to shed its peaceful influence, yet the man who possesses vital faith becomes lifted to a position in which the thought of self ends in self-forgetfulness. As when one struggling up a steep ascent has his mind occupied chiefly with his own exertions, but when he reaches higher points where he can look out on the landscape stretching from snowy ranges to wide plains ; from the solitude where he feels dwarfed into insignificance, away to distant cities and winding rivers ; he quickly forgets himself and his temporary feelings, and is lost in wonder and admiration ; so is it that as faith ascends nearer God it becomes so enlarged with new views of the divine purpose, that the thought of self becomes lost in the thought of God and of man. New difficulties may suggest themselves ; questions full of perplexity, undreamt of before, rise for solution ; he sees far more

than he saw at first ; the elementary matter of personal salvation becomes almost a secondary consideration ; for the "still sad music of humanity" now rings in his ear in tones that haunt him by day and night. The sin and suffering of earth lie upon his soul as a heavy burden. One faith, one hope, one love alone sustain him. He believes in God as righteous and true ; he hopes in God ; and from the darkness and defilement of earth he rises into fellowship with that purpose of love which is the promise and pledge of blessing. He may not see the ideal he longs for fulfilled. Like the faithful men of old, he may behold it "afar off," while he embraces it. The vision of a redeemed world may appear very distant. But he has faith in it. He is on God's side, and believes in the victory of His good and perfect will. And then, even amid the rebellion and confusion of the present, he can pray with unfailing hope, "Father, Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Through this faith and hope his own character is elevated, and he is brought into closer fellowship with Christ.

The faith which is described in the Epistle to the Hebrews was surely of that advanced type. The men of faith who are there named were upheld by such trust in the divine promise, by such hopeful, loving confidence in the purpose of God being a purpose of goodness and mercy for the whole world, that they went firmly on through life, undismayed by danger, unconquered by suffering, and finding their full consolation in the bright expectancy with which they looked, far beyond their own horizon, to the time when the promise would be fulfilled. Their unselfishness was heroic. They knew that they themselves were but

“strangers and pilgrims upon earth ;” they knew that they were only Bedouin shepherds without a home ; but they saw afar off “ a city of God ” to be established upon earth ; they saw the day of the Anointed in whom all the families of earth would be blessed ; and however dim their thoughts might have been of its glory, yet they so embraced that hope, and were so surrendered to the divine will, that they were elevated above temptation, and made “ more than conquerors.” What they did may sound in our ears as simple and easy. But it was not so ; for amid surrounding superstitions and the animal worship and fearful tyrannies of their age, they walked with God, their lives ennobled by exalted expectations which they never might see realised, but which embraced the welfare of all nations, and in the thought of which “ they were glad.” Any one who has lived among the bloodthirsty, thieving, foul-mouthed Arabs who still wander where Abraham pitched his tent, can only wonder at what that Arab, Abraham—still called by the children of the desert the Friend of God—and all the other patriarchs became, through “ embracing the promises ” and living in communion with a divine righteousness and mercy.

From such lives as these we can see how truly faith can save a man as it raises him into lofty sympathies ; how it does strengthen him to overcome the temptations of the present, and enables him, even when life renders little of the promised inheritance here, yet to die in the self-forgotten assurance that the Kingdom of God will come.

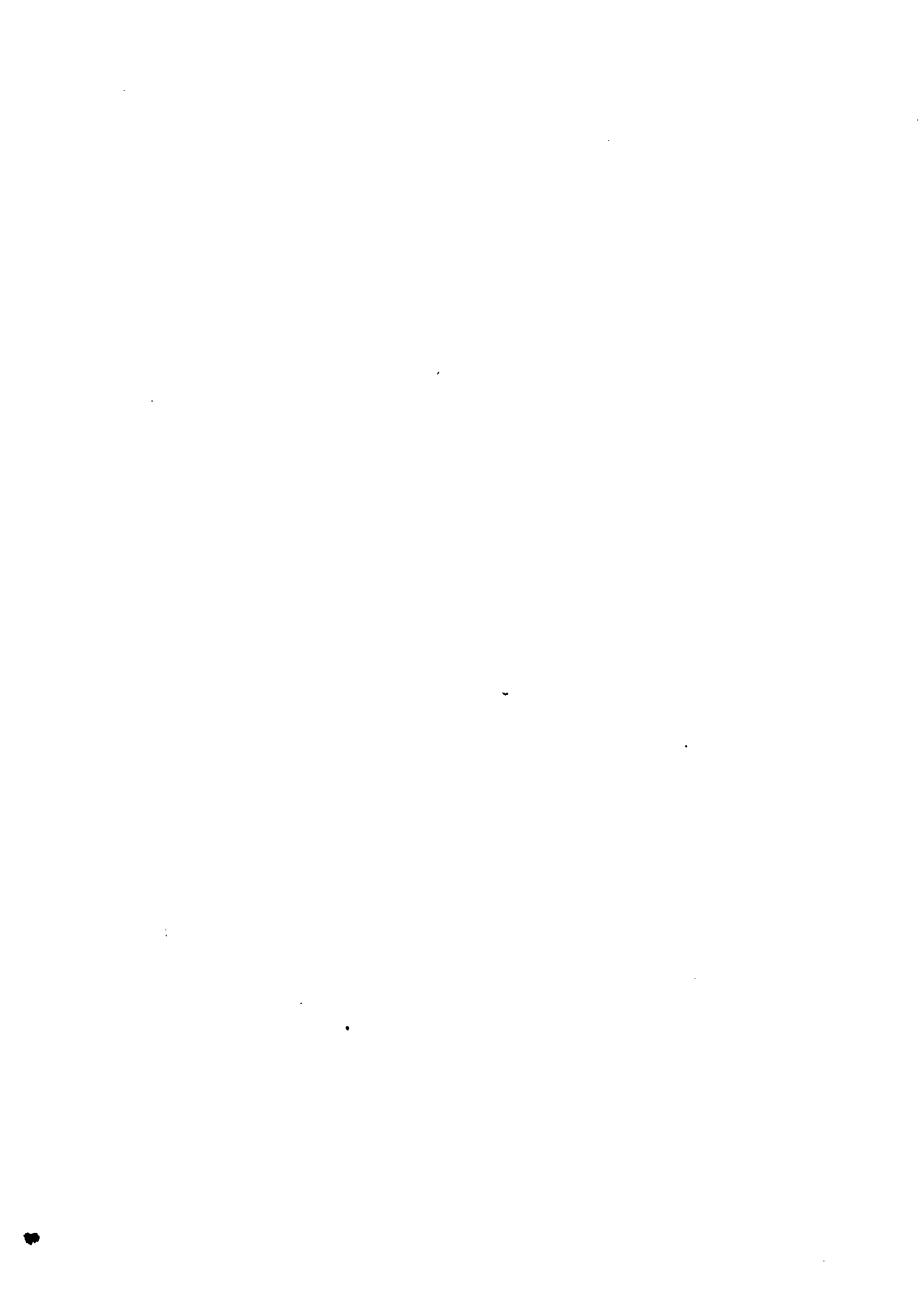
We are, of course, quite aware of the doctrinal significance of the term “ Saving Faith,” and of its relationship to Justification as distinct from Sanctification.

But one of the great evils of systematizing is the creation, in thought, at least, and often in practice, of a separation which does not exist in actual life. It is like the classifying by the botanists of the parts of a plant which are bound inseparably in vital growth. Nay, it is sometimes helpful in religious truth to get away altogether from the systematisers, and to put the facts into everyday language, so as to see them free from what too frequently invests them with an arbitrary and artificial character.

If we would translate such faith as is illustrated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, into a modern equivalent, we might call it Faith in the victory of the Good, in the victory of holy love and of self-surrender to the blessed purpose of God in Christ.

What a change would be produced in our ordinary lives if even in this sense we were men of faith and lived by faith! Take it in the simple sense of faith in the possibilities of life for ourselves, if we only embrace the promises of goodness and of God. Most of us accept a poor idea of what it is possible for us to be or do. We live by conventional standards, and do not realise how rich and helpful life can be made through love, hope, and faith in God. Such a want of faith paralyses effort. "It was easy enough for Abraham," we say, "to whom God gave a distinct command, to rise up and go forth from Mesopotamia." But what do we know of the nature of that voice which spoke to him? Are we sure that it was more distinct or more authoritative and personal than the voices which speak to ourselves every day—the voices of purity or of kindness and self-sacrifice which whisper to us of the right path, the right act, the right thought, the

right word? It should be ours to embrace the divine promises that come to us in these ordinary ways, and to live by self-surrender to them. I do not ask you to indulge in dreams of things so great and distant that the opportunity of reaching them may never come. But I do ask you to have faith in the possibility of *your* becoming—through God, through the living Christ, and through the power of the Holy Ghost, who is witnessing to you of these things—good, and holy, and true; and of your being able to be a genuine fellow-worker with God in His blessed purpose towards the world by living out the life of faith in the little sphere where your own lot may be cast. Embrace the divine promise for yourselves: live in the faith of it, and in the fulness of its mercy and helpfulness. It is thus we can be true children of Abraham and inheritors of his faith and blessing. Life is a magnificent gift. There is not one hearing me to-day to whom life is not granting untold possibilities of good. But what we need is faith in these blessed possibilities, especially when we are immersed in the petty details, the drudgeries, the coarser passions and trials, which daily come to us. We need this faith in a divine calling and in the promise of God, when the world and the flesh and the devil appeal to our sloth or to our self-indulgence, and we are tempted to take the low standard of the world, and to be, as they say, “no better than others.” It is then we need faith in Christ, and, at whatever cost, to surrender ourselves to the vision which He vouchsafes of what is right and true and good. It may be hard just then to obey, to take this particular cross, to lay aside the indulgence that fascinates, and to turn at once from the tempter to the



THE PATIENCE OF FAITH.

“What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.”—JOHN xiii. 7.

THE life of faith has other trials besides those which spring from the cross of duty. It is generally easy to distinguish the right path from the wrong, but there are hours when the divine dealings are dark, and when it is ours to trust God even in darkness. “What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter,” is frequently the only word of comfort we can grasp, and our duty then is to wait for light.

The relationship in which God stands to humanity as its ruler and guide, and His acting as a Father towards the children whom He would educate, might lead us to expect that there would be many things done by Him which we fail to understand at the time. The general, who has planned the campaign, fully comprehends the bearing of the different moves by which he has determined to gain a certain advantage. To the master-mind the marches and counter-marches, the advances and the retreats, are all necessary for the purpose in view. But they may for a while prove inexplicable to the common soldier. He does not rebel on that account. He is content to be ignorant, because he has confidence in his commander. In like manner, when we think of God as having His great design,

which is being wrought out in the history of the Church, it should not appear strange if there should occur periods and incidents that, for a while, confound our own expectations. They may be necessary links in the great chain of cause and effect, but, for the present, one may see only one link in the chain, and it may be inserted so inexplicably as to present the appearance of anomaly rather than order.

And if we are children of the great Father, we need not wonder if, in His training, many things have to be determined for us in spite of our own wishes, and of the value of which we may remain long in ignorance.

It is not easy for us now to measure the greatness of the darkness that at one time must have rested on many of the most important events in the history of the past. The life of Abraham was made up of a series of mysterious commands, beginning with that which made him leave home and country and go forth he knew not whither, to the darkest one of all, when he went with Isaac to Mount Moriah. The loss of Joseph and the taking away of Benjamin shadowed for many a day the life of Jacob with sorrow; the settlement of the tribes in Egypt, instead of Palestine; the forty years in the wilderness, the long national confusion and suffering of Israel, the division of the kingdom, the captivities, seemed opposed to all previous expectations and promises.

Martha and Mary were plunged in greater sorrow from the mystery of Christ's apparent neglect than from the loss of their brother. The death and burial of Christ formed a disappointment which almost shattered the faith of His disciples. "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and

to-day is the third day since these things were done." And in later times, what a contradiction to every cherished hope must the Jew have experienced when he saw the total destruction of Jerusalem, and the irretrievable ruin of the nation! To say that all these failed to comprehend the meaning of what God was doing conveys a feeble idea of the sheer darkness in which these episodes were involved for those who passed through them.

And similar experiences occur in life now. There are some on whom stroke follows stroke, and from whose heart the burden of grief, disappointment, and care is never for a moment lightened. It seems hard that while others enjoy summer brightness their sky is always curtained with gloom; while others have health, they have pain and weakness; while others prosper, yet, struggle as they may, adversity is their inevitable doom. So have we seen happy homes strangely visited by such sorrows as were the last we would have expected from the hand of a loving Father—the one who could least be spared suddenly struck down, and with him the stay shattered of the innocent and the helpless; the mother torn from the clinging arms of the child; or the infant, who had been as a light from heaven in the home, snatched away in its spotless beauty, and the music that was sweetest in life silenced for ever! Verily, what the Lord does at such times "we know not now." It is all dark—utterly dark; and all that the faithful heart can do is to lift the eye from the mysteries of earth to that Presence where all is light, where all is known, and to wait patiently on the Lord. "Though the Lord slay me yet will I trust in Him," was the grand utterance of

one who had no light as to the reasons for the divine dealing, but who knew that "beyond these voices there was peace"—that the Lord reigned in righteousness, and that all His ways were good.

But if our Lord explains to us how there must be many of His dealings which we know not now, He gives us the assurance that we shall know hereafter. This holds true even in this life. We can now see the meaning of Abraham's life, and the carrying of Joseph into Egypt. We can now perceive the reason of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple. The darkest hour in the history of the disciples has proved the brightest for the world. And what has occurred in the history of the world finds illustration in the narrower sphere of personal or domestic life. As the aged Jacob knew before he died why God had taken Joseph and Benjamin from him; and as the sisters of Bethany knew the deeper blessing for themselves and the world which came from the death of their brother; so we also often learn, after a time perhaps, how sorrows that once appeared almost ruthless, have been the source of benefits we had never dreamt of. The rending of the fleshly veil has perhaps opened the Holy of Holies; the blow which clothed the mother with the widow's mourning may have struck the spark of a new life in the son or daughter that has grown into life eternal. The disappointment and failure of earthly hopes may have been accompanied by an education in principle, infinitely more valuable than any gift of fortune. The sufferer is sometimes spared to recognise these good ends of trial. But there are often sorrows which we never understand on earth. There are Jobs on whom no day of

brightness dawns, and families to whom the ways of God appear dark to the very end.

There is, however, a day coming, our Lord assures us, when all these problems will be solved. And we know what the conclusion of them all will be, for we read that when the books shall have been opened, and all God's judgments have been explained, the great song of the redeemed will be one of gladness and praise. "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship Thee; for all Thy judgments are made manifest."

We may, therefore, be content with being now in darkness in reference to many events in our own history and in that of the world. Believing in a Father whose name is love—which in its highest form is another word for wisdom and holiness—we may be certain that He not only never afflicts willingly, but always for our good, and that it is the least possible suffering which is ever inflicted on any being in this world or the next. If we only knew the real purpose of the things which now appear the hardest and strangest, we may be certain that, instead of murmuring, we should utter a deep "Amen" of willing and thankful obedience.

**LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS OF THE
CROSS.**

LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS OF THE CROSS.

“And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”—LUKE xxiii. 44—46.

THIS shrouding of nature as with a funeral pall, from whatever cause it came, gave visible expression to the deeper darkness of trial and sorrow under which the blessed Redeemer was then dying. It was the darkest hour the earth ever saw. It was what our Lord Himself described as the “hour and power of darkness.” For light is always the best measure of darkness. It is when the shadow of the eclipse falls on the blaze of noon that a strange sense of horror falls on every creature, and the birds cower, and the beasts of the field are dismayed; and the gloom, just because of the previous light, appears deathly.

This holds with greater truth in things moral. It is the eye which most appreciates holiness that perceives most truly the foulness of the polluted. It is the pure who understand moral degradation; the coarse and depraved perceive it not. It was because Christ was light and love and purity, because He was good and holy as God Himself, that the sinfulness of the brother man was to Him more awful than cruci-

fixion, and more bitter than death. It was the light that was in Him which made the darkness around appear so deep. And that hour on the cross was the darkest He ever did or could experience. Everything gave agony, everything tempted to despair. How hopeless the world appeared! He had revealed what God is; and the reply of man was rejection and death. Think of the density of the kingdom of darkness which then surrounded that cross! It stood in Palestine, the land of ancient promise; it stood in Jerusalem, the holy city; beside it were gathered the representatives of the chosen Church and people. Priest and scribe were there, who gloried in the divine law, but who, with the name of Jehovah for ever on their lips, denied all that God really is, and under the name of religion were its enemies, opposed to its spirit and to its purpose. As Christ hung there the dreadful fact was made apparent, "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." "The light shone in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not." And if we go outside of that Palestine, and imagine the great world then lying beyond it—the Roman empire, with its brute force and its slaveries; the unscrupulous and the cruel enthroned in power; the weary and the heavy-laden crushed in the dust; men making gods in their own image, and deifying the lusts and passions which they obeyed. Think of it all!—the political, moral, and religious world as it then was—and we may ask, Where was the hope of any Kingdom of God? Was it not one vast midnight?

And in the midst of that great darkness Christ was being crucified; He was dying. He was there alone, deserted by every man. He was there apparently helpless, apparently vanquished. On His pure and loving

spirit all iniquity met as upon a living altar. He bore it as His terrible burden. He measured its depth; He understood its horror; He tasted its death. But when it was at its very worst; when He had touched the lowest depth; when everything seemed to speak of defeat; when it almost seemed as if even God had forsaken Him, so far, far down had His spirit sunk, so fearfully had the powers of darkness increased and thickened about Him and around Him; when every circumstance seemed to whisper the horrid doubt, "If Thou art the Son of God, why does He not deliver Thee?"—then was it that, with one word of unshaken trust, He broke the dreadful spell. "Father," He said, "into Thy hands I commend My spirit." When all outward things seemed to assert, "There is no Father," then there came the triumph of the divine Son: "Father, I trust Thee. O righteous Father, the world does not know Thee; but I know Thee, and to Thee I commit it all—all the burden, and mystery, and agony, and despair. I believe in Thee. I believe that Thy righteousness is stronger than all evil. I believe that Thy Light is mightier than all darkness, and that Thy love is greater than all hatred of men or devils. Men reject Thee; I trust Thee. I trust Thee, Who art their Father and Mine. Sin will not have the dominion, and Thy Kingdom will come, and Thy will shall yet 'be done on earth as it is in heaven.' Death, with its mystery and gloom, is gathering, and I have to enter its loathsome shadow, but I fear no evil. Into Thy hands I commit My spirit."

It was thus that in the midst of the utter darkness of that hour He trusted God, and was not confounded. For if He died and was buried, yet it was not possible that His soul could be held of death.

“Vain the stone, and vain the seal.”

His trust was vindicated. “He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.”

This, brethren, is also the Christian faith. **This** God in whom He trusted is our God for ever and ever. **This** faith which Christ had in God ; this faith **which** He had in man, in spite of all that man is ; this **un-**shaken hope and confidence in the triumph of the **good** over the evil, of the light over the darkness ; **this** vision of life in the midst of death—this is **what** is given to us for our faith also in all hours of perplexity or despair. It is that “strong Son of God ” whose sonship no trial could shake ; this “Immortal Love” which no hatred could quench—this is He Whom we worship and adore.

For there are times in the life of most true-hearted and Christ-like men and women when they are called to be partakers of these very sufferings of Christ, and to taste somewhat of His trial. Such times may arise from causes that bring us very near to the sorrows of Christ ; for they may come, as His came, from a sense of the darkness and sin of the world. If we in any measure share the holy love that was in Jesus, we shall not, and we ought not, to escape from drinking of His cup, and from being baptized with His baptism. If we are selfish and proud, and therefore unlike Him, we shall not understand what these things mean. It is quite possible to be this, and to have, under the name of Christianity, a religion that will minister to our selfishness. Each may for himself build for his “soul a lordly pleasure-house,” and wall it round against the claims of his brother man ; he may feast in careless ease ; he may seek as the supreme good a life of wealth

and comfort, and success and power, and let the world roll on as it may, with its fearful burden of sorrow and sin and wrong, and all the time keep religious opinions and phrases as a defence against future risk. But if we share the mind of Christ this cannot be. If we recognise what the brother man is to us, with the love in which Christ recognised all men, the worst as well as the best, the most repulsive as well as most attractive; if we feel, for example, the meaning of the burdens which crush tens of thousands at our very doors; if we open our hearts and ears to the tales that are every day told us of the homes wherein, for the decent, the warfare of life is a continued despair, and for the evil, dens of squalid misery and abandoned coarseness; when we think of the multitude of problems which modern life presents; tell me if there are not moments when it all seems so dreadful that we are tempted to give up thinking about it. I envy not the man who has not felt this even as a personal agony. When he lies awake at midnight, and when the noise of the streets is hushed, and the hammer rests on the anvil, and the roar of traffic is silent, and there sounds on the mind's ear that "sad music of humanity"; and the thought occurs of all that is going on—all the broken hearts and ruined lives, and the miserable homes in the great city over which the quiet sky is stretching its clouds, or the million stars are shining as they shone over a sinless earth; and when we think of Christ, and what He would wish His Church to be and to do, of what He would wish us to be and to do, for it all; and then when it seems so hopeless and vain to try that we are tempted to say, "So has it always been; so must it always be; leave it alone;" then, when despair seems strongest, let us think of that dark

hour when Christ was deserted by the whole world, and yet never lost His love or faith. Let us then catch His word "Father," and feel that it is not hopeless; that He trusted God and believed in man; and that, when He seemed most vanquished, He truly conquered. Let us then arm ourselves with the same mind, and give ourselves to His work of mercy and grace with new hope, believing that our labour, however little it may be, yet, if loving, and faithful, and sincere, will not be in vain in the Lord.

And yet hope as we may, how far—how very far off does it seem, and how very far does this society, called Christian, fail of all that Christ intended, and that Christ taught! I do not wonder at people becoming cynical. Look at the state of opinion in so-called Christendom, and if you judged from what it is, what answer could you give to Christ's own question; "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth"? Would He find it now?

Or again, think of the state of the Churches and how universally they fail of their purpose. How frightfully they illustrate anything rather than the Christian ideal. Think of it all, and tell me whether in such an hour you are not tempted to give everything up as lost. But it is just for such moments we need to look to the cross and to catch new courage from the faith of our great Master and Lord.

And there are other hours of darkness when "the burden and the mystery of all this unintelligible world" appear almost intolerable. When our own hearts and lives are touched with sorrows that make everything black as midnight; or when we ourselves feel what it is to face death, and we are overwhelmed by the sense of the unknown, and all things look cur-

tained by doubt and uncertainty. It may be that we are not altogether unbelieving, but we long for a surer confidence. In spite of ourselves, shadows rest upon us that are weird and awful.

What then? Have we not Christ with us in all these trials? His hour was darker far than ours. It was an hour which wrung the cry from lips that had never before breathed but sweetest prayer, "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me!" In spite of all, He believed in God, and He has taught us to believe in Him also. The cry of agony was quickly followed by the prayer of peaceful surrender, and He would lead us also to commit all to the same Father. He has shown us what God is. He did so during His whole life, when He went about doing good to all men, forgiving the very worst, and claiming even the outcast as a child of the Highest. But he showed what God is with still grander meaning, when He went through the horror of the hour and power of darkness. He went through death itself with the name Father on his lips; trusting Him when all outward things seemed to mock His trust; believing in the light when all was blackness; believing in men and being sure of their good, when every voice of man was shouting, "Away with Him." He did so, because He knew God and that His Will was a righteous and loving Will, even when it brought Him "down to the very dust of death."

And when we say we believe in Christ, it surely signifies that we mean to get our thoughts of God, our thoughts of the world and of man—what they ought to be, what they may be and shall be—from Christ and from no one else. The Christian religion means this. It means that His faith in God shall be our faith. We may have our difficulties and our sore agony; we

may be often tempted to doubt or to despair ; but when we believe in Christ, we believe in a faith in God and man which neither sin nor death could quench. He who so beheld the joy of victory beyond the storm of battle, that " He endured the cross and despised the shame," will teach us to despise our own coward fears. We will believe in the triumph of those powers He exercised ; and that obedience to God, patience, meekness, forgiveness, trust, love, are mightier far than all the powers of death or hell. As we thus grow into fellowship with Him, we may be led into worse conflicts, and through more trying experiences than we ever knew before. For as we stand within the Light of God, we shall learn more of what the darkness of this world is, but not as the cynic or pessimist learns it, in order to sneer at hope. We shall learn it in order to be fellow-workers with Him Who, in death, trusted God and knew that His Kingdom would come and His will be done. We shall be able, when the burden weighs heaviest on our spirits, to rise into the triumphant thought that above the shadows there is light, that " God is, and that with Him is no darkness at all " ; yea, that through the confusions of earth and the mockeries of men, through death itself, with all its mysteries, there is a divine and glorious purpose of good being accomplished, and that Christ did not die in vain. His resurrection will gain new significance. And as we learn to believe in a Kingdom of God, that is righteousness and peace and joy, we shall learn also to believe in men, and to hope all things for them, because we believe in Him Who has conquered sin, and death, and hell ; because we believe in a Father Whose name is love, and " Whose will is that all men should be saved."

**THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN PHYSICAL AND
SPIRITUAL ORDER.**



THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL ORDER.

“The spirit of God moved on the face of the waters.”—GENESIS i. 2.

“The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”—JOHN vii. 38.

I AM not going to discuss the technically theological relationship in which these verses stand to one another; nor do I intend to enter on the special questions suggested by the remarkable statement of St. John. I will rather take for granted that all of us understand the plain meaning which both passages bear; viz., that God's Holy Spirit worked in physical law, as well as in the special manifestation of Divine Power, following the glorification of Christ, as seen at Pentecost. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost in power—convincing, converting, and sanctifying believers—is the glory of the present Dispensation. It is emphatically the Dispensation of the Holy Ghost, whereby Christ dwells in the Church, and the spiritual renewal of Man is advanced as the great end of the Messianic Kingdom. But these verses, in directing our attention to two great spheres of the work of God's Holy Spirit, suggest several lessons, not without interest in the present day.

It has been the fault of religious teachers, and it is

also the fault of much of what prevails in the tone of the religious world—to draw an unwarrantably harsh contrast between the natural and the spiritual. A violent schism has thereby been created between the sacred and the secular, and, consequently, many disasters have ensued. Good people have done infinite mischief by placing the sacred in opposition to the secular. They have thus denied God's presence and God's glory in things where His presence should have been gladly acknowledged, and have thereby cast a certain dishonour on matters which should have been recognised as religious in the truest sense. The result has been that others, carefully studying the things thus handed over to godlessness, and discovering therein rich mines of truth, and beauty, and goodness, have too frequently accepted the false position assigned to them, and have preached, in the name of Agnosticism or Atheism, a gospel of natural law, in opposition to the exclusive and narrow gospel of the religionists I have described. The cause of God has suffered by the manner in which it has been identified with the mistaken opinions of its so-called defenders. The distinction is a very marked one between the life of the spiritual man and that of the natural man. The character of Saul the Persecutor differed not merely in degree, but in kind, from that of Paul the Apostle. Yet there was much in the life of him who could look back on his youth and early manhood, and honestly say that "touching the righteousness in the law he had been blameless," which we dare not ascribe to any other influence than that of God's own Spirit. Nevertheless, how infinitely lower was it than the life of Paul the Apostle and Servant of Jesus Christ! He became

verily a new creature. St. Peter, too, was a very different man after Pentecost from what he was before, but who would deny to the young disciple, who left all and followed Christ, qualities which were nothing less than the good gifts of God? While we gaze with astonishment on the change which Pentecost created, we must not form some cast-iron theological theory, shocking to our moral sense, which would hand over all that had previously existed in St. Paul or St. Peter to a godless something called "nature" or the "world."

When we pass from the doctrines of men to the Word of God itself, we have presented to us a glorious picture of the unity of all worlds. The divineness of the things we call secular is asserted, while "the glory that excelleth" is fully vindicated for the things that are emphatically spiritual.

Here at the very opening of the sacred record, we have a most suggestive statement made. I do not care to explain it, or to fill in details which at the best could only materialise, and so destroy, the effect of the imagery employed. The language must not be treated with a base literalism. Here, where the mystery of creation is set forth in a series of graphic pictures, half poetic, and essentially religious rather than scientific; here, if anywhere, must the saying hold true that "the letter killeth." And so when it is said that "the Spirit of the Lord moved over the face of the waters," we must banish from our minds any physical or material conception, and rather take the passage as expressing the energising and formative working of the Divine Spirit in bringing order out of chaos and light out of darkness. The fact which is stated is sufficiently suggestive and glorious, for we are told that all natural

order is of God, that the development, or (if you prefer it) the evolution, whereby the watery mists were cleared away, and the quickening light penetrated to the surface of the planet, and the dry land rose from the ocean bed, and the green grass and mighty forests clothed the hills, and the living creatures filled the seas or wandered over the plains, and man came last, as lord of all; that these were not self-made, but were under the formative and guiding power of the Spirit of God. And so are we taught that even in this dull earth, and in what may appear to our eye but the mechanical movements of blind force, we are to see a higher power; for that all are manifestations of creative, formative intelligence, even the moving of the Holy Spirit of God. It is thus that natural science may be regarded as a true theology, and instead of being looked upon with suspicion should be hailed as being distinctly a revelation. It is an ennobling thought that all this fair world we see, all those healthful and strong laws in ceaseless operation around us, all that long history of change and progress which we have been taught to trace, can be linked on to what we behold at Pentecost. It is the same Spirit who filled St. Peter and St. John with the life and power and love of Christ, who also "dwells in the light of setting suns, in the round ocean, and the living air." There is no opposition. All are diverse operations of the same Spirit, who baptized St. Paul with his glowing power, and St. John with his heavenly love, and who once moved over the face of the waters, and evoked order out of chaos. The Bible calls nothing secular, all things are sacred, and only sin and wickedness are excluded from the domain which is claimed for God.

In perfect harmony with these conceptions of the spiritual underlying the material in the external world, we have in the Word of God a magnificent vindication of the divine in those gifts of human genius which modern religionism has been accustomed to relegate to the category of things belonging to the "natural man." With a boldness which puts to shame our grudging and feeble apprehension of the breadth and grandeur of the divine influence in common things, the Old Testament recognises that the skill of architect, musician and artist is the gift of God's Holy Spirit. "See," it is said of Bazaleel, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass." It was as in fulfilment of a divine calling that singers and trumpeters were appointed from the children of Levi. These were their gifts, and it was God who had given them to use to His glory. It was from God that Solomon is represented as receiving the gift of far-seeing statesmanship, which enabled him to guide the politics of the nation. The valour of Joshua, the great captain, and the bravery and physical strength of David, are equally ascribed to divine influence, while such matters as prudence in council or generosity in making offerings, instead of being classified as merely natural, worldly or secular qualities, are traced to the working of the same Holy Ghost.

These things are mentioned in Scripture not that we should regard them as exceptions, but rather to reveal to us principles that are universal, and to teach us, with new emphasis, how "every good and perfect gift

is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights." We shall do wrong to the Bible were we to confine the working of God's Holy Spirit only to those persons and to those matters which are peculiarly spiritual. It would surely be a misunderstanding of St. John if we supposed him to mean that the Holy Ghost had never worked among man till Christ was glorified. It would be to make him contradict the clear statements of other passages of Scripture, and to make him banish God from His own world, and to deny His dealings with the minds and consciences of the great and good through countless generations.

But if we believe that He has never left Himself without a witness, and that the very rain and sunshine and fruitful seasons are the gifts of Him whose Spirit once moved over the waters and brought order out of confusion, then are we entitled to go further and to say that in the love of parent and child, in the heroic self-sacrifice of patriots, in the thoughts of wisdom and truth uttered by wise men, by Sakya Mouni or Confucius, Socrates or Seneca, we must see nothing less than the strivings of that same Divine Spirit who spake by the prophets, and was shed forth in fulness upon the Church at Pentecost. It is thus that the true Christian should regard with reverence all that is beautiful and wise and loving in our humanity, wherever or whenever it occurs. The poor mother—whom some would dare to place in the category of home-heathen—who toils in magnificent self-sacrifice to clothe and feed the little ones that cling to her; although her home may be a wretched den in the city slums, and although she has never entered a church and perhaps scarcely ever heard the name

of the Saviour who died for her; yet surely the light that burns where those thin fingers swiftly work, and where that worn face tells of sore privations willingly endured in order to give her little ones the bread she denies herself, has been kindled from a divine source. Who would presume to call that love a merely worldly, secular, godless thing, while the rapt experiences of the wealthy—and it may be useless—pietist are termed spiritual and divine. No, my friends! Scripture is very bold, and we shall not err in being bold also, as, taking a wide and healthy view of this universe of God, we would vindicate for Him all that is noble and wise in human history, all that has been chivalrous and brave, all that has been elevating in the song of the poet or in the creation of the artist. Handel and Beethoven, Raphael and Michael Angelo, Shakspeare, Milton, and Dante were in this sense divine gifts to our humanity. Surely not from the spirit of evil but from the Spirit of God did they derive their genius; we should deny both the letter and the spirit of the Scripture, if we doubted this. The prophets of Israel teach us this lesson above all others. What we should term secular history is with them intensely sacred; and they show continually how kings and captains and statesmen, and the influences which determine the course of daily life, have a truly divine as well as human aspect. These men saw God working in all things and amid all nations. He was not confined, according to them, to the little land of Israel—emblem of his Church—or to any exclusive coterie, but was to be seen in Egypt and Babylon, in Tyre, in Persia, in Greece, as well as in Jerusalem. The works of His Spirit were manifested in “whatever things were

true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report." These things were of God wherever found ; while all that was mean, cowardly, base, sensual, and sin-loving, were of the Devil. We ought therefore never to give a grudging recognition to that "soul of goodness" which is so often found "in things evil," believing that the feeblest spark of generosity or of kindness is a light from heaven, for—

" Wherever through the ages rise
The altar of self-sacrifice,
Where love its arms has opened wide,
Or man for man has calmly died,
I see the same white wings outspread,
That hovered o'er the Master's head.
Up from undated time they come,
The martyred souls of heathendom ;
And to His cross and passion bring
Their fellowship of suffering.

" So welcome I from every source
The tokens of that primal force,
Older than heaven itself, yet new
As the young heart it reaches to ;
Beneath whose steady impulse rolls
The tidal wave of human souls ;
Guide, comforter, and inward word,
The eternal Spirit of the Lord ! "

But while we thankfully acknowledge the work of the Divine Spirit as manifested in the development of creation and in the progress of humanity, yet we ought to recognise the greatness of the advance when we pass from these lower stages to the highest—even to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the Church, and to His work of converting and sanctifying human souls. It is not difficult to trace the progress which is thus indicated ; we can see how it passes from the law and order impressed upon the physical world, and from the development of ever higher types of organised life, on to the bestowal of those gifts on man whereby

the moral, intellectual, and religious life of humanity is attained. Here and there, in patriarchs and prophets, in sages and poets, we see foregleams of the coming glory. But we reach a new level when, in the Apostles and saints of the early Church, we behold men inspired with the very life of God Himself, and brought into conscious fellowship with the divine holiness and love. This was not a mere development out of the past. It was not a mere natural outgrowth of previous education. It was sudden, abrupt and all-mastering. It was new in kind as well as in intensity and force. It was verily a new spiritual creation, a new spiritual order, fulfilling and interpreting all that had been best in the past, but lifting all on to a new range of progression.

In conclusion I would add only one word. I have endeavoured to vindicate as divine all elevating gifts of genius, and every instance of goodness, truth, love, which may be found in our human history. I would indignantly reject any detraction from virtue because discovered in what is called "the natural man." For every light is from God. In doing this we but follow Christ, who claimed for the kind act of the Samaritan, heretic though he was, a higher religion than that of priest or levite. It was indeed the delight of Christ to discover good men in unsuspected places. It was with joy He saw a faith in the heathen woman of Phœnicia, or in the Roman centurion, that he had "not found, no not in Israel."

But all this makes the lesson more emphatic, "Friend, come up higher." If we are glad to recognise the work of God's Spirit in the common humanities, in the beautiful affections, the noble devotion, the

heroic sacrifices, which do so much to redeem this fallen world of ours, ought we not to rejoice still more in what humanity may become when filled with the same Spirit of God, and when quickened with the very life of Jesus Christ? It is surely not a hard necessity, it ought to be the most glorious, the most hopeful of all sayings, "Ye must be born from above," "You must share the very life of God." It is as if God said "I insist on nothing less than this; that you shall be brought into fellowship with myself, and share my joy." There must surely be something far wrong with men when they shrink from the very idea of such regeneration. There has surely been something far wrong in the teaching of those who have presented its necessity in the spirit of a threat, rather than of highest blessing. For this work of the Spirit of God is the flower and completion of human progress. It is the highest possible range on which humanity can enter, for it is the bringing of man to know the things of God, and to possess through sympathy His own thoughts of glory and of joy. It is indeed a necessity that we must share the life of Christ before we can see the blessedness of His Kingdom; and this life is from above. It is the highest gift of that same Spirit Who has bestowed all elements of good in the natural life, and Whose greatest work is to quicken us into the life of God. That is accordingly a false humanitarianism which would rest content with the lower to the denial of the higher. It is a falling out from the great march of progress upwards towards perfection, because towards God. We are untrue to the light already given, if we desire not the fuller light of which it has been but the earnest and prophecy. Pente-

cost is the measure of what may and ought to be ours. For it was He Who at creation caused the light to shine out of darkness, Who then caused the better light "to shine in our hearts, giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" and Who bestowed upon men their gifts to become Apostles and evangelists, and the inspirers of Christian civilisation.

The life thus bestowed on St. Peter or St. Paul was of a new kind. That life we are called to possess. That life we may and ought to possess. The Comforter abides with His Church. The Spirit reasons even with us now. It is Christ's desire that we should know the fulness of His power. Let us seek His power as power from on high. Let us pray for it, and with the blessed assurance that, if "we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

THE BEGINNINGS OF SIN.

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“But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?”—2 KINGS viii. 13.

WE have here a drama in nine verses ; a series of pictures presented, each one charged with incident and motive. The figures are all dramatic. The prophet in his loneliness, invested with a weird power before which monarch and captain tremble. Ben Hadad, the King of Damascus, sick and superstitious—a strong man shattered. Hazael, the Macbeth of the story, in whom the evil seeds of ambition swiftly ripen into a harvest of villainy. The incidents are no less dramatic. The enigmatic answer, “Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover : howbeit the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die.” The long, silent gaze into the face of Hazael, settling darker and darker, till the soldier quails under his eyes, and the prophet bursts into tears as he lifts the curtain and shows the traitor’s career on which Hazael was so soon to enter. “What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing ?” is the expression of his natural revulsion.

But Hazael lived to perpetrate all that the prophet had predicted. The revulsion was natural when the shocking enormity of his future cruelty and profanity was displayed, but when, instead of an abrupt leap

into sin there came the insidious concatenation of events; when it was not by a bound but step by step—one deed involving another—then, without suddenness—almost, as we would say, naturally—Hazael grew, slowly and surely, till he became the very “dog” at the spectacle of which he once shuddered.

Such is the history of Hazael—nay, it is the history, more or less accentuated, of the majority of all men. For there are few men or women whose lives would satisfy them, were their lives seen by them in all their results at the outset—say at that time of fresh youth when our ideals are usually at their highest and best. “Is this all that I am to achieve?” we could imagine such an one saying, “and is my life to bring me nothing fuller and richer than that flat and unprofitable monotony? Is there to be nothing nobler done than the poor success of managing to exist? Is thy servant a dog that he should attain nothing worthier than this shallow, useless character, this meagre individuality, or this so-called prosperity, which at the best is but purple and fine linen, and feeding sumptuously every day? Is life to have no finer issues, no fuller blessing? And is it possible that I should ever become contented in having it so, with the light of glowing aspirations gone, or faded into the dulness of conventional nothingness?”

Alas! how very few remember, after a few years, that they ever had their ideals—their romantic dreams, perhaps they call them now. So it is that people grow to be what at one time they would have regarded as contemptible.

There are few men who become utterly bad all at once. Evil seldom presents itself in such undisguised

wickedness as to startle conscience by its vileness and enormity. It is very seldom that the choice between moral degradation and untarnished honour is put so sharply that the man consciously accepts degradation. Sin does not tempt when it is presented in all its native ugliness and full-grown repulsiveness. Let there be but a wrong principle admitted as a rule of life, and then the steps which lead to its gratification become invested with a fascination that conceals their real nature. Whenever the ambition of Hazael was fired by the statement of the prophet, "Thou shalt be king over Syria," all else became possible to him. It is thus that our great dramatist shows his marvellous insight when he opens the tragedy of "Macbeth" with the weird prediction of the witches:—

"Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis,
All hail, Macbeth, Thane of Cawdor,
All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter."

A man in the heyday of generous youth, whose temperament is genial and affectionate, dashed perhaps with vanity and a craving to stand well with others, starts with the wrong principle of pleasure and the wish to please and be pleased rather than nobly to obey duty. Gifted with humour, he is the very soul of good fellowship, characterized by his companions as "one of the best-hearted fellows they know, one who would share his last penny with a friend." These are good gifts if rightly used. But if left without a backbone of high principle they are perilous to a degree. There is, indeed, so much that is attractive in a nature like this that it seems impossible anything can issue from it but what is kind and agreeable. We cannot imagine such a man inflicting

the direst injury on others as well as himself. Were you to present to such a warm-hearted lad a picture of what in a few years will be a portrait of himself; were you to show him a career ending in a moral shipwreck that has involved the misery of those he loves best on earth; were he to catch a glimpse of the shattered nerves, the craven countenance, the bloated cheek, or still worse of the ruined home with the dear ones whose lives have been cursed and blighted by his influence, we can imagine how indignantly he would reject such a future. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" The contrast is too abrupt not to be shocking. But let the self-indulgence and the pleasure of the moment reign supreme; let the temptation approach not by sudden assault but by the gradual sapping of principle: through this companionship and that jovial revel, and again by that act of moral cowardice involving a step lower in his social surroundings; let it not be by an irrecoverable plunge into intoxication, but by the glass here and the treating of the friend there; let it be by the gradual increase of habits of idleness, until the opportunities of life are lost, and discouragement intensifies the dislike to duty, and the preference grows for lounging by day and for evenings wasted in a society which reflects the growing dissipation of all manly principles; let all this go on till there comes the morbid craving, maddening into the drunkard's passion—and, alas! it is but a few years that are required for the most generous youth to become the degraded "dog," the vision of whose shame once stirred his loathing.

There is a stage in the life of the worst criminal when he would be horrified at the deeds which he

afterwards commits without a blush. Do you imagine that Judas ever proposed to himself the career which ended in the betrayal of the Lord, and his dreadful suicide in Aceldama? Assuredly not. I rather believe that if we knew all the circumstances, we would see how distinctly the final crash was bound in such a way to the first false step as to make it appear natural.

Or take another range of temptation. Were you to ask bluntly any man of business, however unprincipled, to join in an undisguised swindle, and call it a swindle, we all know how indignantly such a proposal would be met. The very word "fraud" would so startle conscience, that there could be only one reply: "What? Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" But that is not the way in which men become fraudulent. The unprincipled trader has many euphonious expressions to conceal even from himself the dishonesty he is practising. Reasons which appear meritorious lend support in the course which he adopts. He first of all begins with the fixed determination to make money. His avarice is inflamed by the rapidity with which he sees others accumulate fortunes. For him there is but one key to influence, to power, to enjoyment, and luxury—and that is money. Let him get money and he knows how the world will do him homage. He finds that there are certain current phraseologies which help to make things easier to conscience than if they were put into plain English. "Dishonesty" would be a harsh expression, but to be told that if he is to get on he must not be "too particular," and that he need not attempt to be better than others. All this helps him to put down any qualms which may agitate his unsophisticated

nature. The problem how to make something out of nothing gets easier as one or two gambling transactions or lying tricks of trade turn out fortunate. Self-confidence increases with success, ambition and avarice are fired in proportion as they are gratified. The transactions which he owns were "rather irregular" have turned out well. "As no person has been a loser by them, where has been the harm?" He begins to increase the stake, and under the smooth phrase of "trade-risks," or the meritorious term of "enterprise," or with the excuse that there are others as bad, he undertakes liabilities for tens of thousands of pounds which he could not meet with as many pence; or he falsifies his goods to an extent which makes detection dangerous. It is quite possible that the rascal succeeds. Every throw of the dice, which had involved probable ruin to others as well as himself, proves fortunate. The money is made, and no one is the wiser.

My brethren, it is bad enough when a career like that which I have pictured ends in the ruin which it deserves, and when it is visited by the reprobation of outraged public opinion. But it is infinitely worse for the man and worse for society when it succeeds. Fraudulent bankruptcies are bad, but the successes of fraudulent trading and of unprincipled commercial gambling are infinitely more demoralising.

The career of such a fraudulent man as we have described is one that leads on quite naturally. Once the ruling principle is money-making, once the passion of gain gets supreme, once the scruples of honour and conscience are overborne, once a single step has been taken from the way of truth and fair dealing,

then it only requires a series of mischances to produce a condition of things in which almost any conduct seems preferable to the course that moral courage dictates. A thousand excuses and fallacious hopes induce the man to plunge deeper, rather than draw back. He must keep up appearances, so church is attended more regularly than ever, there is no falling off in subscriptions, no diminution is allowed in the costly establishment. Till at last the crash comes, and the world is appalled that this man of all men should have so acted. "What? Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" So he himself would have said a few years ago, but the wrong principle being once adopted, the small divergent angle, the almost imperceptible "switch" of falsity once being allowed to lie against the straight line of duty, has brought it all on—imperceptibly almost—till at last terror and despair have driven him to do his worst. He is caught like a bird in a net, only it is a net which he himself has woven.

Alas! alas! my brethren, it is a pitiable picture, and one which finds a parallel in other careers—or rather in every career in which sin gains a gradual mastery. Little by little, by self-will, by concealment, by passion, by unfaithfulness to highest duty, by making choice at this critical point or that of the evil instead of the good—taking the wrong turn instead of the one conscience pointed to—who can tell what you or I, or any other poor man or woman, may not in this way become? There is but one safe-guard, and that is the grace of God. There is but one course that is secure, and that is loyalty to God's will, and the acceptance of duty as in obedience to His will. And

there is but one way of recovery from the downward path, and that is entire and complete arrestment with honest confession of the wrong, whatever it is—an honest confession, both to God Who searches the heart and knows the life, and to the man, whoever he may be, parent, or friend, or employer—against whom you have sinned.

Especially would I urge the terrible possibilities of evil upon the young, and implore them, as they value themselves, to guard against the admission of a false principle of conduct. There is no truer proverb than the French maxim: "*C'est le premier pas qui coûte.*" It is the first step which involves all the rest. Watch the first step—the first yielding to self-will, to impurity, to dishonesty, to falsehood. The Devil will supply plenty of excuses, and the world, or your own wicked heart, will afford you many a subterfuge, but beware, at the very first, lest you are taking hold of the first link of the terrible chain which ends in misery and degradation. Keep the highest ideals. Do not let them be lowered by the base conventionalities and surroundings of life. Yea, keep the highest of all ideals—Jesus Christ. Walk with God, with heart, life, and conscience open to His searching eye; and your end may then become as surprising in its victorious conquests and rich attainments, reached imperceptibly almost, day by day, as his downward course was appalling to Hazeel.

Character is infinite in its possibilities. May God give us grace so to love Him with all our hearts, and to walk with Christ in such obedience, that we may attain the glorious fruition of those who shall share for ever His own divine and triumphant joy.

**LESSONS FROM CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE
OF MAN.**

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“He knew what was in man.”—JOHN ii. 25.

THIS statement seems to have a wider meaning than that Christ had such a perception of character that He refused to commit Himself to those Jews at Jerusalem, whose faith had no deeper ground than astonishment at the “signs” which He performed. That was undoubtedly what suggested the larger conception of His knowledge. He mistrusted beliefs which had no root in spiritual convictions, and which arose not from any sense of the divine truth and goodness which He revealed, but from a kind of superstitious awe at the sight of miraculous powers. To be called the Messiah because He was a worker of wonders might have gathered around Him a turbulent political mob, but it gave no security for the establishment of the true Kingdom of God. In this narrow sense He knew the unsatisfactoriness of the professions those men were making and refused to commit Himself to them.

But no one can read the passage without feeling that St. John passes from the temporary incident, and asserts a universal, far-reaching principle, when He says, “He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.”

“He knew what was in man.” There is an insight into character which only belongs to the highest type of genius. It is one of the distinguishing marks of a great ruler or commander that he can perceive what is “in” the men with whom he has to do, and can select or reject his instruments with unerring skill. It is the function of the great dramatist, also, so to sound the depths of human passion and motive as to form an instructive picture of what man is, and of the possibilities of good and evil. Both of these kinds of knowledge do not, however, rise above the insight which genius commands into the secret workings of character. The knowledge of man which Christ possessed was of a different nature. It was a divine and searching perception. It was thus that at one time He surprised his audience by expressing the thoughts they had been secretly entertaining. “Immediately,” as it is said by St. Mark, “when Jesus perceived in His Spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, ‘Why reason ye these things in your hearts; whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk?’” In a similar sense, he astonished Nathanael by describing the nature of his solitary communings. He confounded Judas by displaying thorough acquaintance with his intentions. He anticipated the doubts of St. Thomas and the cowardice of St. Peter. These, among other instances, teach us that Christ had more than that kind of insight which is the usual gift of certain types of genius.

But if we are to believe that the knowledge which Christ possessed of what is in man was unerring,

universal, and thorough, then we must perceive how certain consequences follow, both as affecting Christ and affecting man.

(1.) We may learn, for example, how such a knowledge must have produced in Christ that terrible sense of the evil of the world, which made Him the Man of Sorrows.

Knowledge of the world acquired by a selfish and worldly man has usually a demoralising influence. Its tendency is to destroy faith in humanity and in the victory of goodness. As men learn to take a low view of society, they become more or less cynics, and there is no more hopeless type of character than a heartless cynic. Such persons always regard life with suspicion. They say that they know what the world is—that they have seen through and through the motives which govern men, and that it is only in romance you can find the hero. The cynic, with his narrow, disappointed soul, has a bitter sneer ready for every comer. Tell him of an act of generosity, and he immediately suggests some by-end. If one displays a devoted public spirit, the cynic can perceive but vanity or petty ambition. If you point to an earnest Christian, whose whole life is self-sacrifice, or to a brave missionary or ardent philanthropist, immediately the cynic discovers that they are “weak-minded creatures, who cannot live without making a fuss about something or other.”

Undoubtedly there is much in society which might well tempt us to be cynical, but such cynicism is always the token of a shallow or disappointed nature. And is not the cynicism which is now so much a feature of our literature, the sign of a faithless age? Cynicism is worse than satire. Satire may be the lash

wielded by truth, or the mirror held up by indignant love in order to reclaim. But satire, even at its best, is a sharp instrument. It is only beneficial when it is used by the moral surgeon whose object is curative.

It is remarkable that in Christ, Who saw through all the meannesses, the selfishness, the corruption, the pride, the cruelty, and wickedness of men with perfect clearness, and with a depth of repulsion from the evil which was proportionate to His absolute holiness, there is not even an approach to cynicism. He does sometimes use words that have a certain touch of satire. It is thus we find him exposing the moral sores which the Pharisees were concealing even from themselves, and denouncing their cruelty and hypocrisy in most scathing words. He can in one withering term delineate the cunning policy of that "fox" Herod. He can draw a graphic picture of the Rabbis who lay heavy burdens upon others which they themselves do not touch with their little finger; or of the scribes and lawyers, who appropriate the key of knowledge, and neither enter themselves nor allow others to enter. In all this there is assuredly an element of satire, but it is satire at its very best—truthful and curative.

But when we turn from these instances, and pay regard to the effect which His thorough perception of what is in man had upon Him, we see something widely different from the spirit of satire or of cynicism. It is the effect which the revelation of sin could not but have on One Whose character was that of holy love. We never could imagine a good father, who had a profound love for his child, combined with a high sense of honour and of holy purity, indulging in heart-

less cynicism or in clever satire, were the vision presented of that child's dishonour or degradation. Revulsion there might be, and a terrible horror at the evil, but the effect would be too penetrating and personal for any experience but that of the greatest sorrow.

And so the sorrow of Christ is to be measured on the one side by His holy love, and on the other by the thoroughness of His knowledge of what is in man. It was to His gaze, Who was pure as God is pure, and Who loved men with an intensity of which all earthly love is but a shadow, that there was unveiled the Gehenna of passion, and selfishness, and insincerity, which stormed within this man and that, and which found voice in the crowds that rejected and hated Him. Everything lay naked and open to that eye which pierced to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. Alas! who of us could bear to see such a vision! Who of us could bear to have our own lives so thoroughly searched? Alas! who could endure to have the whole truth of what they are presented even to themselves? We could not stand the scrutiny were we able to contemplate our actual characters in the light of perfect goodness. It would frighten the very best of us were we to see our motives, our imaginations, our unconscious hypocrisies, our inconsistencies, our secret faults, exposed in the full blaze of divine sanctity. And if we beheld others in their true characters, what would be the effect upon us? As it is, how do we feel towards the man whom we discover to be a rascal? What contempt we have for the mean cheat, the lying knave, the besotted slave of vile passions! But Christ knew what was in every man, and yet He did not despise

them. He saw what they were—Pilate in his selfish trifling, Herod in his cunning and sensuality, Caiaphas in his bigotry, Judas in his treachery. He saw the evils of society, the religious world with its cruel pride ; the miserable world of publicans and sinners, and harlots, and demoniacs. He saw through and through it all.

And He perceived more than what was actually present. He knew the terrible possibilities of which these evils were but the beginning. He knew the harvest of what were as yet but seeds and germs of evil. He knew what the falsehood, self-will and passion would become. Bad as the worst man was, He could say with a dread consciousness of the possibilities of the future, "It doth not yet appear what that man shall be."

It is when we think of this knowledge that we can best understand the weight of the burden which lay on the spirit of Jesus. The cynic with a bitter sneer would have turned away, half in laughter, half in hatred, from a race so stained and corrupted. That Christ could not do. The vision of the evil that is in man produced just the kind of effect we expect when we think of His love as well as of His holiness. It made Him "the Man of Sorrows." As He beheld it all He could not put it away from Him, because He could not put men away. His love took it home to Himself. It became His own terrible burden.

(II.) And this became the more possible to Him because He knew what was in man in another and more encouraging sense. If one aspect of this knowledge suggests to us the evil which Christ perceived, we must remember that He knew what was in man in

a more hopeful sense, for He knew what this humanity was capable of becoming when redeemed to God and inspired with the spirit of divine love. We may say it with all reverence, that Christ knew that *there was that in man which was worth redeeming, and which could be redeemed to glory and goodness*, before He thus came to seek and to save that which was lost.

If you or I never know the amount of possible evil that is in ourselves or others, we are as ignorant of the possible good. How often you hear it said, We never imagined it possible that that man could have shown so much presence of mind and heroic courage. You are seated, perhaps, beside a fellow-passenger, whose bearing indicates nothing beyond the commonplace. Perhaps the man himself never imagined that he possessed a single extraordinary quality. But there come the hurricane and the shipwreck, and amid the roar of the storm and in the presence of danger, suddenly the commonplace man develops into a hero, and performs deeds which are chronicled in a nation's history. You have all read of such instances. Sometimes, when a terrible colliery accident has occurred, the name of a poor miner, whose magnanimity no one suspected before, becomes emblazoned in every newspaper. People say, "We never thought it had been in him to have acted so magnificent a part." But it was in him nevertheless. You do not know what is in that gentle woman, till the hour of sickness or sorrow has come, when the sweet girl becomes the splendid heroine!

Now, even in that lower sense of the term, we can see how Christ knew what was in man. Like the sculptor, who sees the creation of perfect beauty in the

rough block of marble, so did Jesus see the capacities for good which dwelt unsuspected in many a nature. He saw the grandeur of their apostleship in the rude peasants of Galilee. He beheld the strength of the rock in Simon, and the fire of God in John, and the greatness of Paul the Apostle in Saul the Persecutor. He beheld in the fishermen by the sea of Gennesaret those who were to be the founders of civilised Europe.

But in a still larger and more encouraging sense, we can say that He knew what was in man, and how this confused and sin-stained society of earth might become a veritable City of God, and a Kingdom into which nothing that defileth should ever enter. He knew the evil as no one else ever knew it, but He knew the good also, and that love and righteousness were stronger, surer, and more abiding than all evil. He came to redeem what He knew was in man, what might and ought to be redeemed, and so "seeing the travail of His soul He was satisfied," for He beheld in vision the great harvest, for which He was then, even in death, sowing seed. "Except a corn of wheat falleth into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

It is in the light of that knowledge of the better life possible for man, that we can understand the marvellous patience and tenderness of Christ. He would not have so suffered and waited and died, had He not believed in the ultimate victory of love over hate and of good over evil. If His complete knowledge of the sin that is in man gave Him sorrow, surely His triumphant joy as Redeemer must have arisen from His knowledge that there was in man a divine spark still

unquenched, which through Him would grow into the full flame of love. The piece had been lost and trampled in the mire and all disfigured, but He knew that it bore the stamp of the great King, and so He searched for it until He found it. He beheld the corruption and the filth of man, but He saw how glorious that same humanity would be, when He had washed it and sanctified it and clothed it with the kingly robes of His own righteousness. If He knew what man was capable of becoming, when He said of Judas, "It were better for that man had he never been born," He also knew what man could be made, and so for "the joy that was set before Him," as He saw the vision of the spotless army of the redeemed, "He endured the cross and despised the shame."

Let us, then, in those moments when we are apt to take a low view of humanity and indulge in pessimistic cynicism over the wickedness and misery of society, remember how He Who searched, as we can never search, to the very depths of all evil, yet believed in man, believed in the grandeur of his destiny; how He bore, as no one else ever bore, the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and died for that very humanity which had rejected Him; and when He arose from the dead it was with the joy of a great conqueror, who already caught the triumphant shout of the ultimate victory of the good over the evil, and saw, with an assured gaze, the vision of the Kingdom of God and His will done on earth, even as it is done in heaven.

As we think of this, let us seek to be sharers of the holy love and of the faith and hope which dwelt in

Christ. Let us feel what the sin of the world and of our own hearts is, with the same holy sorrow that He experienced. Let us learn His patience with others, while we cannot brook the evil that is in ourselves, and let us think about the very worst with a similar hopefulness, and be labourers together with Christ in the redemption of that humanity for whose recovery He died.

FOLLOW OUT THE TRUTH YOU HAVE.

FOLLOW OUT THE TRUTH YOU HAVE.

“Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”—PHILIPPIANS iii. 16.

WHATEVER else the self-revelation means which St. Paul gives in this chapter, it certainly represents an intense following after truth in the widest sense of the term ; the truth of life as well as of belief ; the highest living as well as the truest thinking ; the noblest love as well as the purest creed ; the most devoted loyalty and obedience to an ideal—that ideal being Christ—as well as growth in the understanding of the divine purpose and glory. For religion is not an opinion, it is a life, the inspiration of a life in us, as well as its fruit in a life lived by us.

That was an age of perplexity to many good souls. “Old things were passing away, all things were becoming new.” It must have been exceedingly trying to those who had lived under the law of Moses, without a single question, saying their prayers, offering their sacrifices, accepting traditions, never doubting what had been always regarded as orthodox, when suddenly this new faith in Christ came like a revolution, and they heard St. Paul, the former distinguished student of Gamaliel, sweeping aside as a bygone creed, all they had learned to revere. To such—for I think it probable that it was to such perplexed clingers to the

old faith St. Paul alluded—he gives the direction, “Whereunto we have already attained let us walk by the same rule.” As if he said, “Be true to the light you have got, recognise the points that are common to us both, and God will reveal further truth to you.”

A similar perplexity affects many persons now. This also is a time when familiar landmarks are disappearing. It is a time of testing and sifting. Wise men are not afraid of the consequences. They believe that the result will not be the impoverishing of religion but its enrichment, and that enormously.

In the meantime, however, the effect of this universal questioning tells disastrously on many minds. Some of them may have been trained to identify Christianity with certain traditional views as to the nature of inspiration, and when those views are attacked or overthrown, they give up the whole as lost.

Others, driven by more intelligent, as well as more destructive lines of study, find themselves at sea without any apparent course that gives them the hope of reaching a haven of religious hope and rest. They are for the time without a religion, and as they are not mere praters of second-hand doubts they know the bitterness of the trial.

It seems to me that the advice St. Paul gave to those in difficulty in his day applies now with tenfold force. The counsel “If ye be otherwise minded, God will reveal this unto you; whereunto ye have already attained, walk by this same rule. Be true to the light you have, follow it out, and it will lead you to fuller light, it will lead you to God and Christ,” is just the counsel we require at present.

Let us see how this advice may be acted upon by

persons who feel themselves "at sea," tossing about on the waves of controversy, and anxious at the same time to find some hopeful course which they may follow.

It will be right, under such circumstances, to discover the point from which they may start. If it is said, Be true to the light you have, the first question is, What is that light?

I do not think we can go farther back than to the sense of right and wrong, which is common to us all, and make that our starting point. I would say to such a man in doubt, You can see in the face of a little child a beauty, a purity, an innocence and faith, that touch you as the loveliness of a spring flower touches you, with the consciousness of a divine grace. You catch a similar charm in the song of the bird, and in the thousand sights and sounds with which nature is filled. You go farther and learn to associate these with visions of what is morally fair and holy in men and women. You must perceive a harmony between the unsullied purity of the child and the stainless honour, the unselfish love, the unswerving righteousness of noble character. It is true that there are other types in nature, and other facts in humanity which appal you. An exaggerated optimism can be easily brought to book by an exaggerated pessimism. But that is not to the point here ; because every sane man can discriminate between the two classes of facts. The world is certainly made up of contradictions, and he is a fool who denies that there is a dark side as well as a bright. But that does not hinder you or any man from pronouncing on the good or evil. You call the one divine and the other devilish ; and this you can

do, because there is in your own heart that which responds to the good and condemns the evil. You can recognise the graciousness of love wherever found, and the deformity of selfishness and hate. You can acknowledge the claims of righteousness, justice, truth, generosity, self-sacrifice, and the difference between the chaste purity of the mother who bore you, or of the sweet sister who loves you, and the vileness of the licentious.

Here, then, is a point to which you have already attained, and the counsel which St. Paul—if we do not misunderstand him—would urge is, Be true to these convictions, follow them out, and they will lead you to God, and to that very ideal after which I am striving—even Jesus Christ. The conclusions you have already come to as to right and wrong may appear very elementary, and, in their simplicity, so distant from the complexities of the Christian creed as to be almost worthless in a religious sense. But it is not so. These conclusions are all-important. Be true to your highest moral instincts, and follow them out. Begin with what you know distinguishes the light from the darkness, and with that distinction you will discover a guiding line which will lead you farther.

There is a habit among mountaineers when they are beset by mists, or enveloped in the confusing blindness of the snowdrift, to search for running water, because they know that, though it be a mere thread, it will guide them by its voice as it steals down among the mosses or the snow; that small as it is it will lead them surely and safely to the larger stream which, in its turn, will bring them to the familiar glen where the houses of men are found.

Even so here. The inquirer in the present day may often feel adrift, and all his trusted landmarks draped in the mists of doubt. Where once all seemed clear, now all is confused. Fog—impenetrable fog—lies for him upon a thousand questions, such as the extent of inspiration, the basis of authority in Scripture, the possibility of the supernatural, the meaning and character of the divinity of Christ, immortality, or even upon the existence of a personal God. “Now-a-days,” he pathetically complains, “one is sure of nothing except what can be seen, measured, and proved by experiment. The engineer, the chemist, the anatomist, the astronomer, the botanist, can give me facts about which there is no possible question. You theologians are challenged as to almost every statement you make. What is a man like me to do? All religion appears cloudland.” I answer, Have you not some facts to go upon? Are there no moral convictions that are as true to you as the things that can be touched, tasted, and handled? Is the sense of right and wrong not a fact? Take the example of the shepherds. When you find the smallest thread of moral and spiritual guidance, follow it. Follow that sense of right and wrong, and just see where it leads you.

You know that these convictions have not been of your own creating. This instinctive joy in what is good, and this disgust at evil, must have a source. The sense of right that is in you has been given you, and He who gave it must therefore be righteous. Nay, all the broken lights of goodness that you recognise in yourself or in humanity compel you to think of a perfect goodness; and as no moral quality can exist except as belonging to a person, so your very gropings after

an ideal goodness and righteousness must lead you to think of One in Whom they perfectly exist, Who is at once the source and end of all perfection—even God.

Nay, the confession of goodness in your own soul, and your cry for its attainment, must surely lead you to confess Jesus Christ, in Whom all possible love, truth, righteousness—all religion, in short, in its highest and best sense—dwells and shines forth with an unclouded lustre. The artist who seeks a perfect model at once leaps with joy when he beholds absolute beauty. And the earnest seeker after righteousness must, in like manner, acknowledge that the glory he sees in Christ is the highest possible ideal—

“He needs must love the highest when he sees it,
Not Lancelot, nor another.”

No! For the Laureate, in his “Idylls,” was setting forth a higher truth than the court of any earthly king. Not Lancelot, nor another, but the Christ—“He needs must love the highest when he sees it.” When he accepts that, all else follows. Truly, “if in anything else he be otherwise minded, God will reveal even that to him.” There may be questions affecting the person of Christ he cannot as yet see, but once he perceives His unsearchable goodness he will learn to say from his heart, “This is divine; truly in this man is the highest, most perfect revelation of absolute spiritual perfection. If there is a God at all, must not this be He?”

It is thus that from the consciousness of goodness in man we are led to God. From the small rill far away on the mist-covered hills of doubt we are led down and onwards to the great ocean of the immortal and divine.

If we thus follow out the good in ourselves and others, we will learn to see in the imperfect the hint and promise of the absolutely perfect, and so shall we rise, step by step, to the thought of God, and in Him of immortality.

We commence at the wrong end when we first go to external evidences to prove the glory of Christ. The highest of all evidence is Christ Himself, commending Himself by what He is "to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

And so would I say to any who may fancy that all is lost, because some old theory has been shaken, or some venerable mistake has been at last found out, Do not on that account imagine that religion is even touched. God may now be shaking the heavens and the earth; but we may be sure that the result will be now as it has always been at similar epochs—it will make the eternal truth more fully manifest. The shaking is for the glorious end, "that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Religion can never perish as long as righteousness and love and purity stream from their eternal source, and light up the path of life and duty with a glory before which men must needs bow in worship. As long as Christ is known religion must have its home in the conscience and heart of men, and that which shines in Him here on earth will prove itself to be the very light of the glory of God; that light which is the light of every saint here shall be the light of heaven for ever and ever, for there is none higher, none more divine.

And there is another application of the text, which equally needs enforcement—"Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us

mind the same things," conveys a lesson of charity and toleration and a call to unity among professing Christians, who may differ on many points, but who, at all events, hold much that is common to all, and are agreed on things which they are able to term essential. No true unity can ever be attained by asking any man or body of men to sacrifice conviction. True Christian union can come about only by the honest recognition of such differences, by mutual toleration of these differences, and by the endeavour to meet upon ground that is common to both sides. It is a sad symptom of the intolerance which may lurk under the guise of liberality, when men with one voice cry out for union, and with another demand the destruction of everything that differs from their own views, although these things may be precious to those with whom they propose union. I for one feel certain that no unity worthy of the name can ever be reached by such methods. Better far to fall back upon St. Paul's counsel, to discover the things that all believe, to tolerate the points regarding which conscientious differences are held, and to leave it to time, experience, and education to bring about a fuller understanding. If there are points on which we are otherwise minded, nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things. "Knowledge puffeth up, charity edifieth." "Let us look, every man, not on his own things, but also on the things of others," and follow such matters as may build up, rather than destroy, and which will sweeten life, rather than embitter it.

INTEMPERANCE.

INTEMPERANCE.

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”—PHILIPPIANS ii. 4.

THIS injunction was given to enforce humility, for the conceited man looks chiefly at himself; the humble and the loving consider others. To think of others with a loving care is the result of Christian life, which is love. It is fashionable with a certain school of modern writers to employ another term first borrowed by Comte from the Italian, but I am not sure that by the word “altruism” the meaning is made clearer. Care for our neighbour is simpler and more direct.

There is a marked distinction between the kind of interference with social affairs which is proper to the State, and the philanthropic enterprise which is the outcome of the Christian spirit. The sphere of the State is to a large extent defensive. It is its duty to guard society from the danger which may arise from the wrong-doing of individuals. It accordingly represses crime; it protects the weak from the oppression of the strong; it forces the parent to support and educate his family; it forbids the employment of children in factories; it shields society from the dangers which may accrue from the neglect of sanitary laws; it forbids overcrowding in dwelling-houses and insists upon landlords supplying adequate drainage. In all

such cases the State acts in self-defence, or in other words it considers the safety of the public. But it is not the commonly recognised function of the State to be philanthropic. It does not prevent, nor does it try to prevent, a man being a bad man, as long as he does not interfere with other people. He may drink himself to death ; he may be a liar, or a sensualist, or a degraded miser, or a prodigal and voluptuary. That is his own business, and the State takes no heed.

The function of the Church is, however, wholly different. As expressing the mind of Jesus Christ who came to seek and to save that which was lost, the Church must pay regard not only to the well-being of the community, but to the well-being of the individual. It is not enough for the Christian that a man should not do evil to others, if he is evil himself. The Church must, in virtue of the Christian spirit, seek to deliver him from his sin.

There are naturally many social questions in which the Church and State have a common interest. There is no criminal or social reform in which the State engages but must enlist the enthusiasm of the Church of Christ, and there are many social questions in which Church and State can go hand in hand, but in which the Church can go farther than the State, and deal with certain aspects of evil with which the State cannot interfere.

Of such a nature is the question of intemperance. In so far as drunkenness affects society, interfering with the well-being of the community, the State is bound to intervene for the prevention of these evils. It is upon this ground that such questions are discussed in Parliament as the Licensing Laws and the condi-

tions under which intoxicating beverages may or may not be sold; beyond this the State does not go, but so far as it does go the Christian philanthropist follows with a legitimate and deep interest. The Church, however, is bound to go on beyond the State, and to use a thousand appliances for the prevention or the reform of such evils. It has to influence character, to stimulate motives, to supply incentives to the individual as well as society in a way which, if duly exercised, is far more searching, diffusive, and thorough than can be obtained by legislation.

I am not a total abstainer, and I decline to be so on principles which have commended themselves to me both from reflection and experience. I would not, however, say one syllable in disparagement of those who, believing total abstinence to be the grand cure for this monster evil, have had the courage of their opinions. If I believed as they do I would be a total abstainer to-morrow, for that man would be unworthy of the name of Christian who would not willingly deny himself a hundred times over in such matters, if he thought that by doing so he could help to solve the problem of drunkenness. I claim for myself what I accord to others—the liberty of judging and of acting according to conscience. The course I take in this matter is what I believe to be not only in harmony with the teaching and example of Christ, but involved in the very spirit of the Christian religion, whose object is to train men to the right use of freedom and to the exercise of self-control—or, in other words, Temperance.

This, however, I would say in respect to Total Abstinence—(1) that it is a necessity and the only chance for men who have a tendency to excess. There is a

large proportion of inebriates whose physical condition, either from heredity or habit, is such that the very taste of strong drink acts like the first drop of blood to the hungry tiger. It inflames every passion and overthrows self-control. For all such, Total Abstinence is an absolute necessity. The tendency must be regarded as a kind of physical disease requiring exceptional treatment. (2) Total Abstinence is a wise precaution for all whose pursuits expose them to temptation, and it is also a wise preventive in the training of children, especially when there may be any hereditary tendency towards intemperance. (3) Total abstainers deserve the thanks of the community for the exertions they have made to create a public opinion, and if not to overcome, at least to weaken the strength of this giant iniquity. It may be easy for us to criticise the methods sometimes adopted, or to condemn the strong language employed, but they have a right to reply that they at all events have been trying to do their best. Great excuse must also be made for the language frequently employed by teetotalers. Any man who sees the evils of intemperance, any one who may have experienced them, perhaps, in his own family, any one who has been brought face to face with the ruin and devastation they produce, must often, in very despair, be disposed to cry out for any measure, however exceptional, and be ready to excuse anything except indifference.

For no language can by any possibility exaggerate the terrible nature of this curse. I do not attempt to draw any comparison between the present age and the condition of society in former generations, nor shall I venture on a comparison between our own country,

or our own city, and other cities and countries. There are those who, remembering the state of society some fifty or sixty years ago, assure us that the cause of sobriety has advanced enormously; and when they refer to certain classes of society no one, I imagine, will dispute the assertion. Others again tell you that there has been a great deterioration in the habits of the labouring classes, and that forenoon tippling at luncheon bars has crept in among clerks and commercial men, to an extent that was almost unknown a few decades ago. I do not presume to pronounce on the accuracy of such statements; nor is there any necessity for doing so. The case needs no adventitious colouring. The sin has struck its roots terribly deep; it has spread over an area which is appalling in extent, and displays an intensity that is frightful. Those who seldom go beyond the circle of their own acquaintance, those whose home is pure and happy, and whose friends are worthy of their friendship, may know an instance here and there, or may read tables of statistics which shock them; but it is only those who, as clergymen, physicians, magistrates, district visitors, or police and other officials, are brought face to face with the actual havoc which drunkenness entails, who can fully realise its terrible nature. There is no class, there is no sex wholly free from it. This, far more frequently than the world dreams, is the skeleton in the house where all else is refinement and luxury; this is the heart-break of many a parent and brother and sister; this is the bitter secret which the kind husband has to carry regarding the wife of his bosom; it is the terrible nightmare which haunts the Christian wife regarding the father of her children. There can be no doubt that

the extent of the ruin, of the poverty, crime, and misery, which is produced by intoxication, stands out of all proportion to what is caused by any other form of vice. What is the chief source of the indifference to religion, of the miserable homes, of the naked children, of the squalor and penury which characterize thousands of houses in this city? I answer drunkenness. What is the chief cause of pauperism? Drunkenness. What is the baneful origin of the majority of cases which fill the surgical and other wards of our hospitals? Drunkenness. It is this which crowds our jails with criminals, which infuriates the murderer, and is the reward for which the thief labours. It is the ruin of family life, of national life, of Church life. It is the enemy of comfort, the curse of the State, the foe of religion. Friends and brethren, to realise the utter degradation it produces you have but to measure how quickly it can change a man into a brute, a woman into a fiend. You have but to see the drunken sot smiting and trampling on the wife who, in spite of his cruelty, still clings to him. Nay, as was lately brought before us at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, you have but to see how it can make a man strike a deadly blow at his own infant of two months old. You have but to see the woman, her hair dishevelled, as I lately saw her, carrying in her reeling arms through the chill night the pale baby, whose cries had been hushed by the "wet damnation" which the drunken mother had poured into its innocent lips. You have but to consider how it will harden a mother's heart into that of a demon, as in another instance brought before us at the same Society I have named in which a young mother starved her only child to death.

When the agents of the Society visited her house they found her from home and were told that the infant was away too; but on searching, they discovered the emaciated creature huddled among rags in a press. It was then the afternoon, the mother had been away since early morning, and the lonely baby was sucking air through a tube attached to no bottle. Alas! the rescue came too late. The child died, and the words of the mother when she heard of its death were "she was glad the d——d thing was gone." God hath said, "Can a mother forget her sucking child?" Drunkenness can make her hate it.

These, you may say, are exceptional instances. What, then, is characteristic? You have but to enter homes where all is bare and the hearth cold, and to see the children, their young faces sharpened into an unnatural intelligence by a bitter and too early experience of life, waiting and watching far into the night for the sound of the staggering blasphemer who, because of drink, has become their curse instead of their protector. There are thousands of such homes every Saturday night in Glasgow, where fathers and mothers are both drunk, and innocent little ones left to their cruel mercies. Has Christianity no special duty in reference to these horrors? Surely it has.

But when the question is asked, What are we to do? the problem assumes such a complex aspect as to make it difficult to reply. Some answers, however, at once suggest themselves. There are questions belonging to the State which ought to excite a far greater interest than even that which already exists. The licensing of public-houses, for example, their number, and the best methods for controlling them, are subjects

in regard to which a keen interest has been awakened, and yet, in my opinion, not adequately awakened in the public mind. It appears to me intolerable that there should be such an unpardonable excess of public-houses in those districts where the poor and labouring classes do most congregate. How would you, my brother and sister, who hear me—how would you like to have such houses open at every corner of your terraces and squares—traps laid down at your very door offering temptation to your sons if not to yourselves? And yet, if you but take a walk to the north, south, or east of this city, where are most of the one-roomed and two-roomed houses, I am sure that your best feelings will be shocked by discovering the extent to which licensed houses abound. It is no answer to quote the familiar formula regarding “Supply and Demand.” Drink, like every other form of temptation, creates a demand as well as affords a supply. Something ought to be done for a reduction in the number of those houses.

Again, it is evident that different measures must be used to meet the requirements of different classes. There is a large section of the community which cannot be reached so effectually by legislation as by a healthy and decided public opinion. It is public opinion, for example, which, next to the direct influence of the Gospel, will tell with most effect upon the demoralizing and ruinous custom of associating drinking with buying and selling as is at present too much the custom among many of our largest traders. It is a sad fact that there are many commercial houses, and some of high position, which apparently consider first and foremost the number of orders that can be booked,

and which wink hard at the methods by which these orders are secured. The manner in which their agents are exposed to temptation, by being practically compelled to "treat," and to drink with the representatives with whom they deal, is making frightful havoc among one of the most intelligent classes of our community. The home of many a commercial traveller and buyer for our large houses knows too well the demoralizing effect that these customs are producing.

Again, it is public opinion which will prove most effective in clearing luncheon-bars from those afternoon loungers, young and old, who, to adopt the phraseology of the day, indulge in their "nips" of ardent spirits, and who bring friends, or go with friends, to drink "dram" after "dram" until the early evening finds them muddled, sodden, and stupid. It is time that the rebuke of public reprobation was allowed to fall upon habits that are sapping the character of thousands of the most promising of our population; and I believe that nothing but good can come from directing the attention of our upright citizens and merchants to these evils. Public opinion will be enormously stimulated if such matters are taken up by men of influence.

But there is something more than public opinion needed to counteract the drunkenness which degrades so large a proportion of the masses. I do not now speak of the agencies which may be employed for rescuing and reforming the intemperate, for bringing them into societies where the weak may be strengthened, the wavering confirmed, and those who are exposed to temptation watched over and advised. These means are all good, but there are others of a more general character which I would now touch upon.

Human nature is very much the same in every class, and intoxication has not always its origin in a love of strong drink for its own sake. There are causes for intemperance which can be removed and ought to be removed. There are social causes which to the shame of the Christian community still exist, and which ought to have been removed long since.

Consider, I pray you, the condition in which many hard-worked men are placed. A labouring man with his fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen shillings a week comes home at the end of his week's toil. Such labour has a certain monotony. Try it yourselves; dig with a spade or wheel a barrow, or fulfil the same round of manual toil hour after hour, in rain and sunshine, for six days of each week, and, if you are a man at all, you will know what it is to crave for some change, for some relaxation, for something, whatever it be, that will act as a stimulus to mind and body. What does such a man find on his return on Saturday? Some of you perhaps may conjure up the picture of a bright fireside, of clustering children, a neat table, shining furniture, and a glowing hearth. Thank God that is a picture which is frequently realised; but what of those who find no such welcome? What of the man whose wife is a slattern or a scold, who finds confusion instead of comfort—the exhausted air of his little one-roomed house saturated with the steam of the washing tub, and wherever he tries to settle there is some child that is either screaming or being screamed at? What of the young artizan or labourer who is a lodger, and who discovers nothing but unfriendliness, stupidity, and filth in the den where he has, for cheapness, to huddle? Ay, what, too, of the tired-out wife and

mother, slattern though she be, who has never learned neatness or method, and who, after her sore struggle from early morning till late night, has a sense of nervous prostration and of that sinking of the system which so often leads to the craving for stimulant? What are these people to do? Where are these men to go? If they go outside, they find muddy streets and an atmosphere thick with the reek of chemical factories. To pace the streets in which their houses are, on a foggy winter night, is dismal recreation. Only one door seems open to them where there is brightness and society, and that is the door of the public-house; and the conditions on which sociality can be enjoyed there are, that they take part in the drinking bout. Is it any wonder that they go there? Is it any wonder that the sober wife at home, who has to fight hard to make the two ends meet, complains that the husband takes "a heavy dram" on Saturday? What else has the man to do? Would you not do it? Should I not do it? God help us if we are such Pharisees as to thank God, that, having all our comforts, we are not as these men are. There is surely here something which Christian philanthropy can deal with.

For there is in Glasgow, as in all the cities in Britain, a disgracefully meagre supply of cheap and healthy amusement for people of all classes. For my part I would rejoice to see our provincial stage so purified as to exercise the elevating and healthy influence which the drama is so capable of exercising. It would be well if our music-halls and singing saloons were made as common and as innocent, as similar places usually are abroad. There is no attraction for the people like

music. You have but to remember what was witnessed during our own Exhibition. To my own heart the grandest of all spectacles connected with it was to see the heights of the Park crowded with tens of thousands of the poor, the ragged, the lame, the outcast, hurrying eagerly, and waiting patiently to catch, even at a distance, the music of the bands, and to see the display of the fireworks. Why is there not more done in this direction? Are we so poor that we cannot afford what any second or third-rate town abroad affords—its own municipal band to play free and gratis at stated times for the pleasure of the people? Why is it that we cannot do something like what I have more than once written about and spoken about as existing at Milan, where you have a glass-covered arcade, heated in winter, made brilliant with the electric light, and open to all comers, with excellent music played for the diversion of the public? Why should we not have some such experiment tried in the north, east, and south of this city, where the people most require relaxation and amusement? Let them have that which we ourselves have at home—healthy recreation. Poverty and drunkenness are the chief factors in the degradation of house and family. But if they cause the miserable dwellings, be sure that the miserable dwellings also cause the poverty and the drunkenness. They act and re-act mutually—and you must supply some new incentive, some attraction, some true palliative to reach the causes of the drunkenness and consequent poverty, at the fountain-head; and among these palliatives, next to the influence of religion in the elevation of the individual, must, to my mind, be ranked

the supply of a healthy answer to the craving for brightness, for change, for stimulus, which at present gets a false answer in the public-house and intoxication.

Men say education will work wonders, and that we had better leave those evils to the gradual but sure influence of advancing civilisation. There is much, indeed, which education can effect; but education is something wider than teaching the three R's or instruction in religion in the Sunday-school. These are not the whole of education. We have to educate the people to know how to amuse themselves rightly, and we have to train the girls who are to be the future wives and mothers of the people to know how to make a man's home comfortable and his children healthy. The slatternly home and the slatternly wife are frequently the consequences of early years spent in a factory or warehouse, without the slightest knowledge being acquired of household economy or the plainest matters of cookery. Education will indeed do much, but it must be made wide enough and broad enough.

If, then, there are means at hand which can tend to the alleviation of the terrible evils which are now making shipwreck of so many of our brothers and sisters in this city, it is surely high time for us to consider wisely what ought to be done, and in generous self-sacrifice we ought to do what we can to accomplish the right. It is high time for us to remove as far as we may this foul stain from our country. We may not reach an ideal state of society, but we may to an enormous extent mitigate the present suffering and shame.

I make no apology for pressing such a subject on your attention. I do not understand salvation as having reference only to the security of our own souls. The salvation of Christ is far wider than that. It is the establishment of the Kingdom of God among men, and a salvation which is most surely reached when we learn to forget ourselves and to care for others.

CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE.

CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE.

“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”—JOHN vi. 35.

“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven.”—JOHN vi. 57—58.

FEW can read the weighty passage from which these verses are taken without feeling with the disciples—“This is an hard saying.” The language our Lord uses is startling, and we are not astonished at the question of the Jews—“How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” I need not remind you of the controversy which they have excited in the history of the Church, and of the use which has been made of them by the Romish Church in building the extraordinary doctrine of transubstantiation. While feeling that *that* is not their meaning, many, again, are apt to dismiss their consideration altogether, on the ground that they refer to mysteries too deep for our gaze. But surely it was our Lord’s will that we should understand them. We cannot read them, however superficially, without feeling that they contain central and essential truths. Everlasting life is made to depend on the conditions they set forth; and we may be certain He did not mean to drape the entrance into that kingdom with the darkness of impenetrable mystery.

There are some expressions here which are evidently not to be taken in a grossly literal sense. By the phrases, "eating My flesh and drinking My blood," or "eating Me," one cannot for a moment believe that literal eating—manducation with the teeth—can be meant. When our Lord speaks of Himself as living water that must be drunk, or as living bread that must be eaten, we have no difficulty in understanding the figurative nature of the language He employs; and but for the monstrous theory of transubstantiation which rose in the Church centuries after Christ's death, and has been the fruitful source of so much priestcraft since, no person would have ever viewed the eating of His flesh or drinking of His blood in any other way than figurative also. When the disciples took them in their literal sense they were told by our Lord, "The flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you are spirit, and are life." And, again, that it could not be literal eating with the bodily mouth is plainly seen in the analogy He draws between Himself and His people. "As I live by the Father," He says, "so he that eateth Me shall live by Me." He thus speaks of our living by Him being the same as the way in which He lives by the Father; and we are at once reminded of His own words, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."

But while we cannot accept the grossly literal idea of eating physically with the mouth and teeth, yet let us take care that we do not destroy the directness of the words by reducing them to nothing more than allegory. We shall never understand them truly till we notice what they teach literally respecting feeding on Christ. There are, indeed, material things spoken of, such as bread and water and flesh and blood, and

these can only be understood as representing spiritual things; but there is one grand literal fact which underlies all the figures, and is the central truth of our Lord's teaching, viz., that in the strictest sense every believer must feed on Him, that He must be the food of his spiritual life, the very nourishment of his soul. Do not let this escape us. As food is to the bodily, so must Christ be to our spiritual nature. There is, therefore, a real and literal sense in which we feed on Christ.

I shall, therefore, ask you to consider what is meant by feeding on Christ, and then see the relation in which the Sacrament stands to that feeding on Him. Once we have understood what true feeding on Christ is, we shall be delivered from the mistake of substituting for it that which may have no relation to our actual spiritual state before God.

In order the better to understand what is meant by feeding on Christ, let us look at the analogy on which the teaching of the passage is founded, or the methods and relations in which our daily bread stands to our bodily nourishment.

Before food can be of any use to the body, the body must have life. Bread ministered to the dead remains outside and ineffective. There must therefore not only be a physical organism, but that mysterious energy we call life must also be present. That life is not within the power of the body. No one can by any effort of will command it. But when life is present, then all the processes of nourishment go on, and they do so upon certain principles. Bread being received, the body lives by it. In like manner there is in things spiritual an implied necessity for spiritual life, ere Christ can be received and used as the bread of life.

It is thus that the gift of Christ is to many as much outside and inoperative as food laid on a dead man's lips. The mummy hand grasps it, but there is no reception of it into the being, no life-process by which it can become effectual. We need the divine spark of spiritual life, the quickening of the Holy Ghost, the stirring of the holier appetites of our God-like nature, ere there is that hungering and thirsting, and that feeding on Christ, whereby we may grow and become strong in the Lord.

Again, the food which we eat can only nourish us by becoming itself our flesh and blood and bones. It contains certain qualities, and by the well-known law of assimilation these qualities are so imbibed into our system that they remain no longer as foreign substances, but go to form the physical organs of thought and feeling; our brains, our hearts, our muscles, and nerves, and bones are built up out of what we eat and drink. Nothing can be food to us which is not capable of being thus assimilated. There are affinities between our bodies and certain substances in nature, and when we eat these substances, the body appropriates what it needs, and the food changes into the actual fibre which constitutes our frames. This is the wondrous process of life as it is in nature. We live by the food we eat becoming ourselves.

But again, not only does the body thus nourish itself by assimilation, but the character of the bodily health is determined by the nature of the food which is supplied to it. There are some things that strengthen, others that enfeeble, others that render miserable, and there are poisons which destroy. There is thus a fixed relationship between the body and its food, whereby the food not only enters into the actual fibre

of the body, but the physical health is determined by its character, and life is rendered healthy or unhealthy, happy or miserable, or it is killed outright, by what is thus received.

As with the bodily, so is it with the spiritual nature. Our moral being has its food as well as our physical. We are ever feeding our affections on certain objects, and there is a process of moral assimilation which goes on continually, that presents a strict parallel to the material; because man's spiritual state is determined by his affections, and the tissue of his moral character—its healthy or unhealthy tone—is formed by the nature of the things on which his sympathies are engaged. If any one allows his heart to feed upon sensuality, and if he supplies his thoughts and passions with the vile garbage of uncleanness, his nature will so certainly assimilate impurity that he will become a sensual and debased character. He becomes that on which his sympathies feed.

Or let his interests go forth on money, ambition, or the pride of life, then just as his love feeds on these objects, so does he become covetous, or ambitious, or the creature of fashion and the slave of vanity. There is a tone instilled, a character imparted to the life, by what is thus loved. According as the sympathies are thus fed, certain inevitable results follow. For there is a moral poison of which, if a man partakes, he will commit moral suicide, and kill all lofty and holy aspirations. There are also unhealthy foods, which leave men morally weak and unsatisfied. And there is that Bread of Life which came down from heaven, of which if a man eat he will hunger no more, but will verily be nourished into life everlasting. It is thus that we may understand in what a real sense we

may feed on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, in the fulness of His life, love, holiness, and truth, is the true Bread which came down from heaven, on which the spiritual being of man, that part of his nature which has been made like God, and for God, can feed and be nourished unto life eternal.

We have seen how, in the case of the body, the food nourishes us by becoming ourselves, so that we are, in fact, according to that which we feed upon. And so, too, in this higher region of spiritual life, does the same law hold good. "Christ in us," "Christ formed in us," "putting on the Lord Jesus," describe the continuous process of Christian life. The man whose heart thus feeds on Christ does so literally receive Christ, that his whole nature, as it were, becomes Christ, and Christ's thoughts, Christ's love, Christ's will, actually enter into and take the place of the old nature, forming the very tissue of this new spiritual character. In a St. John or St. Paul, in an Augustine or a Bishop Ken, in a Baxter or a M'Cheyne, we can trace how the Christ-nature, gradually yet visibly, has entered, and now the more they knew Him and loved Him, the more Christlike did they become in all their joys and sorrows. Thus true feeding on Christ is a thing of the heart, a matter for every day, a grand living process of spiritual assimilation, whereby trusting Christ and loving Him supremely, our thoughts and affections dwell on Him and are nourished by Him, until He verily abides in us and we in Him.

We are now in a position to ask what the relationship is in which these words about "eating the flesh," "eating the Bread of Life," "eating Christ," stand to

the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Briefly, they do not seem to me to refer so much to the Sacrament as the Sacrament refers to them. The eating the bread and wine of the Sacrament is not of itself so much a feeding on Christ as it is a witness to that other feeding on Him of which I have been speaking, as well as a blessed means whereby it is attained. One may partake of the Sacrament physically who is not in any true sense partaking of Christ spiritually. Far be it from me to lower the Sacrament to a mere memorial of an historical fact. It is much more. The Sacrament is perhaps the holiest and highest form under which a true feeding on Christ may be enjoyed. Christ crucified in the fulness of His love and glory are brought so very near, and made so very real to the faithful partaker, that it is verily communion with Christ, a receiving of Christ, a feeding upon Him in the heart by faith. In the highest sense Christ is present in the Sacrament. The Real Presence holds true, although not the physical as in bread and wine. The Sacrament thus falls into and forms part of the grand process of Christian life and growth. It is at once a witness to it and a blessed instrument for attaining it.

If that is a mistaken view which underlies all priestly systems, which would attach some virtue to the bread and wine, and ask men to trust for benefit to a something which is lying entirely outside of their actual spiritual state, bringing them to lean on the Sacrament as on a charm ; no less shall we turn the Sacrament from its true purpose, if we regard it as but a sign of homage to the Christian system, the performance of a rite which indicates assent to a dogma or a mere memorial of an historical fact. For of what

benefit can Holy Communion be if, while taking the bread and wine into the lips, we shut out Christ's love and holiness and glory from our hearts? We then rob ourselves of the true spiritual benefit, and feed not at all upon Him. "Verily, let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Let us ask ourselves, What is that on which our spirits are daily feeding? What is it which constitutes our everyday interest? What is it that is being imbibed into our moral nature, and is being fast woven by the affections into the tissue of character? Is it the world or Christ? Is it our own wills or His? Is it God or the creature? It lies with ourselves what we give as food to the soul. Feed on moral poison, or on that which is not its true bread, and we shall inevitably reap the consequences. A poisoned and polluted heart is a fearful possession, and this we can create for ourselves. An unsatisfied, restless, empty, hungry heart, feeding on things which ever leave it emptier than before, is also a sad possession; and that also we shall give ourselves if we suppose we can nourish our immortal nature with such rubbish as this world's pleasures, its money, or its vanities. But let us realise the gift of God. There is bread for us and to spare. In Christ's fulness there is heavenly manna, food for every high and holy and eternal desire. He that eateth of this bread shall indeed live for ever. He shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more. Once the word was, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." These apples of Sodom yet lie scattered on every side. But of Him it is written, "Eat and live for ever."