

Sunday Reading.

The New Regime of the Moral Universe.

BY REV. WM. ASHMORE, D. D., CHINA.

That would be a perfect moral universe in which every one acted from a conviction of duty. In such a universe the OUGHT would be supreme. Such a universe would not only be a perfect, but it would be a happy universe. Every man and every angel would do that which is exactly right in the sight of God and before his fellows. There would be no discord, no clashing, no jarring. Right and righteousness would be the mainspring of every action. Every one would treat his neighbor as he ought to be treated. No one would infringe upon his neighbor's rights. Every one would receive to the full his just and proper dues.

And yet there is a higher heaven than that. There is a more perfect heaven above the perfect heaven. There is a heaven of heavens as there is a holy place and a most holy place. It is a state in which love is the ruling motive. Love and not duty determines the nature of the conduct. I say this is a higher form of heaven. In a universe where duty is supreme each being renders to his fellow that which is his due, and there he stops. In like manner he may insist on receiving what is due to himself, and the Judge of all will sustain him in it. But in a universe where the regime of duty is superseded by the regime of love, the creature concedes more and exacts less. In a universe where duty is the highest law, for a man to forego his rights might be craven, but in a universe where love is the highest law, the sacrifice of one's personal rights becomes grand and godlike. We may do for love's sake what we are not required to do for duty's sake. In such a heaven as this neither men nor angels would find their chief delight in maintaining and enjoying their own rights, but in beholding and enhancing the happiness of others.

Accordingly the gospel is an advance upon the law. Nay more, the gospel is a higher development of the universe. It is the establishment of a new heaven above an old heaven. The entire moral universe under the supreme sway of the gospel will be a divine advance upon the entire moral universe under the supreme sway of the law. Christ has come to introduce this new order of things, this new administration which will bring under its dominion not only the redeemed of the earth, but the principalities and powers of heaven. The beginning of this new regime is here on earth, but its consummation is in the heaven of heavens. It has its start in time, but its completion is in the ages of eternity. In a word, the coming of Christ to this earth is the initiation of a total change in the moral administration of the whole universe, the beginning of an advance from a lower to a higher degree of perfection.

Accordingly in the gospels and the epistles the motive to action is totally different from that under the law. Under the law men were urged to do right because it was their duty. They were impelled to upright conduct by the exacting righteousness of a holy God. They were commanded, they were ordered, they were enjoined imperatively, to do that which is right. Under the gospel these motives largely disappear. A new set of motives comes in. The apostles do not appeal to the sense of duty, but to the loving sacrifice and example of Christ. The apostle entreats, and he entreats by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. And here the whole universe follows the new usage. God, who is God over all, blessed forevermore, sets the first example of sacrifice under the new regime. He makes concessions and sacrifices which no standard of right existing even in His own mind could require. Christ follows. He too makes concessions and a great sacrifice, which no standard of right or of duty could require. He first discharges the lower obligation of duty, and then rises to the sublime exercise of unfettered love. So we as Christians are to walk in His footsteps, and do for others something more than is required by the ten commandments, even that which is required by the new

commandment, "That ye love one another even as I have loved you." This is a vantage-ground immeasurably higher than the old one. The Christian is taught not to insist upon that which may be his by eternal rectitude, but to sacrifice it and receive in return a higher bliss than the acquisition of his own could afford him. We are to do this because Christ did it, and Christ did it because God did it. The universe, of exacting moral requirement rises into the universe of mutual concession and sacrifice, a universe of ineffable love, which at last meets the ideal in the mind of God.

The Ministry of Music.

Two hundred years ago William Congreve wrote a verse which has been in nearly everybody's mouth, so universally has its truth been acknowledged:

"Music has charms to soothe the savage breast."

And we have a much older statement of the power of music over a human soul. Saul, we are told, was oppressed with an evil spirit. David took his harp and played with his hand some soul-enlightening air; Saul was refreshed and well.

This is but a touch of that divine minstrelsy which is fabled to have soothed perturbed spirits since the world began. All literature is full of legends and fables, half-history, half-fiction, telling how music hath done more than powers of earth and air. Apollo charmed the fabled gods of Olympus; Orpheus wakened the trees of the forest with his melodious notes, till they came forth from their leafy bowers tripping their light fantastic toes, after the manner of men to the rhythm of his lute. Arion, thrown into the sea by those who would take his life, so entranced the dolphins by his heaven-born music that they carried him on their backs safely home to Corinth and his friend Periander. Ulysses, passing the shore of the sweet-singing sirens, filled his companions' ears with wax that they might not hear the enticing notes; Circe, in her palace, waved her long golden staff while she hummed melodious notes that bathed the souls of men in earth-forgetting bliss. Handel carried up the thoughts and aspirations of men in his oratorio of the Messiah, till a vast audience of thousands, half rising from their seats, were ready to echo the words, "The glory of the Lord, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed! Who shall abide the day of his coming?" The soldiers of Cromwell reverently uncovered their heads and sang a psalm and went forth to victory. Soldiers of Italy battled for freedom under the inspiration of Garibaldi's hymn; Napoleon relied on a national air to give the last touch of enthusiasm to his conquering legions; Jenny Lind sang a million of dollars from the pockets of English and American audiences, and tears from numberless eyes; Florence Nightingale held the hands of dying soldiers on the Bosphorus while the words of her mouth, speaking the meditation of the heart, were balm and healing oil to homesick, famished souls; the Jubilee Singers, with their simple plantation melodies, sang Memorial Hall into being.

These, with a thousand others, tell not only how "music hath charms to soothe the savage breast," but how it hath power to do more than this. It can awaken emotions of joy, pure, smooth-flowing peace in the soul; it can stir to action, inspire to worship, warm the heart, quicken the pulsation, start the tears, and thrill our whole being.

We may never be able to tell the difference between tweedledee and tweedledum, but we nevertheless own the power of melodious sounds in sweet concord to stir the heart to newness of life. We may not voice our music, but we agree with Shakespeare that the man that hath not music in his soul is fit only for stratagems and spoils. We may never set forth the rationale of music, but we feel and know its intimate relation and bearing on the thoughts, emotions and inspirations of the soul. And hence it is an element of no small import in the progress of morals and religion, touching, as it does, nearly every place of the soul's existence.

We shall not have to look far, however, for the fountain of music. It is about us, it is within us. It is the rhythmic harmony of the soul in contact with nature and nature's God. Nature is the fount of color and form. These give rise to the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture. In the same way nature is the fount of sound. And there is the music of nature, to which the music of art goes for promptings. It is heard in the "murmuring pines and hemlock," in the brook "slipping over moss-grown stones with endless laughter." It is heard in the trill of the wild bird, in the deep resonance of old ocean beating against the rocks and caves in gloomy cadences. And had we ears to hear all the melodies about us we might say:

"There is not the smallest orb which thou behold'st But in its motion like an angel sings."

Vibrations below thirty-three per second, and vibrations above a certain number, are to human ears as though they were not. This suggests the possibility, nay, more, the probability, that there are about us varied and infinite sounds of which we are entirely unconscious. A sledge-hammer is brought down on a long bar of steel. Our ears receive the sound. The sun shining on forest and field starts a million rootlets to life, leaves are expanding, buds are bursting, flowers are falling, fruit is starting. But none of this do we hear. Hold your ear to the bark of a tree in spring, you hear nothing; but every particle of that tree is dancing with life. You hear the constant hum of insect life, but you hear nothing of that which may be music to the bee plying his honeyed art. Had we ears to hear, the heavens might be a great bell, the world rhythmic with divine harmonies, and the truth real which the ancients believed when they sang of the music of the spheres.

Speaking of the fine musical notes of the English nightingale, good old Izaak Walton exclaims, as he seems to see in this a promise of something better in the hereafter, "Lord, what music hast thou provided for the saints in heaven when thou affordest bad men such music on earth!" And as we come to realize the possibilities of our souls in another sphere, we can truly say, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." The eye can see a lily, and this lily may waken thoughts, as Wordsworth has said, "which lie too deep for tears." That lily which the eye sees is the promise of lilies which eye hath not seen. That nightingale's note which the ear may hear is the promise of seraphic notes which ear hath not heard nor can hear, but which God day by day is revealing to the pure-hearted and right-spirited. Believe it, this universe is not what it appears on the surface. It is more than eye hath seen, more than ear hath heard or can hear. It is not an empty socket with no eye to pity and no hand to save. It is not an illusion, a deception, a mockery. It is the promise, "the proving," "the conviction," as the New Version puts it, "of things not seen." And this is faith, to realize the presence and power of the invisible world above us, beneath us, and within us.

Thus does music minister to faith. It helps to make real the glory and beauty of the unseen, the eternal. And thus has faith ever wedded music to the sanctuary of a more devout, more spiritual worship. It gives wings to the soul. Who, on hearing some soul-inspiring anthem, has not felt the heart flutter as a bird starting to fly? Who has not been wakened to higher, holier aspirations, drawn nearer to God, nearer to heaven, assisted by heaven-born music? As the perfume of heliotrope, so is music to the soul's aspirations and hopes. It bathes it in a purer, sweeter atmosphere. It gives to the soul the divine halo seen in pictures of glorified saints.

Look, then, into your own heart and sing. Sing with the spirit. Sing with the understanding, and let your singing lift you up nearer your God, till you can all say with David, the sweet singer of old, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before Him?"—Advocate.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Discussion of Christian Baptism at North Sydney, C. B.

IV.

There was not an organized church of Jesus Christ before He came. The foundation of His church was laid before the foundation of the world. Abel, Enoch, and all the Old Testament saints rested upon this foundation.

Mr. McDonald in referring to the commission, "Go make disciples," said: Dr. Murray says an infant may be a disciple; but he knows the word disciple is not used of infants in the New Testament. First make disciples, then baptize them. This does away with sponsors, and parents' faith. Personal faith in Christ is the great requirement. The order is: 1st. disciple; 2nd. baptize; 3rd. instruct in doctrine. Philip in Samaria preaches and baptizes both men and women. The little word both excludes the third party.

This people demand of the Dr. a command or example from the Bible for the baptism of an infant. Let him produce a standard historian who affirms that infant baptism is of Apostolic origin. He challenges me to show a command for putting a person in water. Peter commands baptism; the Dr.'s book says "to baptize is to put within a liquid element;" and the "Confession of Faith" says that element is water. This challenge is answered. The order of the law as given in the commission is clear. The order of law is inviolable. He used the following illustration: A farmer tells his servant to plough, harrow, and roll his field. Suppose his servant begins with rolling, then harrowing, and last ploughing. He has done everything commanded, but having inverted the order he has disobeyed his master. To invert the order given in the commission is to disobey God.

During the discussion a very intelligent Old Kirk Presbyterian said to Mr. McDonald: "Dr. Murray will need a new Bible before he will be able to prove his view." I challenge him to find a passage in the Bible where the word disciple is applied to infants. The infant does not obey Christ in baptism!

We now come to the last night of the discussion. It was held in the Baptist Church, and the large church was crowded to its utmost capacity. The Dr. claimed that the full development of the Old Testament church was seen in the life of Christ. John's mission was to reform the church. In the reformed church we find men, women, and children. Where do we find infants nesting? In the bosom of Jesus Christ. Do you imagine that those who went into the new organization left their infants out. Infants are included in all the covenants God made with them. He claimed that infants were called, Matt. xix. 14; Hosea xi. 1.

Mr. McDonald expressed pleasure to find the Dr. acknowledging that we are now under a reformed constitution. He again challenged the Dr. to produce a command for infant baptism from the Bible. The baptism of infants is nowhere commanded, therefore they are not to be baptized. The Dr. speaks of the newly-reformed church. "I am glad he is coming one step nearer to the light." John required repentance and faith before baptism. When John was beheaded Jesus Christ took his place. He first made disciples then had them baptized, John iv. 2.

There are children in Baptist churches, and they have a right to be there, whether of the age of eight or eighty years. The Dr. receives babes by natural birth, we by spiritual birth. Baptists are Pedobaptists spiritually. Pedobaptists are such by natural birth. The Dr. claims that the commission commands to baptize all the nations. This condemns his theory that only the infants of believers are to be baptized. If infants are to be baptized at all there should be no exception made. The children of unbelievers are a part of the nations, so are infidels, and therefore, according to the Dr., must be baptized. The Dr. states there are

only two places where infants are not found, viz.: hell and the Baptist church. Has he forgotten they are excluded from the communion table of the Presbyterian church? They are in the church, and they have a right to the Lord's Supper. There is a third place for the Dr. where infants are not found: "What, therefore, God hath joined together let not man put asunder." Mr. McDonald showed that infant salvation rested on the atonement of Christ, not on gospel ordinances.

The Dr. said, I abominate his views of the gospel of Christ for infants. There is no salvation without the gospel. The female was really circumcised in the male by representation. He cannot give a positive command for female communion, nor for the change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week.

Mr. McDonald said, I am going to take my Bible and give my examples for giving the communion to women, Acts i. 14; v. 14; 1 Cor. xiv. 34. The Dr. acknowledges that women are in the church. Christ says, "Eat ye all of it." The change in the Sabbath is authorized by the example of Christ and His apostles, John xx. 19-26; Acts xx. 27. The Dr. made no reply. When the Dr. can give as clear authority for the baptism of infants as I have given for the communion of women, and the observance of the first day of the week as the Sabbath, I will accept infant baptism. He holds that infants are capable of a call, are saved by the gospel, I would like to see the Dr. preaching to an audience of one hundred infants, and see how much they would heed his call. Do the Dr.'s infants walk in newness of life? Baptized infants grow up as others, and are no better. Among them are found murderers, adulterers, thieves, and liars, just as are found among those who have never been baptized, 1 Peter iii. 20. Baptism is spoken of as the "answer of a good conscience." Does baptism give the infant a good conscience. Every believer receives a good conscience when he obeys Christ.

Here Mr. McDonald read a quotation from Robert Hall's works, vol. 1, p. 482: "We challenge our opponents to produce the shadow of evidence in favor of the existence during this long tract of time of a single society of which adult baptism was the distinguishing characteristic." Hall was writing in favor of open communion, and this sentence was quoted by Dr. Murray, when here last summer, as a challenge referring to the first two centuries after Christ—What are the facts of the case? He claims that during the past two centuries the immersion of believers was the only baptism practised. From the beginning of the third century till the end of the fourth century he calls a transition period, when sprinkling and infant baptism were coming into use. The sentence quoted refers to this latter period. He held that during these two centuries the lines were not clearly drawn, that Baptists and Pedobaptists mingled in church fellowship. When Mr. McDonald read this sentence the Dr. said "hear, hear." He was reminded that he had better say "hear, hear" on the other side of the page, as Hall's utterances were read which proved that Dr. Murray had made him say what he had never said, the Dr.'s dishonesty was exposed. The Dr. wilted under it, but had not a word to say in reply. Such dishonesty would be a disgrace to any man, and more to one in Dr. Murray's position.

Dr. Murray said, I take the reproach that baptized children are not what they ought to be. The fault is not in the ordinance but in our lack of faith. He spent the most of his closing speech in reading from his little book, "Scripture Baptism." That his friends were disappointed could be easily seen. As he sat down a leading Presbyterian was heard to remark to a friend, "I thought the Dr. would have done better than that."

Mr. McDonald, in his closing speech, gave a review of his arguments, and called attention to the many points which were not touched by the Dr. He reminded his hearers that it did not matter whether they were baptized in the ocean, or at the altar by sprinkling or pouring, if they were not born of the Holy Spirit they were none of Christ's, and would perish in their sins.

It was apparent from the beginning, that he was not seeking for a personal triumph over the Dr., but to present the whole truth to the people, and let it rest upon its own merits. From the beginning to the end of the discussion the Dr. was completely in his power. When he was compelled to expose the Dr.'s dishonesty, he did it in the mildest manner possible.

Dr. Murray has made a life study of baptism, and has been lecturing on it for more than twenty years. Mr. McDonald stated that, to his knowledge, the Dr. had delivered seventy lectures on this subject, besides the discussions in which they had been engaged. The Dr. reminded me of a lawyer pleading a bad cause. He labored hard but accomplished little. I believe if his speeches were published he would be ashamed of them. Deprive him of the privilege of making assumptions and assertions, of using fallacies and making false statements, and he is as harmless as a babe. I suppose he did the best he could, and if he had a good cause would make a good defence, but if his utterances are the result of a life's study, alas! alas! what a failure!!! Surely in his case "The mountain has labored and brought forth a ridiculous mouse." Had the Dr. acted the part of a Christian when here last summer he would not have been called upon to return to North Sydney.

The Dr. took special pains to let his audience know that he hated Baptist principles. He is not the first man who has hated truth, but he ought to know that God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. The Dr. is unwittingly the means of advancing the very truth he hates. Where he has labored long and hard he has seen Baptist principles making rapid progress; and he may derive comfort from the fact that he has been the means of helping some at North Sydney to see light in God's light, and to accept Baptist principles. The audiences throughout the discussion were large. At the close a hearty vote of thanks was given to the umpire, S. L. Purves, Esq., for the able and impartial manner in which he had discharged his duties.

The Pedobaptists of the community were invited to assemble at the Presbyterian church, where an address was presented to Dr. Murray, and a purse containing one hundred dollars. The Dr. needed it all to soothe his troubled spirit. He may rest assured he has not won for himself golden opinions by his visits to North Sydney.

Mr. McDonald did not come for money, nor ask for a stipulated sum. He came to defend the truth, and he did it with a master hand. He did not want an address, nor any display in any way. This was the triumph of truth over error, and the laurels of victory rest upon his brow. The Pedobaptists of the community contributed one hundred dollars for Dr. Murray, the Baptists over eighty dollars for Mr. McDonald. His labors were highly appreciated, and the good wishes of Baptists and many others will go with him.

I regret much that we could not have had a shorthand reporter, to take the speeches down in full, and then have given the whole discussion to the public. I took copious notes, but have only given a brief outline of what was said. I have aimed to show the different points taken up, and note how many points were unanswered by the Dr. The discussion closed on Saturday evening. On Sunday the Dr. preached two sermons on infant baptism. At each of these services he read a letter which had been placed in his hands, purporting to be from a young man brought up in a Baptist family, who had been convinced by Dr. Murray's lectures, and was now ready to join the Presbyterian church. The letter was anonymous, and is believed by many to be a fraud, written for a purpose, and used for effect. Until the author is made known this opinion will prevail. The Dr. is welcome to all the fame he can get from anonymous letters of this kind. They are of no value, and have no weight. The use made of this letter shows how anxious the Dr. was to grasp at a shadow.

Mr. McDonald might have produced a genuine letter from a highly intelligent young man, a member of the Presbyterian church, a son of a Presbyterian elder, and a sincere enquirer after truth, describing the impressions the truth brought out in the discussion had made upon his mind. Truth will do its own work, and the community have had the truth laid before them. J. W. BANCROFT. North Sydney, Jan. 19th, 1882.