

Christian Charity.

BY REV. E. THOMAS, PEMBROKE.

I am aware that the term "charity" in the New Testament means love, but the charity under consideration now means liberality in judging men and actions. It is the opposite of bigotry, of blind prejudice, or rabid sectarianism. One great preacher has defined it as "the desire to give," and such it is; it is the desire to give men their due, to give them all the credit to which they are entitled, to give the accused the full benefit of the doubt. "Charity thinketh no evil." It puts the best construction possible upon the words and deeds of men, and is most reluctant to believe anything bad about them. There is nothing more despicable in its sight than censoriousness and backbiting and slander. It covers a multitude of sins, makes liberal allowances for the failings of human nature, and speaks the kindest things it can of all men. There is a charity abroad in these days which, under the guise of latitudinarianism, compromises the truth; that is a false charity, and we have not the slightest sympathy with it. The charity which enraptures Paul, and which he describes in such glowing and eloquent language in this chapter, "rejoiceth in the truth." We shall treat Christian charity chiefly from a denominational standpoint, as that will afford us a better scope for offering a few remarks of a practical character upon the subject.

Does a multiplicity of religious denominations tend to good or evil? If the division of the church into an endless variety of sections produces a beneficial result to mankind, our duty is to encourage it and hail with delight every new-fangled doctrine preached in our day. It seems to us that a multiplicity of religious bodies is a hindrance rather than a help to the rapid march of pure Christian truth; that it has a perplexing, if not a paralyzing, effect upon multitudes of non-professors. The effect of the present state of things is most prejudicial at home, but it is inconceivably worse in heathen lands.

We say sometimes, when observing a number of ecclesiastical buildings in a small town, that it speaks well for the religion of the place. But it is not always religion so much as rivalry. We are thankful to say that a healthy rivalry has been productive of good; but it is one illustration among many others of evil overruled for good. There is nothing in the New Testament to justify the conclusion that the Divine Master intended His Church to be split up into a diversity of sections. "Unity is strength"—this is the fixed order of the universe. Christ offered a most touching prayer in the upper room under the most solemn circumstances. He said, referring to His disciples and followers in all succeeding ages: "I pray that they may all be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Me, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." This was a prayer for visible as well as invisible unity—for a unity which the world could see and feel.

Having established this principle, we are in a better position to ascertain the attitude we should assume towards the various churches. It is our decided personal belief that the particular Church to which we belong is the truly Apostolic Church. If we did not believe that it would be our duty to dissolve our connection with it. We have no creed but the New Testament, we have no head but Christ. His words are to us final and sacred beyond anything that language, with all its present fertility, can express. We have no need to stammer and stumble while reading any passage of Scripture because our conscience accuses us of misinterpreting it to the people. We go to the world with an open Bible, and declare "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," believing that to be the heaven-ordained lever to lift up humanity from degradation and sin to holiness and heaven.

We do not hold that none will be saved but ourselves. The existence of other churches we contend to be a thing to be deplored; but it is permitted by the Divine Being, and overruled for good. This is the ground on which, without any sacrifice of principle

or consistency, we can manifest a charitable spirit to other denominations of Christians. As long as they are worshipping the same God and laboring for the restoration of the race to its original standard of purity and innocence, we can wish them success, provided it be done with due regard to the great cardinal doctrines of Christianity. As Baptists we have never grudged to recognise the good done by others. It is universally acknowledged that we have led the van of liberty; we contend that we have led the van of charity too.

We, as a denomination, have been, and are more or less persecuted, but let us remember that our duty does not consist in paying like for like. The dispensation under which that was justifiable has had its day, and ceased to be. Our Master's command is, "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." If others are intolerant and bigoted and uncharitable towards us, that is no reason why we should be so towards them. History abundantly testifies that such a policy is ruinous to the cause which it seeks to uphold and extend. In one passage of Scripture in particular Christ gives a most direct evidence against exclusiveness, and, consequently in favor of charity. We refer to that in which reference is made to John forbidding one to cast out devils. He said: "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not with us. And we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." But Jesus said, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is on our part." The Evangelical Christians outside the pale of our own denomination are, in the name of Christ, destroying the works of the devil, and therefore we must not hinder them, but rather rejoice in their success. The attitude which we should assume towards other Christians is here clearly and expressly indicated. It is the final verdict by which we ought to be guided.

On What?

We are building a life. In stormy weather and while the sun shines each day and hour we are working away on it. Often we are doing it thoughtlessly, listlessly, carelessly, but nevertheless the work goes on and the building continues. Each thought may be a nail, each act may be a timber in the structure, each aim and desire a foundation stone on which to build. The building of our life may be small or large; grand or simple, as we put in the proper material and build with energy or without, and the stability of the building will depend upon the kind of material we use. If we put in rotten nails and decayed timbers, and build upon a weak and shifting foundation, the building will be unsafe and ready to fall at the first gust of wind.

If the nails are impure and selfish thoughts, the timbers greedy and uncharitable acts upon a foundation of aims only to gratify the tastes and passions of the flesh, we will have such a building, and one which at the first wind of adversity will totter and fall. But there is a foundation which, if we build upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, with pure, noble thoughts and honest, charitable actions, the building will be solid and permanent, and will abide through all eternity. In this life the rains may descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon that house; but it will fall not for it was founded on a rock. And when the other shore is reached, we will have an eternal mansion in our Father's house above.

There is a sense of the Divine presence, in which she may be said, like Enoch of old, to walk with God. It is not distinctly prayer, it is better than prayer: it is the outcome of prayer. But who will ever attain to this without learning by direct endeavour to look through life, through the world, through nature up to nature's God?—Dr. Dewey.

Beauty is as summer fruits, which are easy to corrupt, and cannot last; and, for the most part, it makes a dissolute youth, and an age a little out of countenance; but yet, certainly, again, if it light well, it maketh virtues shine, and vices blush.—Lord Bacon.

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1884.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson XI.—SEPTEMBER 14, 1884.

WAITING FOR THE LORD.

Psalms xl. 1-17.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 1-4.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I delight to do thy will, O my God."—Psa. xl. 7.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. David's experience.—The Lesson. T. Paul's experience. Acts xxii. 3-20. W. Mere outward observances valueless. Psa. 1. 8-15. T. Offerings vain without the heart. Isa. i. 11-18. F. Christ a voluntary sacrifice. Phil. ii. 5-8. S. Christ the one true offering. Heb. x. 4-10. S. Prayer for help. Psa. lxx.

ANALYSIS.—1. Delivering Grace, 1-5. 2. Devotion to God's Service, 6-12. 3. A Closing Prayer, 13-17.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1-5.—What is the idea of waiting patiently? When does the Lord want us to come to him? For what did the Psalmist wait? With what success? How may we define prayer? Out of what did the Lord bring him? What does that mean? Where did he set his feet? Does the Lord let us slip back to ruin? What new song is given the converted soul?

Vs. 6-12.—Into whose mouth are verses 6-8 put in the Epistle to the Hebrews? Why were sacrifices and offerings instituted in Old Testament times? Did not God require these things? What only is the true sacrifice for sin? Was Christ a willing sacrifice? Where was it prophesied that he should bear our sin? See Isa. liii. Whose will was it that Christ should come? John iii. 16. What expression shows that Jesus openly desired to come as a sacrificial offering? Where did he carry God's law?

Vs. 13-17.—Who can save from all sin? Why should we ask for speedy deliverance? What prayer may we offer concerning the plottings of the wicked? What will be the experiences of those who truly seek the Lord?

Lesson Proverbs.—Where, in this lesson do we find—1. The experience of what God has done for a converted soul? 2. What great thing Christ has done to take away sin? 3. The duty of testifying to God's grace and mercy? 4. A prayer for daily help?

NOTES.—Vs. 1.—Waiting patiently: the idea is not of one "waiting God's time," as some express it, for coming to God, for his time is now; but the expression is one of intense longing and expectation. For the Lord: not for feeling or preparation. Inclined unto me: he bows his ear to one waiting on him. Heard: as he always does true prayer. Cry: prayer is a heart cry.

Vs. 2.—Horrible pit: the deep, dark pit of sin or of trouble. My clay: where was no firm foothold. Established my goings: the Lord doesn't leave us to sink again, after deliverance.

Vs. 3.—New song: that is the song of grateful praise. Many shall see it, etc.: the conversion of a sinner is God's great miracle, and leads to other conversions.

Vs. 4.—Blessed: literally, Oh, the happiness. How great the blessing. Respecteth not: turns away from.

Vs. 5.—Wonderful works: (things). Not only in creation and providence, but in redeeming and converting the soul. Thoughts: purposes of mercy. Reckoned up: too many to be set forth regularly. More than can be numbered: far beyond all our arithmetic.

Vs. 6.—Sacrifice and offering: verses 6-8 are quoted in Heb. x. 5-7, as the language of Christ. No animal or other sacrifices could take away sin; these only prefigured Christ, the one true offering for the sin of the world. Four kinds of offerings are mentioned as including the whole of the Old Testament sacrifices—all of them combined unable to satisfy the law. Only the sacrifice of Christ could do that. Sacrifice: the general title for animal sacrificial offering. Offering: the meat offering of Leviticus. Burnt offering: the offering showing Christ's devotion to the Father. Sin offering: the offering of expiation.

Vs. 7.—I come: voluntarily.

Vs. 9.—Preached righteousness: proclaimed God's way of salvation. Great congregation: God's church and people.

Vs. 10.—Have not hid: have not kept it there, but have freely spoken it.

Vs. 11.—Withhold not, etc.: rather, thou wilt not withhold, etc. An expression of confidence.

Vs. 12.—Evils: those inflicted by others. Iniquities: if applied to Christ, our iniquities were laid on him, and he bore them as his own.

Vs. 14.—Let them be ashamed, etc.: it is right to wish that the wicked may not be successful in their plans to injure.

Vs. 15.—Be desolate: by being disappointed in their evil courses. Aha: an expression of exultation at the calamities that befall another.

Vs. 16.—Be magnified: be known as great and glorious.

Vs. 17.—No tarrying: delay not to answer my prayer.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Fundamental Truths of Christianity.

LUTHEARD'S APOLOGETICAL DISCOURSES.

Translated from the German, by Prof. D. M. Welton.

TENTH DISCOURSE.

THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

III.

(Continued)

It would be sufficient for us, if through these witnesses, the external and the internal, only the essential general contents of the evangelical records were confirmed. For if the Person of Jesus Christ is assured to us, we are assured of the main matter. But this assurance extends also to particulars. It concerns events which were the common property of the Christian community, and were not unknown to their opponents. For—as Paul could appeal to the Roman Governor Festus—"they were not done in a corner" (Acts xxvi. 26), but before all eyes, and formed the subject of many discussions with his adversaries, and the ground finally of the action which was instituted with a view to his execution. Renan supposes indeed that the evangelists have related these events as a couple of old grenadiers from Napoleon's guard would have related them; these would give clearly perceptible pictures, interesting anecdotes, a living impression of things, but the things themselves they would warp, they would perhaps place Wagram before Marengo, or have Robespierre driven from the Tuilleries by Napoleon, or leave out matters of the greatest importance. But did the disciples stand as far from the Lord as did the grenadiers from Napoleon? Of members of the staff he would be obliged to speak; then the comparison would be inapplicable. And do not the apostolic letters—although we confine ourselves only to those which no intelligent person has yet doubted—confirm the gospel narration? It is only this objection which at bottom constitutes the various arguments which have been raised against the historical credibility of the gospel narratives:—the denial of miracle, the denial of a higher world. It is not, however, an objection of historical criticism, but of a philosophical contemplation of the world. He who believes in the existence of the higher world, who sees in the person and history of Jesus Christ the revelation of the same,—for him the ground of this offence falls away, he is certain of miracle in the history of Jesus Christ, yea he must even demand miracle in the same. Only one condition must we lay down, namely, that the miracle have a moral aim, that it be not arbitrary and fantastic, but serve the revelation of the mercy and truth which have appeared in Jesus Christ. And who can become acquainted with the evangelical histories, without knowing and confessing this? And if we would attain to a complete assurance on these matters, we need only compare with our gospels the apocryphal gospels and their arbitrary, non-moral and insipid wonder-stories, or the legendary sayings which have been circulated about Mohammed, to be convinced what a heaven-high distinction exists here and how those caricatures of the evangelical history serve in the most striking way to confirm our gospels.

To what expedients have men resorted in order to destroy the claims of the evangelical history, when once they have resolved not to accept it.

Strauss began his attacks in 1835 in his Life of Jesus, which since that time have been repeated in ever new forms. His notion was this: the first Christians embellished with heavenly colors the portrait of their Master, which they drew from the prophecies of the Old Testament, and in this way wove the web of a mythical and traditional history. But manifestly, if the disciples had drawn the picture of the Messiah according to their expectations of him, they would have sketched him far differently. They would have painted the royal son of David, and not the prophet of Galilee, who was crucified and raised again. The external features of the history of Jesus were a hindrance rather than a help to their faith, for they were not according to their wishes and hopes. It was the overmastering impression made upon them by the person of Jesus which lifted them above all offences of their faith and made them certain that he was the Messiah. Only such an extraordinary phenomenon as Jesus is represented to be in the gospels could produce this effect within them. And how could such a mythical circle be formed in the short period which passed between the history itself and their writing of it? Especially in that age of historic knowledge and pro-

found literary activity? Such a thing contradicts all historic possibility. Isolated legends and traditions could be produced through the strong impression which a stunning fact or grand achievement had begotten in the minds of men, and these traditions and legends might come to be related with a good degree of historic embellishment, but they could not produce such a wonderful life.

But Strauss confessed himself that his attack was a failure; that his master, Baur of Tübingen, accomplished what he attempted. "I had wished in youthful impetuosity to take the citadel by a stroke of the hand; but my greater master first undertook the methodical siege before which its walls would fall." And indeed, Baur must have taken the citadel, had such a thing been possible. He attacked it with an unwearied patience such as only German scholars have, in order to show that, in the different evangelical writings we have memorials of later times and of different opposite tendencies in the church, in which therefore only a very limited confidence can be placed. Above all would he affirm this to be true of the gospel of John. And naturally: for if this is a genuine document of the history of Jesus, then the higher view of his Person is assured. On this account every exertion was made to bring down this writing to 150 after Christ. But the efforts were as vain as they were strenuous. (Baur's school melted more and more away, and in the end he confessed himself that ever still the Person of Christ remains a great mystery in history, and that "on his Person the significance of Christianity as a power in the history of the world depends." And he was obliged to leave the resurrection of Christ an unsolved mystery. But if his resurrection remains a mystery, then is also his Person a mystery. And if his Person is not understood, what then signifies every other apprehension of the history of humanity?

We have a succession of writings from the second century. If we compare these with the New Testament writings,—even with the gospels, we must be altogether void of literary judgment if we do not discern how enormous is the chasm which separates between them. To refer the gospel of John to the second century, would be like ascribing the mighty writings of Luther to an unknown author of the time of the thirty years war. Whoever should assert this would be ridiculed by all intelligent and experienced persons. Even Schelling has pointed out this distinction as the strongest proof of the original character of the New Testament writings, and critics of Baur's school have also confessed to this chasm between New Testament and later writings—a chasm as great as that which ever separates the literary productions of a classic and post classic period.

A great deal has been said, indeed, of the contradictions which are affirmed to mark the gospel narratives, in order hereby to make it appear that their testimony is doubtful and invalid. But these alleged contradictions do not touch the kernel, but only the details and externalities of the history. Nowhere in all the world do such diversities amount to an argument against a fact itself. And how men have tortured the gospels to bring these contradictions from them! Lessing was well acquainted with criticism. He could not, however, help declaring: "If Livy and Dionysius and Polybius and Tacitus (Roman historians) are dealt with so frankly and nobly by us that we do not put every one of their syllables to the rack, why then not also Matthew and Mark and Luke and John? Those discrepancies, which men suppose they have found, owe their origin as a general thing to an entirely external consideration and comparison of the accounts, which fails to inquire after the ground thought according to which each evangelist has selected and exhibited his matter. Recently, indeed, there has been a giving up of this prepossession against the gospel narratives; and even Renan has felt himself obliged to admit their historical pith, not excepting the gospel by John. True, he has dealt with them with an arbitrariness which knows no parallel, in order to evolve a history which rests upon nothing but phantasy.

Let us now return to our question concerning the Person of Christ.

It is the peculiarity of the gospels that every where in them the Person of Jesus meets us. It is impossible, indeed, for us to continue with the teaching of Jesus, but it is everywhere Jesus himself, whose image we behold in everything he says. It is he, who lends to his words that peculiar charm, that wonderful blending of severe loftiness and winning amiableness, whereby they become so irresistible. From Jesus himself goes forth the breath that invests his words and makes them the

words of life. It is the form of Jesus that appears in all he says and does and constitutes the central point of the gospels.

What is the portrait of Jesus which the gospels present to us?

In a retired town of Galilee, so we are informed, in a small common house, Jesus grew up. For his birth, indeed, we look to Bethlehem, the city of David, and wonderful events connected with the same, are related to us. But the present stood in no connection with those early events of the new-breaking happiness, since it was as if a new sun should arise all golden upon Israel, and now still as a dream those wonderful events of the first days invested the insignificant present. Their witnesses were mostly dead, among those surviving yonder in Jerusalem and Bethlehem the reports were dying away, it was supposed that the wonderful child was murdered among the other children, which Herod had sacrificed to his suspicion. No one spoke any more of these things. In Nazareth, moreover, no one knew of them, and Mary and Joseph kept the occurrences as a mystery in their own hearts, of which they could speak to no others, for no one understood that of which they spoke not between themselves, because they themselves did not understand it. And least of all would Mary speak of these things to her Son—for how could she speak to him of them? Thus he grew up as any other son in the house of his parents.

But the remembrances of the house of David, and the great prophecies and expectations which linked themselves thereto, lived in their hearts and often filled the conversation of these descendants of their great royal ancestor. This was the atmosphere which Jesus breathed. And the writing in which he according to Jewish custom was early taught, was the food of his mind. Therefore his thoughts were developed, thereupon his knowledge was built, also his knowledge of himself.

We could wish indeed to learn many a thing from his youth, and busy fancy has filled the unwritten space with all kinds of wonderful legendary stories. But this is all invention. Only a single incident and a single word has been preserved to us in the gospel of Luke: the word of his twelve-year-old boyhood in the temple at Jerusalem, that memorial of the self-developing consciousness of Jesus. The festival journey and the holy city with their remembrances, the temple and its worship, all that he saw and heard, experienced and thought—all these might have mightily stirred him and given his thoughts a new elevation. Then also the secret of his life began to become clearer and more certain. He felt and perceived that he stood nearer to his Father in heaven than to his parents on earth, that communion with God was more his home than the earthly house in which he lived and grew. As a first clear ray this thought and this word break forth from the depth of his soul and illumine his inner life. From that point onward the wonder of his being entered more largely and more clearly into his consciousness. He learned to understand himself; but he was silent. He was subject to his parents, he performed the duties of a son as any other, he helped his foster-father in his handicraft, like him he was called the carpenter of Nazareth, and when, as it seems, Joseph died early, he took his place as the eldest of the house for the support of the family—but he kept silent. He carried the wonder of his life as a still, blessed mystery in his soul and divulged it not. He went every Sabbath according to the Jewish custom into the Synagogue and heard the law and prophets read and explained, he even remained in his silence, humbly waiting, till his Father should give him a sign, so that he should then go forth and audibly and publicly bear-witness of that which he had kept in the stillness of his soul.

The friends of temperance held high festival at the Crystal Palace on Tuesday, and the number who passed the turnstiles was 48,655. The fête was under the management of the Good Templars, in accordance with the triangular arrangement come to some years ago, by which the National Temperance League, the Band of Hope Union, and the Good Templars have the management in successive years. The largest attendance at any fête that has yet taken place, was last year, under the auspices of the Band of Hope Union, when nearly 67,000 persons joined in the amusements of the day. On a former occasion the National Temperance League was successful in attracting over 63,000 visitors.