

Our Contributors.

WHERE IS HE?

A Christmas Meditation.

BY REV. EDWARD B. COE, D. D.

The question of the Eastern sages still challenges our minds. "Where is He" now who was born at Bethlehem nineteen centuries ago? We can follow Him for a few years, through the familiar scenes of His earthly ministry, and then He is parted from us and a cloud receives Him out of our sight. But we are sure that He is still living, in a brighter world than this. And if our eyes were opened, like those of Stephen or of John, we, too, might see Him, standing at the right hand of God, or walking amid the golden candle-sticks, wearing many crowns upon his forehead and holding in His right hand seven stars.

But He has never really left this world. He is still present among men, and still working as a mighty energy in human history. We find him, for example, in the church which He founded; and this is the secret of its continuing life and of its moral and spiritual power. He is present in its offices of worship, wherever He is worshipped in spirit and in truth. He is present in its sacraments, making them to those who devoutly observe them the channels of His grace. He is present in the hearts and lives of those of every land and race and age who truly trust and gladly serve Him. He is here among us, here within us, who believe and love and strive to obey Him.

He is present in the great movements of history. As Lord of the church, He must be also Ruler of the nations. The minds of men have, as time has gone on, been enlarged and uplifted, the forces of nature have swung back and forth, but have always been rising to higher levels, till men have at last begun to fancy that there is in themselves an inherent power of development, to whose action imagination can set no bounds. No, the power is in the mind and will of Him who was once the Babe of Bethlehem and now is King of kings and Lord of lords.

So, too, He is in all the thought of the world. There are two great departments of human thinking which are all illumined with ideas that are to be traced directly to Him. They are the department of morals and the department of religion. In the first place, He showed that they are not two departments, as men had before imagined, as some men in our day are again trying to make out—they are not two departments, but one. You cannot take morality out of religion and have any religion left. And you cannot take religion away from morality and have any basis of morality. This is what Jesus asserted, and the experience of the world has confirmed it, but the world did not know it till He had begun to teach and to preach. And now in all the wide domain which is included within these two great words—morality and religion—we cannot help feeling the presence and power of Christ. If we think of God, it is as Christ had made it known. If we think

of the human soul, it is as Christ has disclosed to us its nature and its destiny. If we think of the life to come, it is as Christ has lifted the veil which hid it from our view. The world sometimes resents His presence in its thought as an intrusion, and defiantly threatens to expel Him from it. It might more easily expel the light out of the noonday sky.

He is present in all our domestic and social life. He had no home during His brief earthly ministry. He is in all our homes to-day. The purity and peace by which they are pervaded, the fidelity and tenderness toward one another of those whose separate lives are blended in a common life under His benediction, the loving care of parents, the serene dignity which invests old age, the trustfulness and innocence and mirth of little children—these are some of the fruits of His presence in those human relations that are consecrated by it. And if this Christmas day has dawned upon a world which is finding out how true it is that it is more blessed to give than to receive; a world in which the claims of poverty upon wealth are in any measure regarded, and a spirit of philanthropy is in any degree prevalent; it is not because He who was born King of the Jews entered it at Bethlehem two thousand years ago, but because He has never left it. The song of the angels proclaiming "peace on earth to men of God's good will," has awakened in the hearts of men an answering strain of good will to one another. The modern spirit of humanity is the inspiration of the Son of God in man.

He is obviously present in the world's spiritual life. The spiritual world is not far away. It is here in the midst of us while we are living our busy and care-worn lives. We are all of us living in some measure in it. And out of it there sometimes come to us sudden inspirations of penitence or devotion, of anxiety or exultation, which sways us with tremendous power. But in that near though unseen realm Christ is certainly living, and there our souls find Him and hold sweet communion with Him. In all the vast and populous realm of souls, there is no order, no light, no hope, except as His glory and His grace are sovereign in it. We lift our hearts in prayer, and instantly we are with Him. We bend low in penitence, and instantly we are conscious that we are in His presence. In the sphere of spiritual existence He reigns alone.

Your renewal for another year will be very acceptable within the next week.

That prayer which does not succeed in moderating our wish, in changing the passionate desire into still submission, the anxious, tumultuous expectation into silent surrender, is no true prayer, and proves that we have not the spirit of true prayer. That life is most holy in which there is least of petition and desire, and most of waiting upon God; that in which petition most often passes into thanksgiving. Pray till prayer makes you forget your own wish, and leave it or merge it into God's will.

What Others Say.

NONE LIKE IT.

No book about the Bible is half so good a textbook as the Bible itself.—*Chris. Register.*

TWO GOSPELS.

There are two gospels which everyone should study: the gospel of Jesus Christ and the gospel of common sense.—*United Presbyterian.*

DON'T WHINE.

In a contest, whether for a prize or for position, there is just one thing better than winning, and that is, taking defeat like a man, without whimpering.—*The Telescope.*

WHO IS TO BLAME.

The saloon keeper is as good as his license; the license as good as the legislature which made it possible; the legislature as good as those who elected them. The blame falls on the citizenship.—*Dr. H. S. Taylor.*

THE POCKETBOOK.

There is no truly Christian man who keeps an unconverted pocketbook. God's universal law of unselfish service is as supreme in the domain of material possessions—in the realm of that wealth which extends a man's power "to bring things to pass"—as it is in any other department of man's possible efforts.—*Merrill E. Gates.*

A WRETCHED HABIT.

It is probably a hopeless task to protest against the vulgar habit of mangling the fine word "Christmas" by spelling it "Xmas." If those guilty of this breach of good taste (if it is no more than this) would stop to think of the meaning of the word, we are sure the evil fashion would presently cease.—*Mail and Empire.*

A BAD HABIT.

Are you in the habit of being late to church? If you are, you have a bad habit, and you should strive to overcome it. Of course there are times when being late may be unavoidable, but for habitual tardiness there is really no excuse, unless it be carelessness or a lack of system. Many of those who are regularly late to church can always manage to be on time at an entertainment.—*Chris. Observer.*

RUSSIA AND ISRAEL.

A Russian paper, published in St. Petersburg, presents that nation in a new role. It calls the Japanese "the Canaanites of the twentieth century," and declares that Russia has a God-given commission to make war on the Japanese.

If Russia represents Israel she seems sadly in need of a Moses just now. Not only so, but they need a Moses to lift up a brazen serpent in their hour of punishment. We are inclined to believe that Russia may indeed be typified by Israel, but not by the Israel that was entering a land promised to them and which they were ordered to take. Rather the Czar's government reminds us of the Israel of which it was written:

"But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemoth unto the river of the wilderness."

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