

THE ENLARGED CHURCH.

THE Christian Church bows to a constitutional law of our planet and slowly changes and advances. As the state under Victoria or King Oscar is not that state which once answered to the name of Zenobia or Augustus, as the literature of the English nation is not that shape of thought which once found utterance through the Hebrew and Sanskrit tongues, so the popular religion of our period is not that faith and practice which prevailed when King David ascended the marble steps of his temple or when Paul delivered his sermon on Mars Hill. As in painting the artist first draws in outline and with a few pencil-marks foreshadows a great picture, so in religion the earliest ages draw a mere sketch of the virtues and deeds which the subsequent times must produce. All the good of our race is cumulative. If the physical globe is growing under a perpetual shower of star-dust which makes the sky blue and helps compose the rich colors of the sunset, not otherwise do knowledge and sentiment grow wider and deeper as the centuries come and go. That would not seem a wise Providence which should permit the mind to remain shallow and should constantly deepen the earth's dust.

It is not known in what form or when or by what means man came into existence, but he has always acted in harmony with this formula: Given a good or a beauty, to find a greater beauty or a greater good. His world has therefore been cumulative, and his religion has always passed from one idea toward two and from one virtue to many virtues. All students of the qualities and habits of primitive man find his religion to have been composed largely of fear. Unable to escape the notion that an effect implied a cause, the primitive mind soon reached the conclusion that some cause or causes lay back of the many things the eye could see and the hand touch. But only a high education could have attached to this godhood great moral qualities. Early man could not ascribe to his Deity attributes undreamed of by man himself. The conception of a great cause must have reached our world long in advance of the notion of an all-wise and benevolent cause.

The historic religion began more as a dread than as a loving

worship, and the first cardinal doctrine of early orthodoxy must have been formulated in the words that God must be daily appeased, that to keep on good terms with such a powerful being was the chief end of man. It exhausted the genius of priest and philosopher to invent the ways and means of keeping the sky at peace with the earth. The ill-nature of God was as extensive as his existence and ability. Kings, generals, and great citizens were always wondering how many lambs and oxen would be required to keep Jove or Jehovah in friendship with the fields until the wheat had been garnered and the grapes had escaped the last form of blight. The great poem of Ædipus cannot by all its eloquence and many-shaped excellence prevent the modern reader from regretting that Zeus should have become so indignant at a noble young prince who had unwittingly married his own mother. When Ædipus learned that his wife was also his mother, his own grief was so great as to render the wrath of the gods a spectacle wholly uncalled for. But with even the semi-cultured Greeks, the more the divine wrath the more perfect the religion. The early problem of religion was not chiefly how to fling a sweet "sop to Cerberus"; it was rather how to make a sop rich enough and sweet enough to pacify the Olympian group. Virgil was at last sufficiently thoughtful to raise the question whether ill-nature were the ideal condition of celestial minds—"Tanta-ne iræ?"; but of the merit of hot indignation as a divine attribute, primitive theologians had little doubt.

This first cause not only was capable of great and prolonged wrath, but it was also the embodiment of all that egotism and selfishness which in the department of human life came with authority and power. If a chief of a tribe or the monarch of a state were always marked by a certain self-consciousness which our times might perhaps designate as self-conceit, what a colossal self-esteem must have characterized the Creator and owner of all things in the whole circle of space and time! The ancients assumed the unbounded self-love of the Deity, and therefore the early worshipper added to fear the perpetual desire to confess Heaven's greatness. Along came the people with their two sentiments, dread and self-abnegation. As when the king was passing the true subjects lay down in the dust or mud, that in such rows of prostrate forms the potentate might read his own greatness, so when the loyal subject of a god assumed himself to be near his deity, down went his body to the dust, that in such acts of human humility the heavenly king might reach a new sense of his own exalted condition and destiny.

Language and art and passion urge into the service of expression the well-known power of contrast. Painters do not make the color of a sky or of a piece of woods by working only at the sky or at each leaf. They work in some adjacent spot or spots of the canvas, and exalt the blue of the air or the picture of the woods by artistic manipulation of what is neither sky nor forest. From no field of thought has this power of contrast been absent. When the early religionist longed to confess the glory of his maker, unable to put a more brilliant jewel in the divine but invisible crown, he placed ashes upon his own head, and thus made sackcloth and dust proclaim the splendor which no art or language could directly express.

It is not necessary that the student of religion should find how far into the history of Christianity these two sentiments, dread and contrast, moved, and how rapidly they faded before the widening and deepening truth of an advancing race; but it does seem the painful duty of the Christians of to-day to confess that under those simple words, "the glory of God," lay for many a century the unhappiness and degradation of mankind. It is almost within the reach of living memory that God was thought of as a mighty conqueror who was made only the more illustrious by the length and breadth of the desert left behind by his chariot wheels. The barbaric primitive human taste which could once be thrilled with pleasure by the exploits of an Alexander or a Caesar advanced far into the career of Christianity and clothed with attractiveness the sweeping desolation which the Almighty had wrought among the earthly millions, and which was liable at any moment to be repeated in the present or future arenas of life. Our fathers not remote felt that religion was all to be exhausted in the effort to compliment the Creator. The "glory of God" was little else than an enormous self-love. In the Christian centuries in which this "glory" flourished, humanity sank that God might be exalted. The story repels by its sadness. Heaven was the home of a selfishness which asked all things and gave but little. Men, women, and children complimented the infinite Father because he had, for a time at least, kept them away from a consuming fire. It was often assumed that the greatness of God made his will an absolute, spotless morality, and that no creature might complain at the alleged theory and practice of the Creator, for the infinity of Jehovah permitted him to do what he would with his own. The lump of clay must not dictate to the potter; it must bless the potter for the privilege of revolving on his wheel.

The Christian Church may well designate as sad and wasteful all those centuries in which it attempted to encourage and gratify the infinite self-love which seemed enthroned in the heavens. It ought to have perceived that all moral principles were universal and perpetual. Their arena is not only amid human life, but it expands and is amid all the forms of intelligent being. If the human soul cannot be ennobled by a self-aggrandizement, pure and simple, a divine soul must be subject to the same incapacity. It is not possible for self-love to be the attribute of a god. In all those times when the worshippers in both pagan and Christian temples were marching up marble steps that they might tell the Lord again and again the story of his own greatness, the air was full of rebukes and whisperings. The Almighty must have wished that his children would bring to his altars the many-shaped greatness of their race. Could the sacred temples have spoken for their Deity, they would have uttered the sublime ethics of Jesus: "What ye do for these little ones, ye do for me."

The past of the Church includes not only this long effort to applaud the Almighty, but also a period of the supremacy of doctrine. By processes which seem lost, the Infinite Being was made into an ardent admirer of forms and fashions. The vastness of creation and the sweep of years which struck with awe the astronomer and the geologist, the amazing heights and depths, that grandeur which not only thrilled the Galileos and the Newtons, but which also created them, did not excuse the Almighty from being partial to a mode of baptism and from a disposition to make his children study hard the lessons of "eternal procession" and "total depravity." There were centuries which were rich in the possession of about two hundred doctrines, each one of which was assumed to be utilized in saving a soul and in pleasing the Heavenly Father. Before the constitutional republics of America and France came into existence, there passed along a great procession of nations founded upon practices which are now designated as "red-tape." In the theory of Darwin, man wriggled a million years while he was learning to walk nobly and erect. In the history of nations there was a long wriggling period. Mankind was waiting for principles to arrive. No history of the Church will be complete which shall omit those years in which, vital ideas being absent, the clergy governed with a red-tape manual the kingdom of man's God.

These facts may be recalled the more willingly because the heart is cheered by the reflection that they have passed away. God's self-

love has been eclipsed by his love of his rational beings. The awful isolation and solitude of the Creator have been broken up, and the Father is with the children. Worship has not declined, but it has asked an elevated humanity to be a part of its hymn and prayer. As the classic matron said, "These are my jewels," so the Christian Church would point to happier men and women and say, "These are a part of my prayers."

It has now been about three hundred years since the human mind began to study itself and its world. The philosophers assumed that man must master his own planet. If it were true that he was on his way to a second life, he must all the more industriously exhaust the lessons and duties of this career. If man has two lives they must be cognate. If death only divides it must divide a lesser beauty from a greater, wisdom from more wisdom, and love from love. This new philosophy opened to society a new field of action and to the Church a new form of religious being and conduct. It began to say, I must build up this earthly kingdom. It is a part of the divine empire. Any slights shown the earth are shown to Heaven, because all human years are interwoven.

The Church of the present is seen reaching out toward man in all the great breadth of that term. It still busies itself over the salvation of the soul; but it has slowly added to that work the task of making the rescue assume the preliminary form of salvation from ignorance and vice and poverty. The older Church worked to remove or obviate a special misery called by the many names of "Hell," "eternal pain," or "banishment"; but the later logic asks the sanctuary to consider all misery as near of kin, and to connect the mind which suffers in this life with the mind which may perhaps suffer beyond the tomb. Ignorance, vice, poverty, injustice, are viewed as calamities, and must be treated as a part of that deep shadow which in its blackest form makes up a "lost soul." All tears need pity, fall in what world they may.

Worship has added to its old repertory the notion of honoring God through his works. As the best praise of an artist is the matchless beauty of his canvas, as the best fame of a vocalist is found in the sweetness of the song, so the most rational and most impressive worship of the Deity will be found in that hour or nation which shall lead up to his altars the most enlightened and most moral characters. The worship can be most improved by improving the worshipper. The "Book of Common Prayer" need not be read more frequently nor

with louder voice. The little volume, standing the same from generation to generation, asks only for lips which can utter its petitions in more of uprightness and peace.

It is indeed possible that some congregation or some pastor may be making his meeting-house too earthly and may be teaching a gospel that is too "muscular"; but these cases seem sporadic and need not weigh heavily against the new truth that the Christian Church is looking toward and must look toward the complete interest of man as a mind, a body, a soul. If we assume the existence of a personal God, we must assume that the Church is such a general agent of God that it must see to it that man "suffers no detriment." Whether the detriment threatens to come from the state or from the misfortunes of society or from its vices, the Church must stand forth as the defender and savior of the sufferer. It is the earthly administrator of a celestial kindness and right. It is, however, no such agent of Heaven as that one which once under the name of Protestant or Catholic attempted to rule the race. It is only an administrator of Heaven's wisdom, Heaven's eloquence, persuasion, and solicitude. It is an agent of Heaven as art is an agent of beauty. Art carries no whips. It does not drive slaves; it leads lovers. It studies and seeks and expresses all the forms of beauty. It watches the leaf fluttering in the wind; it notes the drifting summer cloud; it studies the features of the Madonna. It is the purveyor of a heart which it daily makes more hungry. Thus the new Church of the Christian discovers and secures for its members and friends the most possible of all physical and spiritual good. It possesses no authority; it cannot decree like a state. It rules only as a vast wisdom joined to a vast friendship.

The present situation of the Church would seem expressed should we say that its old kingdom of worship has opened to admit the kingdom of benevolence. Even when the Salvation Army marches at night in the streets of London or Liverpool or Paris, it is not difficult to admire that wisdom and kindness which appeal to the higher nature of a wicked, reckless man, and persuade him to dress and act like a soldier and to march under a banner inscribed with the name of the Lord. There may be puerilities in the code and practice of that organization; but when a depraved and purposeless, hopeless soul turns away from its moral ruin and begins to march toward that goal marked out by such a captain of salvation as that one who first led men in Judea, the puerilities fall away from the case and leave it worthy of manhood's highest respect.

The annexes to the Holy Temple are numerous. Sometimes the modern meeting-house contains a well-furnished kitchen. Perhaps an exhaustive criticism would "draw the line" at kitchens. This essay is not meant to contain a last analysis. Acute minds will perhaps arise to find the exact religious and social bearing of the strawberry-festival and the oyster-supper. Up to this date the most popular objection to the religious oyster-supper has been embodied in the complaint that too much happiness and nutriment have been expected from a single member of this bivalve family. Let us have little to do with such details. It is evident that the Temple has been enlarged and improved. The names of the additions would fill a page. The "Young Men's Christian Association," the "Young Women's Christian Association," the "Woman's Christian Temperance Union," the "Society of Christian Endeavor," the "Red Cross" and the "White Cross" societies, the "Episcopal Guilds," the "Helping Hands," the "Young Woman's Friendly," are only a few of those terms which tell the story of a widening Church.

When the Church began to care for mind, soul, and body, and began to make a cultivated earth the logical prelude to the ultimate streets of gold, it compelled the pulpit to widen in scholarship, mental power, and sympathy. A demand sprang up for minds which could make a survey of man's condition and hopes. Theology at once expanded until it admitted social questions and inquiries; and the men who once needed only to apply texts of Scripture to a careless sinner or a trusting saint found themselves compelled to study the whole history and need of mankind. Heaven suddenly annexed earth. The men who had preached about Paradise were compelled to add to their subjects the fields and shops and mines and the duties and perils of labor and capital. The Church, in studying man as man, indirectly acted upon its clergy, and compelled them to prepare themselves for a wider intellectual career. This new mental power, this new influx of practical earthly philosophy, is the potent cause of the decline of doctrine which is now visible in the many of the Christian denominations. The mind which once loved to find and mark hidden meanings in the Scripture and wonderful distinctions between terms and entities, longs now to work in and for the swarms of human life and to say with Charles Kingsley, "I have loved the world, I now love it, I shall love it always." The difference becomes less between the clergyman, the statesman, and the philanthropist. Each one must equal all manhood.

There is no proof that these new applications of the Church are making the Christian character less full of worship. It is probable that the greater mankind becomes the more adorable will be its origin. By so much as society enlarges and ennobles itself, by so much should it bow the more lovingly before the Power which set going such wheels of mind and heart. The king is made great by the growth of his empire. If man could go from all degradation and sorrow to the altars of praise, with a profounder piety may he repair thitherward from a civilization full of greatness and happiness. As the most learned philosopher carries in his spirit a deeper sense of the world's mystery than can be found in the thoughts of a school-boy, so an age may well expect all its growth of learning and virtue to deepen the solemnity of its thoughts and feelings about God. Worship ought to grow with the growing reasons for worship.

It is difficult to measure at a given place and time the status of this sentiment. Not all ages are open-hearted. Some races are silent in hours when other peoples are talkative. It is difficult to map and measure underground streams. There is reason to hope that the Christian Church of to-day, in its espousal of the temporalities of mankind, is not moving away from the altars at which all kindreds and tongues have cast down their offerings and chanted their psalms. Inasmuch as the greater man becomes the more he loves greatness, it ought to follow that religion, enlarged in wisdom, power, and love, ought all the more to feel thrilled by thoughts of the Creator of all things and of all life. It would be a misfortune should the sentiment of worship decline in this continent. The misfortune would not in the least fall upon man's God, but rather would it all rest upon that human soul which in order to be great and blessed must enjoy the advantages of living amid sublime thoughts and divine, even infinite, longings and passions.

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RELIGIOUS PROGRESS OF THE NEGRO.

IF the genus man is a religious being, the species Negro is pre-eminently so. Wherever you find him, in whatever state of civilization, whether living as a savage in the depths of the Dark Continent or as an educated and prosperous citizen of the United States, you find him ever ready to acknowledge the claims of religion and attentive to its forms. Worship seems to be a necessity of his nature. There may be Negro atheists, but we do not hear of them; there may be Negro doubters, too sceptical or indifferent to be moved to any kind of religious exercises, but they cannot be numerous, or the fact of their existence would have been impressed upon the world.

In his native condition, on the lakes, streams, or plains of his own continent, the Negro's religion generally is of a low and degraded type, but not uniformly so. He pays divine honors to his ugly, unshapely fetich; he resorts to cruel rites to overcome malignant influences; but he also has conceptions of a *Nyangmo* who sends the sunshine and the rain, who veils his face with the clouds and makes the stars his jewels. Old Mtesa, of Uganda, on the Victoria Nyanza, whom Stanley taught Christianity at a single sitting, so to speak, worshipped the spirits of the lake—the *lubari*—but vacillated between his ancestral religion and Islam and Christianity, according as the influences in favor of the one or the other happened to predominate; and his son and successor, Mwanga, has shown the same inconsistency. But fickleness is perhaps a peculiar taint of the royal blood, for the people, receiving Christianity from faithful missionaries, attest the strength and constancy of their attachment to it by their life-blood. That the native African passes quickly and easily from his heathen rites to those of Islam and Christianity is a matter of common knowledge; but that a poor, ignorant, superstitious slave boy should in the course of a few years become an educated, dignified, respected prelate of the Church of England shows that the native African is not only capable of being educated and Christianized, but of being polished in mind, manner, and faith so that such a distinguished body as the Anglican Episcopate should delight to do him honor.