

And all this came to pass without any sudden transition, or powerful personal influence." The result has been that for at least fifteen hundred years the canon of Scripture has remained unchanged, we might say, without either effort or desire to change it. Everything else in the world has changed again and again ; but Christ's word remains.

Yet Christ's sentence has a deeper meaning yet.

For His word has true and absolute everlastingness in the ideas which it expounds, in the morality which it creates, in the forces which it exerts, and in the results which it achieves.

To glance at only a few of its ideas. Here are four which not only seize and possess the imagination, but awe the reason, while they soothe and feed the heart. The Fatherliness of God revealed and reconciled in Christ ; so that the poor African, hunted for the slave market, may, if he only knew it, cry out to God above him : " Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." Eternal life, God's present gift to mankind by Him in whom it dwells, His incarnate and only begotten Son, Who in humanity has won for us victory in the flesh, over the flesh, for the flesh, and freely communicates to us that nature in which He thus has triumphed, and in which we by His grace may triumph too. First, our sacrifice, then our food, ever our example. That by the simple and mighty power of faith this gift becomes ours, with all the righteousness it implies, and the grace it conveys, and the peace it bestows, and the holiness it compels, we humbly and meekly using those ordinances which usually and normally are the channels of it—the Sacraments of His presence. Once more : That circumstances have no power to hurt us ; nay, whatever they are, if we use them and master them, they must be conductors and reservoirs of blessing. Nay, that even sorrow, the darkest and saddest, may become a mighty power and an ineffable privilege, the mourner having his share in the promotion of the divine kingdom as well as the doer ; the mere patience and courage of the saintly sufferer edifying the Church and filling up the sorrow of his Lord.

Possibly these truths are familiar to us ; let us thank God they are so ; but they are the illumination and the regeneration of the world.

But Christ's word abides also in the morality which it creates. It is not too much to say that the Sermon on the Mount brought a new code of morality into the world, and the best proof of this is the bitter hatred with which the Pharisees encountered it, the unspeakable disdain with which the Pagan philosophy of the time crushed it under its heel. Christ may be said by His word to have created at least three moral virtues, which exist to this hour, as the immortal offspring of His word—for purity already had been the hereditary virtue of the Jews—humility, meekness, and pity. If they existed in any sense before Christ, it was only by sufferance, hidden away in a corner, permitted to women and children, and perhaps priests, but the bitter derision of strong men, and even denounced by statesmen as inevitable dissolvents of that vigorous selfishness which seemed necessary to the commonwealth. Workhouses for the destitute, asylums for the orphans, hospitals for the sick, almshouses for the unfortunate—paganism never even conceived of these, much less attempted them. The slave was but a chattel ; the pauper a victim.

You cannot even imagine of the loftiest of heathen moralists taking the trouble to disseminate the precepts of his philosophy among the masses of the artisans ; such an enterprise as that undertaken under the auspices and with the aid of this Society, for more than twenty years past, of selling the Bible among the crowded masses of the London poor, to St. sea or even Epictetus would not only have been ludicrous but inconceivable.

But it has all sprung from the word of Him, whose first sign was that He preached the Gospel to the poor, whose last utterance admonished His disciples, " By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."