

His active life; we listen to His parables and discourses; we witness His miracles; and then we follow Him to His cross, and kneel there in faith, that on us too, in all our weakness and sin, there may fall some drops of cleansing blood; and in all this we are holding communion with Deity. Each word and act of His Human life brings before us some new truth of God's character, or about God's dealings with His creatures.

This is an occasion for family greetings, for kindly intercourse, and for courtesies such as does not occur in any other part of the year. It has a joy and brightness all its own. But Christmas has its pure meaning only for those men who are leading new lives, and who feel that God's manifestation in the flesh has to them an importance with which nothing else on this earth can ever compare, and who are daily endeavoring to exemplify the spirit and the purity of Him who was crucified.

BAPTISMAL GRACE.

The following remarks on Baptism in connection with the education of the young are deserving special consideration at the present time.

"When the doctrine of Baptismal Grace was challenged some years ago, surprise was expressed by some philosophical observers of what was passing, that an abstract question as to whether this or that effect did not follow upon the administration of the Sacrament, could possibly have excited so much strong feeling as was actually the case. 'What can it matter,' men said 'whether when you pour a little water upon the forehead of an infant, it is right to suppose that an invisible miracle does or does not take place?' Now the answer is, that it does matter a great deal. If only the value of our Lord's ordinance and the plain teaching of His Apostles were at stake, if it had been possible to connect no practical interests, as they are called with this or that settlement of the controversy, a Christian must have felt that it mattered much. But in point of fact, the practical question which was at issue was this:—Whether Christian doctrine does or does not supply a working basis for the education of children. For there was no question then, as in truth no question can reasonably be raised by Christians, touching the reality of original sin. The New Testament and the Church are sufficiently explicit in teaching that we are born into this world with a transmitted inheritance of loss, and, in some sense, of ruin certainly attaching to us; and on this point experience must be invoked with ample effect in aid of the statements of faith. But is a child, after Baptism, still without the indwelling presence; or is it true that 'being by nature the child of wrath' it is hereby made 'a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven,' in virtue of a real communication of the Holy Spirit at the administration of the initial Sacrament? The answer to that question is of the utmost practical importance to the moral educator. If the baptized child is in reality still unblest and unregenerate, still waiting for some future gift of God's transforming and invigorating grace; what right has the moral educator to complain if the child is persistently disobedient, or ill-tempered, or untruthful? The child has a right to say in its secret thoughts to its instructor something of this kind: 'On the one hand, you tell me that I am an unregenerate child, and that until God changes my heart no good can come of me. But on the other, you expect me to produce the fruits of goodness—of real energetic goodness;

you expect me to be loving, and unselfish, and obedient, and true. Are you not dealing with me in the same way as the Egyptians dealt with the Israelites, when they wished the Israelites to make bricks, yet did not give them straw? Surely this is not just. Of two things, one: either I am not all that you mean by unregenerate; or else you have no right to expect me to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.' A child may think a good deal which it cannot put into words and it is especially likely to be alive to the inconsistency of a religious theory which conflicts with its rudimentary instinct of justice. But if with the Church, you tell the child, that since its Baptism it is a temple of the Holy One; that by His Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ has made a home in its heart; that it must not be ungrateful to so kind and gracious a Friend; that it can obey and be truthful, and respectful, and loving, if it wills, because God enables it to be so; that it must be these things, because else God will leave it to itself;—you appeal to the child's sense both of justice and generosity. In other words, the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration really supplies the moral leverage which is essential to our effective Christian education. 'I never understood the Church Catechism'—they are the words of a very thoughtful woman,—'until I became a mother, and I felt that I had to answer to God for the moral training of my children, I do not know how I could have even set to work unless I had been sure that he was with them; that I could count upon something stronger than anything I myself could give them; that I could appeal to His presence and to His gifts.' (Canon Liddon's Sermon, 'The Divine Indwelling a Motive to Holiness.')

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CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

No. 17.

A NEW PROPHECY.

In the *Canadian Monthly* for December there appears an article by Mr. Goldwin Smith entitled 'The prospect of a moral interregnum.' We may say by the way that the article and its vehicle are harmonious, for this magazine has for a long time been veiling its infidel sympathies under the too thin veil of impartiality. A literary organ which appeals to national sentiment and national pride for support is thus provided with an opportunity of disseminating the crude theories of shallow sceptics who are ignorant of their own literature, and the mind of Young Canada is being poisoned with their rehash of arguments which were sent to such utter corruption and rotteness years and years ago that a disinfectant ought to accompany these resurrectionist exhibitions of the *Monthly*.

Professor Smith assumes the role of a prophet as confidently as though his predictions had not been as irregular as old Moore's almanack on the weather. He came years ago to Canada to witness the Act of Union with the States, and recently left Toronto because he could not endure the spectacle of loyalty to England which was there presented, to his discredit as a prophet. His visions are usually more akin to the vaticinations of hope than the insight of the Seer, so that as his hopes are the mere shadowed projections of fantastic prejudices, which are his private monopoly, we are not constrained to fear their accomplishment even although they are clothed in very choice English and are illuminated by brilliant but somewhat irrelevant classical allusions which are meant to stagger the vulgar crowd.

It is but a brief time since this writer cast doubts upon man's immortality, his views went simply to show that the effulgence of even his lantern did not reveal as much as God's revelation. The lantern is out again peering into the future with a similar result, as lanterns do not show much before or behind, and now-a-days it is only sad to see a man groping in the caves of scepticism lighted with the dim glimmer of human logic while the word at large walks abroad in the glad light of heaven.

Mr. Smith recently told us that he had studied the Church by the light of his lantern and his oracular decision was that we were in two Churches not one, every churchman being like Sir Boyle Roche's bird in two places at once. He was unable to see how men who differ on some points could live together in one communion, and berated both sides for not deserting the Church and thus leaving the space it occupies a mere blank. We recall these utterances as pregnant illustrations of Mr. S.'s habit of confounding the particular with the general, the common fault of all who use lanterns instead of daylight.

The last effusion in question is too long for criticism in detail, it contains an intolerable amount of mere literary 'fuss and feathers.' The salient points, the solid matter, may be summarized thus: 1st. Christianity is about to be pensioned off, it has fought a good fight, but humanity wants something new; 2nd. Science is taking up the wondrous tale of extinct religions and out of the debris of the Christian Temple will build an eternal structure sacred to ethical truth, &c. unless morality and religion agree to die together; 3rd. Mr. Goldwin Smith is not quite clear whether Science can execute such a contract, doubts if it has the capital for such a job,