

HUMAN NATURE AND THE INCARNATION

In his famous lectures on "The Varieties of Religious Experience," delivered in Edinburgh some years ago, the late Professor William James of Harvard presents two great truths or principles which he declares to be common to all religions. The first is a consciousness in man that "there is something wrong about him as he naturally stands," and the second, that "he is saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers."

It would be difficult to find a statement from a non-Catholic which puts the matter in a clearer and more concise form, and we can but marvel that a mind which discovered so much did not discover more. But we have perhaps in this very inability an illustration of the fact that the acceptance of real Christianity is not merely a conclusion of the intellect, but also an act of the will—a will yielding itself to the operations of God's grace.

Respecting the first point of Professor James's analysis little need be said. There is probably not a man living who does not realize—at least in moments when he is honest with himself—that there is certainly "something wrong about him as he naturally stands." He would perhaps have a difficulty in defining in what that wrongness precisely consists; but the experience itself is there. All human nature bears witness to it. The ancients spoke of it as the "sædium vitæ," and they suggest a variety of means for its relief. The modern man has undergone no change in this respect. On the contrary, it may be said that his sickness has assumed an even more acute form. It is to this sickness that we must trace the restlessness of the modern world, the insane craving for amusement and diversion, the absorption of the mind in the temporal and passing interests of life. All these are but the struggles of the soul to free itself from its disquieting experiences and to forget the sickness from which it knows itself to be suffering.

Man's miseries, "are those of a dethroned monarch." We might justly add that he is a sick monarch as well as a dethroned one. But admitting the correctness of the learned professor's analysis, are we not also constrained to admit that it is in the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ that there is provided for this age-long sickness of man the only effective and permanent cure? And it should be helpful and profitable to many minds to contemplate this all-important matter from this point of view at a season of the year when the great truth of the Incarnation is once more brought to our serious attention. What, we may ask, are all the solemn and philosophic utterances of man by the side of this soul-moving and soul-healing truth? Has any one of them ever really solved the mystery of man's "wrongness," or provided him with a means by which that wrongness can be righted and by which connection can be made with the higher powers? Is it the Babe of Bethlehem, the Son of God become incarnate for us, who alone has accomplished this, and who has, by that very fact, proved to us the divine character of His Person and of His mission? The entire history of Christianity bears witness to the fact. Every saint and every martyr is a living illustration of it.

"The perfect union of the divine and the human," writes a thoughtful student of the subject, "has been in all ages the object of every religion; for the essence of all religious need lies in the ardent desire of the human spirit to partake of the fullness of God. In Christianity alone does this need find a complete and unconditional satisfaction. With one sole exception all religions present the union of God and in a defective form; either the two sides remain separate, or there is absorption of one into the other. The sole exception is Christianity, which finds the perfect union of the two, without fusion and without separation, in the person of Jesus—God and Man."

There is, of course, a sense in which the world admits this fact, but what the world admits is the circumstance that the admission has so little influence on human life and that it leaves the large mass of mankind so strangely cold and indifferent. It is not because they do not reflect upon the deep significance of the truth presented and do not study it in the light of their own inward moral experiences? They believe it merely in the sense that they do not deny it and as being perhaps a more or less acceptable philosophy of life.

"The low standard of virtue which we observe and deplore in some Catholics," writes a great master of the religious life, "arises not from want of faith, but from neglect of meditation upon the truths of religion. The Catholic votaries of the world do not deny a single one of the truths the Church teaches, but they give no thought to them and consequently they live as if they believed them not."

Before many days have passed the Christian world will be standing once more beside the lowly manger. That world has of late passed through some bitter and almost crushing experiences. It has realized as perhaps never before that there is most certainly something wrong about it as it naturally stands. A very large proportion of it has sought and is seeking earnestly to

make connection with the Higher Powers to find Him who alone can set that wrongness right.

Our prayer at this Christmas time should be that those who thus seek may find—that they may find at the manger of Bethlehem health and healing for their souls and with these the peace of God which passes understanding.—Catholic Union and Times.

A CHRISTMAS WISH

Wherever there is sickness, May Santa Claus bring health; Wherever there is poverty, May Santa Claus bring health; Wherever one is weeping, May tears to smiles give way; Wherever sadness hovers, May joy come Christmas day.

To every heart that's aching, May peace and comfort come, And may an outlook rosy Supplant each outlook gloom; May friends now separated Soon reunited be, And everyone find gladness Upon this Christmas tree.

—EDGAR A. GUSTAF

GREAT SOCIAL WORK

FRENCH PRIEST-DEPUTY IS PRAISED BY POINCARÉ

(By N. C. W. G. News Service) Paris, Nov. 28.—In the course of a meeting recently held in Paris in the presence of the most prominent among Catholic philanthropists and sociologists, M. Poincaré, former president of the Republic, and Mgr. Julien, Bishop of Arras, paid high praise to a man who, single-handed, was able by means of intensive propaganda and strenuous work, to be of greatest service both to the working class and his country. This man is a Catholic priest, the Abbe Lemire, who represents the Department of the North in the French parliament. The work undertaken by him is "L'Œuvre des Jardins Ouvriers" (Gardens for working people).

MME. HERVIEU'S CHARITY

Of course, Father Lemire is not the initiator of those gardens. Long before he started his campaign, there were quite a number of such gardens being raised in various parts of France. At Sedan, for instance, kind-hearted woman, Mme. Hervieu by name, who owned an important local industry, had been greatly worried about the fact that the money given by her to the needy was a mere momentary relief, and, for quite a number of them, an encouragement to laziness. Thereupon she decided to help the poor in a more satisfactory way, providing them at the same time with seeds and all needed implements.

By being thus enabled to obtain larger help from the help granted them, and this in proportion to their work. Afterwards Mme. Hervieu had the idea of extending the benefit of a similar institution to those working men who, although not altogether destitute, might, however, welcome every help afforded them to bring up their families. In 1891, at Sedan, 21 workingmen's families were thus benefited by such gardens. In 1897 there were 90 and now there are 399.

Once known, the success achieved by the Sedan "Œuvre" found other imitators. In 1906, at St. Etienne, a Jesuit Father was already at the head of a similar organization which comprised 700 gardens. But Father Lemire was really the man who, by strenuous work, intensive propaganda and judicious methods was destined to bring this idea to a fruitful and grand realization. As early as 1896, Father Lemire in order to promote his campaign, had founded the "Ligue du Coin de Terre et du Foyer" (League of the Morsel of Ground and of the Home). Sociologists, clergyman and municipalities took an interest in his undertaking. Father Lemire delivered lectures and wrote books in furtherance of his work. At last, he had a bill enacted by parliament which provided the necessary measures to facilitate the organization of the "Œuvre des Jardins Ouvriers."

HOW THE MOVEMENT GREW

In 1908, there were in France 134 local organizations of workingmen's gardens, which cultivated 6,000 gardens, by which 64,000 people were benefited; in 1912, 281 organizations, with 18,000 gardens and 189,000 beneficiaries (of whom 65,000 were children). During the five years of the War, the "Œuvre" plan remained at a standstill, and its very existence was threatened. All the able-bodied men, almost all the heads of families, having been killed, it was feared that the gardens would be neglected. But a great endeavor in mutual solidarity was witnessed. The men and women who had remained at home to lend a hand to one another, and the truck gardens were kept in good condition. Thus at the end of the War, the "League of the Home" claimed all the gardens cultivated by the soldiers in the vicinity of their encampments. These gardens were then altogether neglected. There are certainly at the present time 30,000 gardens for workers, helping 300,000 people. The local groups were formed sometimes by the pastors, sometimes by the St. Vincent de Paul conferences (especially in Paris) and sometimes also by either manufacturers or municipalities. The gardens are selected in fertile grounds affording great facilities for cultivation, and within

easy reach. They are usually located within a distance of one kilometer from the last houses of the town.

In compliance with the regulation of the organization the gardens are rented to families whose morals have proved satisfactory; the first to benefit are the heads of numerous families and those who find it more difficult to balance their budgets. As a rule, the gardens are not given absolutely free of charge. In order that the tenant may take a greater interest in the ground he is cultivating, a small yearly rent is exacted. The rent being applied to the purchase price, the workman, in time, becomes the owner of his piece of ground.

MORAL OBLIGATIONS ASSUMED

The tenant agrees to keep his garden for at least four or five years. This obligation is additional assurance that he will maintain his ground in good condition. Families who are given gardens must promise to behave decently, live in good terms with their neighbors, and abstain from doing work on Sundays not absolutely essential. The area of each garden is, for most groups, in proportion to the number of children in the family.

The organizations supply the gardens with all necessary implements and seedling. M. De Villorin, who is the greatest seed dealer in France and a strong backer of all Catholic "Œuvres," gives out, every year, all the seedling required for a number of gardens.

Courses in vegetable garden cultivation are given, and also courses in housekeeping for the women. An annual feast of the gardens is usually celebrated on St. Francis's day (August 30). Prizes are awarded for the best-tended gardens. Nothing, in a word; neglected to bind the workman to his little piece of ground. As for the advantages afforded by the organization, they can easily be realized.

A garden of 600 square metres can supply the vegetables necessary for a family of seven persons. Furthermore, the workingmen's gardens increase the general production and keep away from the markets a number of consumers, thereby contributing to the lowering of prices.

The workingmen's gardens also prove to be an efficient and cheap remedy against alcoholism and tuberculosis. "It is the home sanatorium," says a member of the Academy of Medicine.

KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER

The gardens equally afford a healthful occupation during leisure hours, and a diversion from other works; they keep the families together and lead them away from expensive and very often objectionable pleasures.

Lastly, they are a social blessing. By binding the worker to the ground, by providing him with a kind of work in which he may see the result of his efforts looming ahead, by making him a landowner, this institution prevents the increase of the number of discontented and revolutionary lazy fellows who sow hatred among the various classes of society. On the contrary, it turns them into an element of tranquillity, of wisdom and social peace.

As Mgr. Julien said in speaking of the social work: "Presenting a man with a small piece of ground is, in fact, to give him a broad stretch of blue sky."

THE TWOFOLD MISSION

With good reason has the Church selected St. John the Baptist to be the preacher of her Advent message to the faithful. Through the words of Our Lord's Precursor she speaks to us in the Gospels of the Sundays of Advent. John the Baptist was a stern and rugged character. A man of robust strength, of uncompromising principle, of austere penances, he stands out among the contemporaries of Our Lord as the living flaming symbol of the soul purification that our Lord demanded as the preparation for His entrance into the hearts of men.

The Baptist had a twofold mission to accomplish. He was to announce the coming of Christ, and he was to prepare the way before Him. He was a herald. But he was a herald of Heaven not of earth. There is nothing worldly in the character of John the Baptist. To the maxims of the world, to pleasures, to greed, and to ambition he opposed the weapons of the spirit, bodily penance, mortification, and self sacrifice.

He bore the mark from the hearts of the hypocritical Jews and showed them the intrinsic hollowiness of their religion. And then he demanded a fundamental change in their lives. The axe should be laid at the root of the trees of pride, lust, and avarice and the valleys of omission should be filled up and the mountain growths of evil should be leveled. And not content with preaching he himself gave the example.

Needless to say St. John the Baptist was not a popular figure among the Jews. No doubt he was despised as a reformer, a dreamy visionary, or an egocentric misanthrope. But he cared not what people thought. He clung to principle, he performed his task even though it cost him his life, and he left the world with his Master's eulogy ringing in his ears. "Amen I say to you that there hath not arisen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist."

ing after His resurrection. She announces during Advent the coming of Christ at Christmas, and she declares that we must prepare for that coming by penance and the searching of our hearts. She declares the love of pleasure in the work and tries to raise men's hearts and minds from the things of earth to the things of heaven.

Through her many saints and holy people she too gives the example of what she preaches. Yet like John the Baptist, the Church is not popular with the world that does not think as she thinks. The world will not accept her doctrine, because they are too hard, or savor too much of penance. What a different world this would be for the Jewish people if they had hearkened to the words of the Precursor and prepared for the coming of Christ as he exhorted them.

OBITUARY

MRS. ELLEN O'BRIEN

The funeral of Ellen Conghlin, relict of the late Jeremiah O'Brien, took place in St. Carmel, on the 26th of November, from the home of her daughter, Mrs. P. Havelin, Centralis. Solemn High Mass was celebrated by the pastor, Rev. Father Tierney, assisted by Rev. Father Ronan, St. Mary's, and Rev. Father Hogan, Lucan.

The deceased estimable lady was one of the oldest residents of this locality and her exemplary life and her love for Holy Religion was an inspiration to all who knew her. She is predeceased by her husband, two sons and one daughter, and those left to mourn are two daughters, Mrs. P. Hanlon, Centralis, and Sister M. Gertrude of the Sacred Heart Convent, London; a son, Mrs. G. J. O'Brien, of Centralis, and D. L. O'Brien of St. Mary's; and one sister, Sister M. F. Xavier, Mt. Hope, London. Among those who attended the funeral were a number of friends from a distance.

HOLIER OF HUMAN RELATIONS

A news item records that all records for divorce cases in Suffolk County were broken this fall when approximately 800 cases were listed in the Superior Court. So far nearly 600 have been disposed of, and to hear the others it is necessary to draft an additional judge. This increase in the divorce rate is not peculiar to this one county. The same story is told in other counties. For example, recently a judge of the Westmoreland County courts in Pennsylvania made some pat observations about the astonishing increase of divorce in his county. In the year 1909 he says that there were but 61 labels filed; in the single month of September, 1920, there were 90 cases. During the year 1920 the total number of divorces granted in that county will amount to nearly 257.

All over the country the same danger signal is being. According to the figures of a former Commissioner of Labor the number of divorces in the United States for the twenty year period from 1897 to 1898 increased 157 per cent, while the population increased only 60 per cent. During the next twenty years was from 1897 to 1906 the number of divorces was nearly tripled, namely 945,625 against 323,716. In 1870 there was one divorce for every 3,441 persons in the United States; in 1905 there was one divorce for every 1,218 persons.

According to the figures collected by a private organization in Washington this country now is the leading divorce nation of the world. Japan which recently held that unenviable distinction has 109 divorces for every 100,000 persons; the United States has 112 divorces for every 100,000 persons.

In the light of these facts well may organizations be formed to offset this growing evil. Emphasis on the Catholic position is not needed. The Church's attitude has been from the very beginning clear and unmistakable. Separations have been allowed for grave reasons, for certain irremediable, the nullity of invalid marriages has never in twenty centuries has the Church departed from Christ's teaching and set her sanction upon divorce.

In view however of the increasing laxity of divorce laws, and of the agitation that has been appearing recently in some states for uniform divorce laws it is well to recur again to the statement of the Bishop's Pastoral in regard to what is fast becoming our national disgrace. That document says: "We consider the growth of the divorce evil an evidence of moral decay and a present danger to the best element in our American life. In its causes and in its results for those who are immediately concerned and its suggestions to the minds of the entire community, divorce is our national scandal. It not only disrupts the home of the separated parties, but it also leads others who are not yet married, to look upon the bond as a

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trivial circumstance. Thus, through the ease and frequency with which it is granted, divorce increases with an evil momentum until it passes the limits of decency and reduces the sexual relation to the level of animal instinct. This degradation of marriage, once considered the holiest of human relations, naturally tends to the injury of other things whose efficacy ought to be secured, but by coercion but by the freely given consent of a free people. Public authority, individual rights, even the institutions upon which liberty depends, must inevitably weaken. Hence the importance of measures and movements, which aim at checking the spread of divorce. It is to be hoped that they will succeed; but an effectual remedy cannot be found or applied, unless we aim at purity in all matters of sex, restore the dignity of marriage, and emphasize its obligations."—The Pilot.

DIED

BURKE.—At Fitzroy Harbor on Saturday, Dec. 11, 1920, Mrs. Patrick Burke, mother of Rev. Father John Burke, late of Ottawa. May her soul rest in peace.

MORAE.—At Beverton, Ont., on November 25, 1920, Mrs. Jennie Morae, eldest daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Brown, Toronto. Sweet Jesus be merciful to her soul.

PATTERSON.—At Welland, Ont., on November 20, 1920, Miss Anna C. Patterson, second daughter of Alderman J. J. Patterson and Mrs. Patterson. May her soul rest in peace.

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