

PRACTICABILITY OF PEACE.

The following remarks are not addressed to any who—dazzled by the splendor of martial preparations, the pride of fancied national honor, or classical associations,—would advocate war as a good in itself or its results. It is believed these sentiments are fast fading from the public mind, and are disavowed by every Christian philanthropist. Nor is it intended to examine the defence of war as a mere corrective evil,—an approved process in the course of divine Providence, by which other and greater evils are averted or remedied,—an allegation which has been again and again refuted, by the friends of peace; but there are many sincere philanthropists, who, fully perceiving the vast amount of suffering and corruption caused by this custom, believing such calamity to be unalleviated and uncompensated by any resulting good, and earnestly desiring the extinction of war, still doubt the practicability of that extinction by any means in the power of the friends of peace to apply.

First, it is objected that the magnitude of the evil is such as to be irremovable by private effort. The insatiable ambition, pride of honor, fancied interest, and deep-rooted customs of nations; the enthusiastic canonization of warriors, the brilliant examples of classic history, the flattering voice of poetry, the splendor of monumental arts, the chivalry of patriotism, and the imposing fascinations of military display, all combine to drown the still small voice of humanity,—altogether form an overwhelming power, against which individual or associated philanthropy must strive in vain. What can a few peace societies and their friends effect, against the gigantic pride and customs of sovereign rulers and the political world?

It is not to be wondered at, that men,—even intelligent and considerate men,—make an objection like this; for the world has hitherto seemed to be governed or revolutionized by force; and they are naturally incredulous of any important change without the perception of physical power to effect it. But it is overlooked, that many of the most signal revolutions of the globe have originated in some new or disregarded principle,—religious, moral or political,—brought out by some zealous, perhaps despised individuals, which afterwards proved to be the actuating soul of the great physical movement. Such was the case with the crusades, the discovery of America by Columbus, the American and French revolutions, &c. The most remarkable revolution of the earth was the promulgation of Christianity by a few fishermen of Galilee, and their associates, changing the religion and moral habits of a large portion of the civilized world. It may be thought that this should not be adduced as an instance as it was under the especial and miraculous direction of the Most High; but we are taught that all events are, in reality, guided by his providence; and if the progress of peace principles is predicted, and their promotion enjoined, by this revelation, there is as much reason to expect his divine aid in their extension, as in that of the gospel of which they form so essential a part.

Again, it should be recollected, that under the perpetual advance of Christianity and civilization, mere physical power is everywhere losing, and moral power gaining, the predominance of influence. In former ages it might perhaps be said, that before the proud thrones or passion-led multitudes of the world, moral effort would avail but little in presenting truth, or advocating humanity. Already has the religious and intellectual change been such, that no oppressive abuse of physical power can be long continued in face of the unequivocal rebuke of religious enthusiasm or philosophical philanthropy; and under the obvious progress of society we have every promise that the claims of enlightened benevolence must be heard, and will be effectual. But the friends of universal peace, if guided by truth and warned with zeal, are plainly possessed of a moral influence superior to the power of brute force, however imposing; and if efficiently sustained by those who are in sentiment with them, so that they could bring all the religious and benevolent of the civilized world into an united, energetic protest against the practice of war; neither despotism, nor custom, nor chivalric delusion, could withstand it; the pride of the martial world must bend before the town of Christian reproof. Let us not, then, in timid distrust of moral power, withhold it. Give it in sanguine faith, and it will be decisively victorious.

But we meet with a more serious objection to specific efforts for the cause of peace, among those religious and enlightened men on whom chief reliance is placed as instruments of the cause. They doubt not the power of Christianity to overthrow the power of war; but they consider the process proposed on this subject as wrong in its order; general Christian faith must precede it.—“Make men Christians,” they say, “and

universal peace will follow.” They have no expectation that peace principles will ever be received, until Christianity, as they understand it, is made to prevail in the world; and they accordingly think time and money wasted, in any previous attempts to diffuse them. And yet a little attention will make it plain, that the whole strength of this objection lies in its ambiguity; an examination of what is here meant by Christianity, will dissipate it. If a Christianity is made to prevail over the world which involves the doctrines of forbearance and peace as essential elements, undoubtedly the prevalence of such a Christianity would for ever extinguish war; and the course of the peace-makers is precisely that which the objectors would desire, but which they refuse to aid; for these peace-makers strive to engraft this very feature of peace inseparably on Christianity, and may be considered as missionaries of that religion, in its genuine pacific form.

But the objectors have not this idea of Christianity in mind, in making the objection; they intend Christianity as each understands it, according to the doctrines laid down by his sect or denomination respectively, in none of which, with the exception of the Friends and Moravians, is the peace principle included as fundamental.—History, however, is full of instances of pious and devoted men, under every form of religious faith, who have not only sanctioned, but participated in, the revolting violence and cruelties of war. No one will call in question the religious character of the early fathers of the church, the reformers with Luther, the Covenanters of Scotland, or the pilgrims who landed on the Rock of Plymouth. Perhaps even the crusaders to Palestine, the German invaders of Saxony, and the Spanish conquerors of South America, may be allowed to have been actuated by a sincere faith in what they received as Christianity; but in none of these instances, or similar ones which history records, has the aspect of the cross, in any of its varied lights, obliterated the heathen spirit of Mars; and what reason is there to believe that any view of Christianity, which includes not its peace principle as essential, whatever ascendancy it may gain over every other view, will spread over the future, a forbearing tranquillity which it has ever failed to do in the fairest trials of the past? The true teachers of Christianity are, then, the peace-makers.—They alone preach a gospel from which peace can spring. They alone exhibit its love as identical with its faith.

Another objection to the practicability of peace efforts comes from a numerous class, confiding less in the power of Christianity.—The war spirit is said to be ineradicable, as founded in nature. All brute animals are by instinct prone to violence and conflict, and human beings have been engaged in war and bloodshed from the earliest ages, and in every realm. War must, then, ever continue, while man retains his present passions; and his race must be miraculously changed in nature, or exterminated from the earth, for a new creation, before peace can dwell over its extensive sphere. We then strive to counteract the laws of Providence, when we oppose war; every generation must pass through its bloody trials, and look to a future life for a regenerated, pacific constitution.

The fact of the universal custom of conflict, brutal and human, is indisputable; that in brutes it is founded in their unalterable nature, will not be questioned; but when this law is applied also to man, the whole truth is not shown; it is forgotten that man has higher and freer impulses, which counteract and modify his animal nature. His calculating reason, and penetrating foresight of consequences, direct his very passions to an action, by which their present gratification is sacrificed to future good. Moral principle, too, is perceived by his mind, and an instinct, nobler than the animal, bends him into obedience to it. Man, by nature, is acquisitive and grasping; and yielding only to this nature, the world would be a universal scene of robbery and plunder. Civilization, pointing through experience to general good, has brought him under laws which respect the right of property, and induce scruples of honesty, restricting desire, where no punishment would follow its violation. Man, naturally, is indolent and self-indulgent; the view of future melioration rouses his energy, sloth is shaken off, self-denial practised, and active enterprises undertaken, which ultimately lead to exertions and privations for the good of others. Naturally, man is ambitious and despotic; how seldom is the man or woman seen, who does not love to rule; but civilization again has induced a general respect for equal rights, and the thrones of despotism are fast sinking before the rising claims of universal freedom.

Now, enlightened interest, justice and humanity all plead strongly for the abolition of war. Peace calls on man to modify his martial nature, as he has done for other bless-

ings. Christianity enforces this demand with higher authority and still more imposing motives; and if his animal nature has given way before weaker impulses for other objects, there can be no reason to despair of a conquest over it, in this case, when all the lights of reason, humanity and religion are made to bear upon it, and in full view, all the horrors, depravities and sufferings of war, and the rich blessings of unbroken peace, are duly presented and appreciated.

These replies are offered to the consideration of intelligent men, who entertain the objections stated. To the confiding Christian, who relies on the revealed will of God, however it may apparently oppose human experience or reason, a decisive answer can be made to every discouraging argument.—God has, by his prophets, declared there shall be a reign of universal peace, when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning-hooks, and shall learn war no more. Christ has enjoined, with peculiar emphasis and repetition, that forbearing love from which peace must necessarily result. These predictions and injunctions are the warrant of the peace-makers. Fortified with these, they are assured they shall not labour in vain; they see in them certain pledges of divine assistance, and ultimate success.—*Peace Society Tract.*

SINGING IN CHURCHES.

This is a subject on which, as we are well aware, there is much diversity of opinion; perhaps it would not be going too far to say, some unnecessary and improper warmth of feeling. Yet it is difficult to imagine, apart from the acknowledged waywardness of human nature, why this is the case. Only one exception occurs to us, at this moment, to the general practice of singing as an integral part of Divine worship; that exception being the highly respectable body known as the Society of Friends, who hold peculiar sentiments on the subject. All other professing Christians, Protestant and Roman Catholic, incorporate vocal music with their worship in the sanctuary of the Most High; as did the heavenly intelligences mentioned in the Apocalypse, who sang a new song unto Him who was slain, and who liveth again as the Intercessor for His people;—they beheld the glory which earthly worshippers can yet but dimly conceive—“even the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”—and straightway raised the loud pean of triumphant joy, “Alleluia, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.”

It is not our present purpose to defend the Christian practice of singing as a part of Divine worship. We assume it to be not only justifiable and right, but authoritatively ordained. Our remarks will have reference to the mode in which, as we conceive, the audible praise of a Christian congregation, commonly called Church music, should be conducted. That it should be reverent, all will admit. Such a spirit becomes the sanctity of Divine worship. Where it is lacking, praise is not only a vain oblation, but a mockery and insult which Jehovah will punish. Nothing should be introduced into this service of the temple incompatible with the solemn awe which the creature should feel in the presence of the Creator, the probationer at the bar of his Judge, the finite when beneath the shadow of the infinite, and the mortal on the threshold of immortality.

But that which is reverent may unquestionably be joyous also. A due solemnity of feeling by no means precludes an indulgence of those grateful emotions which the privilege of access to God must excite in the soul of every true believer, and that buoyancy of spirit which suggests and necessarily accompanies, thanksgiving and praise. Devout gratitude is often ecstatic, and it need be no matter of surprise that men conscious of the grandeur of that service in which they are engaged, and authorized, by Holy Writ, to believe that with such sacrifices God is well pleased, select tunes as well as hymns in accordance with the exceeding joy which pulsates through every affection of the heart, and inspires them with a hope unspeakable and full of glory. A glad some spirit and deep reverence may go hand in hand, and find utterance in melodies in which liveliness and even excitement may have kindred interest.

If singing be a part of worship, an expression of grateful praise on the part of the multitude assembled,—(and if it be not this, it is mockery all)—should not those who can sing, join with the spirit and with the understanding also, in the act so acceptable to God and so becoming his people? Heart-worship cannot be delegated—the Most High cannot be praised, any more than he can be served, by proxy. And yet, praise is due unto Him who hath heaped benefits upon us, and who hath redeemed man from woe. Admitting that there often is praise which is not vocal, and

that it is quite possible to make melody in the heart while the tongue is silent, still it seems to us a nobler worship when the whole people “lift up their voices,” and in one united anthem fill the Almighty’s Temple with the incense of vocal praise, and “crowd His gates with thankful songs.”

The practical effect of congregational singing, as distinguished from that which is only choral, is a strong argument, we conceive, in favor of its universal adoption. As in this department of the paper we have spoken religiously upon other subjects, so we may speak on this; and perhaps it may be safely affirmed, that where the practice prevails, on the principles already laid down, there will generally be found a more healthy, warm, active, spiritual Christianity, a more fervent devotional spirit, and a consequent greater enjoyment of the ordinances of the sanctuary. If religion be love, and its fruits peace and joy, it must prompt to gratitude and praise. It is in the very nature of joy to have utterance; it must speak, either in rapturous ecstasy or by the silent but increased throbbing of the heart. It is a well-spring that can be dammed up by no artificial barriers; it will leak through or overflow.

Joy is communicative; and when it is the pure joy of vital religion, of sanctified affections, fused and moulded into the image of Him who is emphatically declared to be LOVE in all its purity, sublimity and potency, it cannot fail to have the best effect upon those associating with its possessor. This is well known to those upon whom devolves the spiritual oversight of their fellow Christians; and who are, in a certain sense, responsible for the continual burning of the fire upon the altar. They see it verified in many individual cases of conversion, in the growing spirituality of any section of their congregation, and more especially in those seasons of the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, distinguished as revivals. The spirit of the new convert, or of the little band of more faithful disciples, or of the Church more generally, diffuses itself; and while kindling new fires in hearts before cold and dead, feeds again in its turn upon the warmth it has communicated.

It is thus with congregational singing. The voice of voluntary, grateful praise, soon finds its echo, and that again its response; thus the affections are called into play, the bond of union is drawn closer, while its circle is enlarged, paradoxical as this may seem; and when each finds others joining in the glad anthem, and swelling the pæan of “worship and thanks and blessing,” his own tongue is unloosed—new hopes, new feelings, new desires, new joys are awakened, or old ones revived—and the Church becomes more earnest and active, more like a living member of the body of Christ, more prepared for warfare and for conquest,—their united singing of one common song being their rallying point in time of danger, their strength in weakness, and that which unites them in the bonds of peace and of fellowship with the Head.

Indeed, we can easily suppose that if congregational singing was generally introduced into the churches, ministers would not so often complain, as now they do to an alarming degree, of supineness, inactivity, and declension, in every direction. We do not mean that this should be relied upon; as remedial even, without vital piety and the influence of the Divine Spirit. We believe that there exists among all denominations a good substratum of practical Christianity, and that a fuller dispensation of the Spirit awaits only man’s disposition to receive it. And we believe also that the inert mass of Scriptural religion—(the words, though a contradiction in terms, seem best to convey our meaning)—might be made active and operative for indescribable good, if the warm spirit that prompts to and accompanies congregational singing could be made to breathe upon it.

Upon another point we do not wish to be misunderstood. There can be little, if indeed, any good congregational singing, such as is reverent and appropriately expressive, without a leader and a choir of greater or less power; and we think an organ so admirably adapted to give body and stability to congregational singing, that we would like that instrument introduced into all churches of adequate size and appropriate construction. There is little chance of harmony, of general uniformity in time and other particulars, without some one to take charge of, conduct, and regulate the whole. What we and many others desire to hear, is the congregation singing with the choir or organ—singing all, heartily and in time—so that singing may indeed be a part of the worship in which the people themselves participate.

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