

we must suffer, as indeed we must suffer for the violation of any of God's laws.

Our political powers place certain restraints upon the freedom of our citizens, and those who violate them are punished. These restrictions are necessary in the interests of liberty. Political freedom, in the broad sense of the word, means anarchism, crime, despotism, confusion—the only law being that might is right. This, of course, is not liberty. Too far east is west, as the saying is; and there is sometimes more danger in going too far as not going far enough.

What is true of the political system is also true of the mind of man. God has placed certain limits upon our freedom as rational beings beyond which we cannot go without suffering for it. But the temptations to go beyond these limits are great. In the first place intellectual men generally have a great passion for study, a passion which often leads them beyond proper bounds. Then no other gifts or possessions evoke such praise nor carry with them such fame and honor as those of intellectual pursuits. And in this there is a strong temptation. There is probably no temptation so strong as that of bidding for popularity. Many of the brightest minds in all ages have been slaves to popularity. They have sacrificed truth and principle in bidding for it. Again, gifted men, by the great favor and confidence shown them, are led to become over-confident in themselves and gradually they push out into forbidden ground. Why is it that some of the greatest reasoners of our age give Christianity only a passing thought? Why will men like Spencer and Huxley—men of mighty intellects—seek to discredit the Bible? Because these men have allowed their intellects to become their gods and place confidence in nothing else. Then, again, men of talent may have the temptations which riches bring with them, added to those just mentioned, as the intellect is often the means of acquiring great wealth.

Christianity is necessarily a religion of faith. Being a divine, as well as a human religion, there must of necessity be something in it above and beyond the mind of man; and the man who thinks that he should be able to understand everything in the Bible is assuming something which only an infallible mind could accomplish. Such a man, believing only what he can reason out, has no faith; for faith is trusting in what we cannot plainly understand on the evidence of those things which we can comprehend.

Our Saviour says that we must become as little children, i. e., our faith and humility must become as theirs. These two principles intellectual men too often appear to lack.

But the person who has not great reasoning powers is not tempted in this way. He is generally of a more humble mind. He places implicit trust in God and His word. Those things which he cannot understand he accepts as faithfully as those which he does. To him the evidence of the inspiration of the Bible is overwhelming, and he does not ask to understand everything that is in it. It is just here that his faith comes in.

What is it that has started the creeds and encouraged men to wander from the old paths? Men whose reasoning powers have led them so far that they consider the word of God an insufficient guide or rule of discipline, and who have raised other rules of faith and practice, introducing into Christianity those divisions which have proved such a hindrance to its progress and so detrimental to that true spirit of fellowship which should prevail among Christians?

To what does the higher criticism movement, which is just now making such assaults upon the Bible, owe its existence? Is it not to intellectual men who have apparently wandered so far beyond the limits of true wisdom that they will set themselves as judges of God's word? This movement is

but a step in advance of those principles which led to the establishments of the creeds.

Those who have great blessings have great responsibilities in proportion. Not only must they not use those possessions God has given them against Him, but they are in duty bound to use them to advance His cause. And this is true of the intellectual gifts God has bestowed upon man. Our Saviour illustrates this in the parable of the talents.

Men of intellectual attainments should therefore be very careful how they use such gifts. True wisdom may often consist more in guiding our minds into the right channels than in puzzling out mysterious problems; the using of them for the purposes for which they were created rather than in showing their brilliancy and cunning.

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ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN.

The Apostle Paul was a free man; he was free born, being a Roman citizen. He was in bondage to no man, and yet he made himself the servant of all men. His one burning desire, which became a passion, was the salvation of his fellow-men. He would not on any account use his liberty as a stumbling-block to others. With all his inherent rights and freedom, he was willing to become all things to all men that he might save others and make them free. He adapted and accommodated himself to all kinds of people; in this he was a noble example of Christian manhood. He possessed the spirit of wisdom and sacrifice. To a Jew he became a Jew, although he considered the law as a yoke that Christ had removed. But knowing their prejudices, and knowing as we all ought to know, that the heart cannot be won to Christ until the thorns and roots of prejudice and bigotry are removed, he first prepared the heart for the reception of the truth. It was a fact well known to the apostle, that sowing good seed into poor soil was as foolish as it was useless, that no good results could possibly accrue from sowing the word of God in the heart filled with prejudice against the truth. His grand purpose was to do good to those who were unsaved, but sowing the seed of truth in a heart not susceptible to the truth, would never make it better. The first important work, therefore, of the apostle, was to make himself acceptable to the minds and hearts of the people. This could be done only by becoming one with them, and adapting himself to their conditions. He was careful not to carry his own peculiarities and prejudices among those with whom he associated. He would not despise or condemn their peculiar views as notions. He would not on any account sin against God, but he would very cheerfully and willingly deny himself. He was not seeking to adapt or accommodate the truth to their prejudice or peculiarities, but it was himself he was seeking to adapt to their conditions in order to prepare their hearts for the truth. To this end he consecrated his noble life, and his great success was in his wisdom in "becoming all things to all men."

Here is an infallible rule established not only by sound common sense, but by an infallible teacher and exemplified by a life wholly devoted to the salvation of man. Herein is seen the profound imperative need in our present condition of church life. That we have the good seed, which is the word of God, none can doubt. But the apostolic life by which apostolic truth is made effectual in the salvation of souls, is just where we see a failure, and wherein another reformation is needed. Our love for the salvation of man is apt to disappear when placed in competition with our own self-interest, as rivets lose themselves in the ocean. As soon as we assert our own liberty and interest, we change the rule, and as Spurgeon once said, "we will become all things to all men that we may win a sum."

The heart filled with the briars and weeds of prejudice, can never be improved by sowing in it the seed of truth. This is not what is needed. It is a very easy work to sow the seed, but if no fruit from our sowing, what have we gained? Will the Lord say to us, "Well done," if we do not sow with the intention of reaping from our sowing. Here is the question of intense interest just now. How can we reach the hearts of those who are unfitted for the reception of the truth? What should our attitude be toward them who disagree with us and are prejudiced against us, and the truth we preach. Settle this question by the apostle's rule, and we will convert the world. Let us understand that we must first be a friend to him whose friendship we would gain for Christ. We can never gain friendship by pounding or driving. It is vain, as Butler says, "to argue against the grain." Shall we exclude ourselves from those with whom we disagree? Shall we preach the truth to them when we meet them, regardless of their prejudice? Our lesson says no; but adapt and accommodate ourselves to their society and their notions as far as we can without compromising the truth, until we gain their friendship, and then sow the seed. The noted Barnes said, "That when you have gained the respect and confidence of a man, nine-tenths of his conversion is accomplished." Prof. R. W. Harper says, "That when we would convince others of the error of their ways, never let it be in the spirit of destruction, but let the spirit of construction predominate." The wisdom to win the heart to Christ is the wisdom that will sacrifice self-interest, and accommodate itself to all the contingencies of life.

Why is that persons whom we say are good, whose character seems to be unspotted, but whose influence in reaching others seem to be a failure? The only answer to this is found in the failure of adaptation, in not accommodating themselves to the ways of others. Their own notions and peculiarities are as dear to them as their homes, and as fondly cherished. When we think we cannot work with others because they do not agree with us, and because their ways are not our ways, let us study the apostolic principle of becoming all things to all men, and try if possible to come in touch and in sympathy with those we would lead to a better knowledge of the truth. But says one, "I do not believe they are right in their view, nor in their ways of work." We will admit this; but what we want to know, is, how we can be successful in getting the truth into their hearts. We have not done our duty in telling them they are wrong, and perhaps in so doing increase their feelings of prejudice against us. We want to save them from their error. How can we do it? Is it by refusing to associate with them, and refusing to work with them; or is it by uniting with them in every way we can, and thereby gaining their confidence and their respect? The great question that is agitating so many minds to-day is, "How can we reach the masses? There is but one answer to this question, and that is the one given by our Saviour in His prayer: "That we might all be one, that the world might believe that Thou hast sent me." This is equivalent to saying that our unity will reach the masses. But how wonderfully strange that we will by our notions and opinions, and peculiarities, close the very door to success, and thus destroy the work of saving the world. Nothing more clearly reveals the true spirit of Christianity than our unity and kindness and love to those who disagree with us and nothing will reach their hearts more successfully, and prepare them for the reception of the truth. We all have our peculiar notions, and if we let these notions divide us, every one of us will have to run a church of his own, and that will be a church of one. Let us be very careful and not irritate these notions by scratching them until they become sores; but let us cover them with the healing balm of love for salvation of the lost. Let us become all things to all men that we might save some. Let our love for others be so great that we will be willing to make any sacrifice to save them.

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